Universidade do Minho
Escola de Arquitetura, Arte e Design

Sarah Al Shrbaji

A fictional representation in the geo-architecture of Syrian student migrations to Portugal: Traces and chronotopes of (e)scape paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

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Sarah Al Shrbaji

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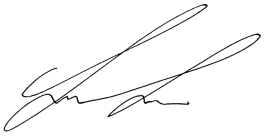


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This thesis is a tribute to all Syrians who tried to escape the war in Syria but were unsuccessful; to those who managed to attempt but were deported back; to those who were not deported but remained in detention centers and refugee camps; to those who were not deported but lost their lives — or the lives of their family members — at sea or on land while crossing borders; to the screams and worries of mothers and families searching for their children, whether disappeared during escape attempts or imprisoned by Syria's dictatorial regime; to those still grieving their lost ones; to those who do not know whether their loved ones are alive or dead; to those who lost their lives during the war — whether through massacres, bombardments, or other violent means; to the political activists and innocents who were kidnapped, imprisoned, and tortured — many until death — in the dictatorial regime's torture chambers; to those who survived; to those adapting and integrating into foreign societies; to those struggling to make a living abroad — yet doing so with dignity and honor; to the entire Syrian migrant population striving for a better future and better education; and to those who remain in Syria, holding on through everything.

I carry your stories with me. And I wish that one day, very soon, in whatever way I can, I may contribute to rebuilding Syria — for you.

Statement of Integrity

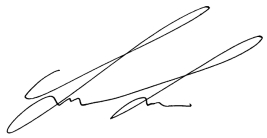
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Mais declaro que conheço e que respeitei o Código de Conduta Ética da Universidade do Minho.



April, 2025

Abstract

This thesis explores the intersection of architecture and migration, focusing on Syrian student migrations to Portugal within the student migratory flows between 2014 and 2018. It consists of three parts — one theoretical, one representational, and one performative — within an interdisciplinary approach. These three parts incorporate the stories of five case studies on student migratory paths and experiences, along with one fieldwork mission. They connect ideas and concepts such as memory, its recollection and obliteration, lived experiences within time–territory–place–space, and map distortions.

From these stories, questions about the representation of migratory paths and experiences emerge — particularly regarding research methodologies, with an emphasis on the agency of mapping. Through an understanding of positionality, the thesis develops inter-subjectivity and visual data to reinterpret the shared stories. Each path representation entails a continuous learning process regarding how the student migrants from the case studies shape their environments and are shaped by them, influencing their event-memory, experience, and perception.

By simultaneously considering territorial and human scales, geo-architecture mediates as a practice in a fictional scope to expand the potential of migration studies in representation, while also reminding of the Syrian migration crisis in the 21st century, contributing to the field of architecture.

The thesis is in the field of architecture but corresponds to the supervision team fields of study, which include two scientific areas in architecture — architectural culture and city and territory — as well as geography.

Keywords: Representation; Geo-architecture; Mapping; Syrian student migrations; Performance-based research.

Resumo

Esta tese explora a interseção entre arquitetura e migração, com foco nas migrações de estudantes sírios para Portugal, a partir dos fluxos migratórios estudantis entre 2014 e 2018. Estrutura-se em três partes — uma teórica, uma representacional e uma performativa — dentro de uma abordagem interdisciplinar. Estas três partes incorporam as histórias de cinco estudos de caso sobre trajetos e experiências migratórias e uma missão de campo, a unir ideias e conceitos como memória, o seu recordar e esquecer, experiências vividas dentro de tempo--território–lugar–espaço e distorções de mapas.

Destas histórias emergem questões sobre a representação dos percursos migratórios e das experiências através das metodologias de investigação, com ênfase na agência do mapeamento. Através da compreensão da posicionamento, a tese desenvolve a intersubjetividade e dados visuais para reinterpretar as histórias partilhadas. Cada representação de percurso implica um processo contínuo de aprendizagem sobre como os estudantes migrantes dos estudos de caso moldam os seus ambientes e são por eles moldados, influenciando a sua memória dos acontecimentos, experiência e perceção.

Ao considerar simultaneamente escalas territoriais e humanas, a geo-arquitetura atua como prática num âmbito ficcional para expandir o potencial dos estudos migratórios em representação, ao mesmo tempo que recorda a crise migratória síria no século XXI, a contribuir para o campo da arquitetura.

A tese insere-se no campo da arquitetura, mas corresponde às áreas científicas da equipa de orientação, que incluem duas áreas na arquitetura — cultura arquitetónica e cidade e território — bem como geografia.

Palavras-chave: Representação; Geo-arquitetura; Mapeamento; Migrações estudantis sírias; Pesquisa baseada em performance.

Reader's note

The doctoral thesis does not aim to criticize or ridicule any efforts of any entity, including scholarship programs, universities, countries, services or individuals mentioned within. Its purpose is not to critique any humanitarian organization or agency involved in these Syrian student migrations and their stories. The message conveyed, especially in Part ii, is a translation of the dialogues that were conducted. The hardships, words, and frustrations expressed in the narratives are highlighted to represent these emotions and remain faithful to the shared stories and their owners. Any information presented that may or may not represent a truth is not intended to undermine or discredit any entity.

For the intended digital visualization of the thesis, it is recommended to change the page display to two-page view.

Acronyms

AAA - Associação de Apoio ao Afeganistão

AIMA - Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum (Portugal)

APGES - Associação Plataforma Global para Estudantes Sírios (Portuguese abbreviated form of Global Platform for Syrian Students)

ANIM - Afghanistan National Institute of Music

APGES - (*Associação Plataforma Global para Estudantes Sírios*) is the Portuguese abbreviated form of the Global Platform for Syrian Students, but GP4SYS is the English abbreviated form of it.

AST - Arabian Standard Time

CCAC - Closed Controlled Access Centre (a facility on Samos, Greece, designed to provide controlled accommodation for asylum seekers)

CECS - Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade (Center for Communication and Society Studies)

CEEAAD - Centro de Estudos da Escola de Arquitetura, Arte e Design (Center for Studies of the School of Architecture, Art, and Design)

CVP - *Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa*; Portuguese Red Cross

EAAD - Escola de Arquitetura, Arte e Design (School of Architecture, Art and Design)
ICS: Institute of Social Sciences (Instituto de Ciências Sociais)

EET - Eastern European Time

EEST - Eastern European Summer Time

FCT - Fundacao para a Ciencia e a Tecnologia

FRONTEX - derived from frontières extérieures (French for external borders); for European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

GMDAC - Global Migration Data Analysis Centre

GPS - Global Positioning System

HBB - Humans Before Borders.

HNO - Humanitarian Needs Overview

IDP - Internally displaced person

IDPs - Internally displaced persons

IBM - Immigration and Border Management

IOM - International Organization for Migration

IRN - Institute of Registries and Notaries (Portugal)

ITEMS+ - International Tandem Event MicroSeries Plus (symposium related to architecture and migration)

Lab2PT - Laboratório de Paisagens, Património e Território (Laboratory of Landscapes, Heritage, and Territory) at the University of Minho

LandS - O grupo Paisagens e Sociedades (Landscapes and Societies group)

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations

OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODP - Operational Data Portal

RIC - Reception and Identification Centre (temporary accommodation centers in Greece for registering and identifying asylum seekers upon arrival)

SACD - Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity

SAR - Scholars at Risk

SEF - Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (Portugal)

SHARE.EAAD - Likely related to a collaborative or academic initiative at the School of Architecture, Art, and Design (EAAD)

SHARE.ICS - A similar initiative connected to the Institute of Social Sciences (ICS) at Minho University

SHARP - Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan

SNHR - Syrian Network for Human Rights

SRH - School of Architecture (possibly at Heidelberg University, mentioned in relation to the ITEMS+ symposium)

TAR - The Architects' Resistance

UN - United Nations

UNAOC - The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNITAR - United Nations Institute for Training and Research

UNOSAT - The United Nations Satellite Centre for Analysis and Technology

UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

WEST - Western European Summer Time

WET - Western European Time

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_Introduction

This thesis structure begins with an introduction that sets the context for the research. The introduction is divided into three components and sections, each providing an outline of this thesis: through an interplay of words, the first section segments and introduces the research topic, emphasizing its significance; the second defines the methodological approach within the research framework; and the third section presents and lays out an overview of the subsequent parts and chapters, summarizing the main arguments in relation to the overall structure of this thesis.

As a starting point, **title in fragments**, deconstructs words and then correlates and interconnects them in alternative ways to explain the theme of this thesis behind the title. Through these fragments, words are defined and connected to the key methodologies of this research process. Reflecting the early phase and exercises of the thesis proposal during the Doctoral Program in Architecture, this approach helps break down the scope and focus of the thesis, which involves a complex body of work and theme. It emphasizes the importance of a fragmented yet holistic process of learning about both the subject matter and its broader context. Through this deconstruction method, the introduction sets the stage for an exploration of migration within the interdisciplinary field of architecture, preparing the reader for the subsequent parts of this thesis.

As an introductory part of the introduction, the 'title in fragments' emphasizes specific words to show that language and word choices are central to the theme of migration. In this context, language functions both as a barrier and as a facilitator of communication. It is also a tool for defining and labeling migrants, often shaping the discriminatory practices they face, especially at borders. At the same time, certain individuals may benefit from the social advantages granted by such labels. Given that architecture, in its interdisciplinarity, can engage with these notions of language and borders, the idea of deconstruction becomes architectonic — similar to how deconstruction disrupts spatial order through constructive disruption. In architecture, deconstruction involves disassembling traditional norms and forms of representation, rigid categorizations, and systems to reveal hidden meanings and to question and challenge the status quo, much like the breakdown of the title of this thesis.

From these fragments of words comes the **methodologies framework**, upon which this thesis is developed and built. The methodologies used in this thesis explore how the representation of shared migration stories is handled, questioned, and reflected upon in a collaborative process between the researcher and the migrants, contributing to knowledge production through learning and creativity. These methodologies focus on specifying the researcher's positionality, a way to approach the theme of migration, a way to approach the migrants, and the intersection of all these elements in the learning and creative process. They form a network of interwoven ideas that interconnect at several points. The research behind these methodologies aimed to find a system of ideas that do not merely juxtapose objectives, but instead work and function together to evolve and develop an ethical and aesthetic representation, both textual and visual, that contributes to the theme of migration and the interdisciplinary field of architecture.

While defining the framework used to build and develop the methodologies, an overview is created outlining the structure of this thesis and the elements that make up this sequence. The **structure overview** explores the intersection of student migrations, architecture, and methodologies, bridging these fields for representation, divided into three main parts. The first part focuses on the theoretical dimensions of migration, architecture, and geography, including methodologies and their integration into the learning and creative process. The second part explores visual and textual representations of migration, developed through the learning and creative process with the case studies, reflecting on lived and recalled experiences through mapping. The third part adopts a more auto-reflective approach, using performance and site visits to engage with the migrant experience, culminating in reflections on the learning and creative process of this research, in relation to psychological impacts of migration-related words and experiences. The conclusion synthesizes the findings, stressing the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to understanding migration and the challenges of representing the stories of displaced students, particularly in light of the ongoing Syrian crisis. This thesis advocates for a global educational access and sustainable support for migrants.

Title in fragments

A **Fictional** Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The term ‘fictional’ expresses an aspect of the visual and textual elements in the research. It suggests that, while the migratory paths are based on real events and stories, they are addressed through descriptive narratives that blend factual and speculative elements to reveal and share hidden, unspoken, and/or overlooked aspects of the migratory experience and path. The emphasis on ‘fictional’ and ‘fiction’ at the beginning of the title is meant to convey that fiction does not equate to a lack of truth; on the contrary, it is rooted in truth, as the ethical reasoning and responsibility of this thesis lie in the search for truth, which allows it to be translated.

A Fictional **Representation** in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

To share means to represent; the term ‘representation’ encompasses the learning and creative process across all three parts of this thesis’s structure. By emphasizing the article ‘a’, the term ‘representation’ is expanded toward a broader understanding — encompassing the various textual and visual representations developed throughout the thesis — and highlights the position that this particular representation, in a holistic view, is just one among several. There could be numerous other ways of representing, through different reinterpretations and approaches to the theme of migration.

A Fictional Representation in the **Geo-architecture** of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

‘Geo-architecture’ is an interdisciplinary concept that merges geography and architecture, focusing on the spatial, territorial, and temporal aspects of migration. It emphasizes the expansion of architecture into the interdisciplinary fields with which it intersects, extending both its territorial and human scales. Geo-architecture bridges research on human mobility through path studies and architectural practices, exploring how migration affects — and is affected by — geophysical, geographical, ecological, environmental, and spatial-territorial-temporal conditions.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of **Syrian** Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The term ‘Syrian’ is an adjective that places the focus on migrants from Syria — a group affected by ongoing conflict and war. Their migratory experiences are central to this research, shedding light on how the migration of a specific nationality, and the significance of holding

that nationality — the Syrian passport — are shaped by political, social, and geographical factors. For some Syrian migrants, Syria is a recollection of home: a place of birth, of family and friendship, where the language and dialect(s) spoken all around once provided a sense of belonging. For others, it is a place they have not been able to visit for years — which is the case for a large portion of the displaced population. And for others still, Syria no longer exists as home; it has become a place they no longer wish to see. For the latter, it represents a zone of political and emotional tension — where homes may have been lost or destroyed.

Geographically, Syria spans a total area of 185,180 square kilometers (excluding the occupied Golan Heights, which covers approximately 1,200 square kilometers) and lies at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean, touching the sea in its far northwest. Currently, Syria is characterized as a war-torn region, marked by remnants, ruins, and displacement caused by conflict. It has recently emerged victorious from a revolution that began in 2011, following the downfall of the dictatorial regime of Al-Assad. Syria is now composed of Syrians advocating for transitional justice.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The term ‘student’ highlights that the research specifically focuses on cases of Syrian students in higher education (tertiary cycle), their pursuit of education, and the struggles they face — all of which are interrelated and contribute to the broader Syrian student crisis. It also addresses the success stories of students whose main objective is to continue their studies, despite the disruptions caused by war and displacement.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The term ‘migrations’ refers to the movement of specific individuals from one place to another, driven by various reasons that lead to displacement. In this context, it is due to war, insecurity, political instability, and, in particular, the inaccessibility of higher education in a safe environment. Migration does not begin or end with the student’s opportunity to pursue education; rather, it is an ongoing process that continues until the student migrant determines whether there is an end, a final destination, or even a continuation of their migration.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

‘To Portugal’ represents the destination and host country in this study, where student migrants sought refuge and education through a Portuguese-based humanitarian scholarship. It marks the continuation of the migratory path for many students and serves as the context in which their stories of displacement, adaptation, and transformation are analyzed — in Portuguese psychology, journalism, research, activism, humanitarianism, and now in the

field of architectural academia and interdisciplinarity. For many migrants who were either relocated through refugee programs to Portugal or chose to migrate for studies and career opportunities, Portugal represents a place of safety and stability. It is where they found refuge from the harsh realities of war and, for some, it continues to be a place of learning and personal growth. Geographically, Portugal — with a total area of approximately 92,090 square kilometers — is located in the extreme southwest of Europe, beyond the Mediterranean and west of the Strait of Gibraltar, with its southern coastline extending at least as far as Cabo de São Vicente. This positioning marks a natural boundary between Europe and the Atlantic Ocean, further emphasizing Portugal's role as both a geographical and symbolic endpoint for many seeking a better life.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: **Traces** and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

'Traces' are the remnants, memories, or imprints of the migratory paths and experiences left and found in the shared stories of the Syrian student migrants. These traces encompass the psychological, emotional, and spatial–territorial–temporal aspects of migration, capturing its impact on individuals. This impact inevitably affects the act of recalling and produces gaps, obscured details, and, at the same time, vivid recollections. This contrast — where some memories fade while others persist — gives the traces their significance. Through acts of remembering, these traces are connected and reassembled into narratives through the process of representation.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and **Chronotopes** of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

'Chronotopes' is the plural form of chronotope, a term derived from literary theory. In this context, it refers to the intersection of time and space in the migrant experience. It examines how specific moments in time are linked to physical locations, shaping how migration is perceived, experienced, and remembered.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of **(E)scape** Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The use of the erroneous prefix 'e-' creates dual meanings in the word escape, referring both to the act of fleeing from conflict (escape) and to the notion of scape (a constructed view), where the 'e-' suggests being out of the view of war — out of the war scape. This research explores the lived realities of both escapes: the survival migration from Syria to Portugal and the complex, multifaceted spaces and experiences encountered throughout the migratory process.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The term 'paths' describes the lines traversed by student migrants, focusing on the process of moving from one place to another through a sequence of migration events. It highlights the challenges, transitions, and transformations that occur throughout their migratory paths and experiences. Here, 'paths' refers to the routes, trajectories, and spatial-territorial-temporal movements undertaken by Syrian student migrants in their migration to Portugal across geopolitical spaces. It signifies both the tangible migration routes across land and sea borders (traced in geography and movement) and the abstract, experiential pathways formed through memory, displacement, and adaptation — shaped by their migratory experiences. The concept of path explores the time-intervals taken by Syrian students as they sought safety, education, and opportunities abroad, specifically focusing on their migratory experiences across the Mediterranean, through intercontinental territorial relations, and into Portugal. It emphasizes the complexity of migration as it intersects with educational aspirations, and how these students experience displacement, adaptation, and resettlement.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The Mediterranean is the geographical area on which this thesis focuses. The Mediterranean region and sea serve as both a literal and symbolic boundary, representing the geopolitical and geophysical divide between war-torn Syria and Europe. They also reflect the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the dangerous routes migrants must take to reach safety, as well as the humanitarian agencies that provide help within these territorial and administrative contexts.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

'From 2014' marks the beginning of the fourth year of the war in Syria and a critical period in the Syrian student migration crisis, as many students began their migratory flows to Europe, facilitated by a scholarship program. It is a turning point in the broader migration context. 'To 2018' highlights the fourth and final migratory flow of student migrants, setting the research's primary focus and providing a specific time-frame for analyzing the experiences of Syrian student migrants who arrived in Portugal during this period. This time-frame includes references, studies, and events both preceding and following it, highlighting the significance of the student migratory flows during this four-year span and their connection to ongoing migration studies, references, and events, which continue to grow each day and rapidly expand, generating an overwhelming amount of information and data.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of **Syrian** Student **Migrations** to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

Syria has endured a complex and prolonged conflict for over 14 years, since 2011, exacerbated by international and regional interventions, and rooted in more than 54 years of authoritarian, sectarian, and oppressive rule under the Al-Assad dictatorship, passed down through the family and regime. Following the downfall of Al-Assad, the country now stands at a crossroads, awaiting stability, justice, and reconstruction from within. As a result of the war, millions of Syrians have fled — through both legal and irregular means — creating a global displacement crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recognizes the Syrian refugee situation as the largest displacement crisis worldwide.[1]

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of **Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal**: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

To bring about an expansion in architecture that involves a textual and visual recognition and realization of these migratory escapes, the research title suggests a reminiscent and evocative response to the Syrian student migrations that successfully arrived in Portugal. A large part of these migrations are part of the migratory humanitarian act of an academic Portuguese platform. The Global Platform for Syrian Students (APGES), a Portuguese-based humanitarian academic scholarship, established a rapid, humanitarian response to grant Syrian students legal migration to Europe, higher education, and relatively long, if not open, resettlements in Portugal from 2014 to the present day.[2] The response of the scholarship program was to the Syrian student crisis, which evolved into a Syrian student migratory crisis. As a result, for the Syrian student migratory flows supported and facilitated by the APGES scholarship program, Portugal was the intended 'arrival country.' For these students, Portugal represents not only a place of safety but also a place for pursuing higher education, where many have found both refuge and opportunities for academic growth. Portugal, for these students, is also embodied in the APGES scholarship — Portuguese in its location, its board members, and its founder. It is the language they have learned and continue to learn, helping them adapt to and integrate into Portuguese society. For Syrian student migrants, as well as the wider Syrian migrant population, Syria and Portugal mark the two geographical anchors of their migratory paths: from the place they once called home to the country that now hosts their futures. In terms of land area, Portugal is 49.13% smaller than Syria.

1 UNHCR Global Focus: "Syria situation."(2025) Retrieved from: https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/syria-situation

2 The APGES scholarship program, as of today, may or may not have active students continuing their studies, such as Masters or PhD students. Whether new scholarships are still being granted through this platform remains unknown. After 2021-2022, the program appeared to be winding down, focusing on the completion of the remaining Syrian students' education paths, while also changing its name to Global Platform for Higher Education in Emergencies. But "to this day" refers to the long resettlement, as many of the Syrian students remained in Portugal and continued their professional pursuits.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

To academically disseminate this non-conventional architectural input on migration, the research contributes to a conceptual bridge between architecture and geography. From the aesthetic dimension at the territorial scale and the ethico-aesthetic paradigm, the term 'geo-architecture' becomes interlinked with migration. The research responds to these theories and deconstructs migratory escapes to become part of a representational methodology, with mapping agency interwoven into fiction practice as a researcher's inter-subjective performance to inaugurate the research objectives. Focusing on the context of the migrant and on how the migrant's memory recollects and obliterates certain migratory events, the representation relies on true, singular voices and sources: the migrants' narratives that describe their migration stories and personal perceptions of time and space in memory. Fiction practice in representation animates the itineraries to grasp the stories and project them within a geo-architectural bridge. The fictional representation of the escape paths is a textual and visual translation of the truth behind the shared, reported, and archived events of the Syrian student migratory flows.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

From dialoguing with the Syrian student migrants, the structure of the research begins to come together. From initiating the dialogues to projecting them through 'chronotopic' storytelling and narrative discourse, the creative process suggests a three-part approach — theoretical, representational, and performative — that frames the acquired and recorded information from migrants as traces of their memories. In the migratory escapes, these traces are part of the representation, as are the chronotopes, which determine the extension and reach of reality indirectly through time, space, distance, and velocity of migration. The reality a migrant constructs in their memory becomes a fictional representation in the author's perception and patchwork of the narrative. In the search for the appropriate representation, architecture relates what starts as words into images and then translates them from textual into visual form in the translation of the narratives. In this context, representation refers to how the migratory paths and experiences of Syrian students are depicted and visualized in architectural and geographical terms as case studies, translating the complex lived human experiences of migration into storytelling. These case studies form the story maps that trace the contours of both broader and specific migratory contexts.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

This phrase refers to how the migratory paths and experiences of Syrian student migrants who have arrived in Portugal are depicted and visualized in architectural and geographical terms, translating the complex lived human experiences of migration into storytelling. It emphasizes the role of performance and storytelling theories, aligning with the use of narrative forms as

fiction to represent real events, through visual and textual representations of migratory paths and experiences.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The Syrian student migratory escapes are instances of successful migratory events that took place along the Mediterranean region. They are considered successful in the sense that the Syrian student migrants arrived in the host country, did not encounter obstacles that halted or ceased their migration during border processing procedures, and were not subject to deportation back to Syria. The rarity of participating in a successful, non-threatening migration across the Mediterranean is significant. With consecutive challenges and unexpected ups and downs, a migratory path is always at risk of termination at any point. In the creative process of this research, the contexts of selected Syrian student migratory escapes are designated as case studies, unfolding through the shared narratives of the migrants' itineraries. Entering into the experiences of others raises many questions. How does architecture, as a field within the humanities, perceive these contexts as cross-scale material hidden behind regional news, archives, and migrants' memories, waiting to be unraveled, shared, and made visible? The migratory contexts bring forward sub-contexts that make up the itineraries — from what affects a migrant's memory to the buffer zones that facilitated the transition of student migrants to Europe, to the transportation methods that shaped their migratory path. In this sense, the selected Syrian student migratory escapes are dismantled into these sub-contexts, where one migration could serve as an object of representation in one or more sub-contexts. For identity protection, these contexts and their migrants remain anonymous, but their stories represent their voices.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of (E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2018

The Syrian student migrations were part of five distinct migratory flows. Each Syrian student arrived in Portugal at a different time. These migrations are time-framed between 2014 and 2018. There are five case studies representing the escape paths of Syrian students to Portugal. Additionally, there is a sixth case study that, in terms of migration, is structurally detached from the other five, as it is not considered a case of migration but rather a mission involving a migration-related site visit. The five case studies are organized in chronological order, aligned with the time-frame. While the sixth case study is linked to addressing the 2014–2018 period, it takes place in a later time-frame to explore a reverse narrative and is still represented chronologically within the structure of this thesis. With the sixth case study, the case studies collectively tell six individual stories about their travel paths and experiences across the Mediterranean. However, the migrations of the five case studies alone marked a change in border-thinking, leading to substantial and expedited agreements with European cross-border policies. Preceding a counter-action to the hardening of borders in the Mediterranean region, the novelty of the APGES scholarship program's rapid response contributed to challenging the current border politics and practices across different temporal-

spatial dimensions and human and territorial scales.

A Fictional Representation in the Geo-architecture of Syrian Student Migrations to Portugal: Traces and Chronotopes of **(E)scape Paths amidst the Mediterranean** from 2014 to 2018

From the migratory escapes, the view of these -scapes may refer to both the actual war conditions and the (traumatic) lived mobilities experienced along the migratory path. Since these narrated stories are primarily conceived through the shared memories and descriptive narratives of Syrian student migrants — serving as primary sources of empirical evidence — the creative process plays a crucial role in translating these memories, based on true events, into a narrative representational discourse. Consequently, the representation of these escapes makes use of fiction to express, in both ethical and aesthetic dimensions, what the narrative discourse may alter and signify within the migration event.

In fact, a fraction of the Syrian student migrants who participate in this research did not arrive in Portugal through a humanitarian admission program. The research also addresses these migrations as successful, in order to compare the diversity of migration contexts and narratives. Geo-architecture is set to translate two different Syrian students' migratory escapes — one who illegally crossed the Mediterranean by sea, and the other who legally flew over it — into visual and textual representations. With these two different migratory experiences, the research methodologies expand to explore the fluctuations and appropriations made by the student migrants along their migratory paths by mapping their itineraries.

Mapping, as an agency, is a tool to visually project and represent different human and territorial scales. Here, mapping communicates a narrative discourse about the migratory escapes, reshaping geo-architecture through a socio-politically intricate, aesthetic, and ethical framing of migration. Shared by Syrian student migrants, the migratory stories alter how a border may be perceived. They thereby amplify or reduce the significance of physical borders, engendering a response to today's student migration crisis.

Methodology framework

The **methodological framework** of this research is grounded in an interdisciplinary approach that integrates critical ethnography, auto-ethnography, oral history, and performative inquiry to examine migration narratives through fiction and geo-architecture practice. Rather than treating knowledge as static or objective, this research acknowledges the activist and advocacy role in knowledge production, shaped by the interaction between the researcher and the subjects — the student migrants. The study engages with methodologies that challenge dominant narratives and emphasize the voices of those directly affected by displacement. By incorporating artistic and performative elements, the research expands beyond traditional academic methods, enabling an embodied exploration of migration that captures both its material dimensions (architecture, borders, objects) and affective dimensions (emotional and sensory experiences of migration).

The methodological framework outlines these methodologies to explore how representation is constructed through the learning and creative process. The first part of this thesis explores seven principal methodologies, which are a combination of situated knowledges, critical ethnography, auto-ethnography, dialogism, inter-subjectivity, fiction practice, and geo-architecture practice. These methodologies interact to form a dynamic approach that not only examines migration narratives but also shapes how these narratives are re-read, analyzed, and communicated through representation. This approach asserts that knowledge is not detached from the researcher's context but is shaped by lived experience and social interaction.

The base for knowledge production is examined through the distance, type of distance, between the researcher and the subject of study, the researcher's way of communication with that subject, and the knowledge produced through that interaction. Through this research approach, knowledge is a sequential result of acting. It is never neutral but always shaped by the shared, specific experiences of the subjects. This foundational idea challenges traditional, objective views of knowledge. The methodology used to approach the subjects, including the selection of the subjects and the process of recording information to be used as knowledge, is integrated into the research practice. This process reflects the interplay between personal experiences, the environment where the communication is established, the communication itself, and the collective information produced through the communications, which serve as means to capture and convey the lived realities of the subjects.

The research also recognizes the importance of ethical considerations, reasoning, and responsibility in research, emphasizing that it must avoid victimization or misrepresentation. The approach incorporates different types of ethnography, positioning the researcher as an integral part of the inquiry and ensuring that the research process remains reflexive and ethically grounded. By determining where and how to approach the research theme, the subject matter — along with the researcher's familiarity and proximity to the theme as a whole — shapes the construction of communication as a collaborative process, reflecting the exchange between the researcher and the subjects. The questions of where and how to approach, as well as the issue of distance between the researcher and the subject in this context, relate to positionality — both that of the researcher and how the case studies are

represented through the voice and manifestation of this positionality.

Critical ethnography and auto-ethnography further inform the methodologies employed. Critical ethnography emphasizes the researcher's ethical responsibility to engage with and critique social structures while foregrounding the perspectives of marginalized groups. In the case of Syrian student migration, this involves addressing the power dynamics and systemic inequalities that shape the lived experiences of war in Syria and the migratory experiences fused in the Syrian students' realities. Meanwhile, auto-ethnography allows for the integration of the researcher's personal experiences with the subject matter, creating a layered approach to understanding migration. Auto-ethnography is the central methodology of the third part of this thesis, as it is driven by the researcher's lived experience with migration, migratory contexts, and migrants. The combination of these methodologies in the structure of this thesis, from introduction to conclusion, allows for a processional representation of student migrants' experiences, balancing personal narratives with collective socio-political realities. The dialogic characteristic of this research, influenced by dialogism, ensures that the stories of the student migrants are not viewed as fixed but as part of an ongoing, interactive process of sharing and meaning-making. In this sense, dialogism also refers to the concept of maintaining a non-neutral positionality in relation to the theme of Syrian student migration. Through these methodologies, this thesis navigates the complexities of migration, identity, and activism, aiming to provide a more comprehensive and reflexive understanding of the subject. The first methodology implemented was an initial attempt to translate and mediate between a refugee family and the Portuguese Red Cross, using an approach of exchanging letters, a form of postulated narrative, that became a form of dialogue.

For the interdisciplinary scope of architecture, the methodological research also integrates migration studies to address the architectural dimensions of migration and border-thinking in architecture, challenging conventional perceptions of borders as solely physical constructs. This approach encourages a broader understanding of borders as social, cultural, and political entities, integrating conceptual analysis to examine foundational ideas related to migration and architecture. It employs a performative research methodology, engaging with Syrian student migrants through dialogues to ground the study in their lived experiences. Additionally, the research incorporates linguistic investigation by constructing a glossary of migration-related terms, using language as a tool to bridge the gap between lived experience and architectural representation. To understand these methodologies through deconstruction and articulation, diagrammatic analysis is used to visually map out the relationships between key concepts such as migration, borders, and architecture, establishing a foundation for these methodologies to interact. Furthermore, the research is informed by decolonial and critical migration studies to position border-thinking as both an epistemological and activist practice. Through these combined methodologies, the research contributes to the development of geo-architecture, grounded in inter-subjectivity, activism, and interdisciplinary knowledge production.

This framework positions migration not only as a movement through space but also as a lived, evolving experience shaped by geopolitical, social, and cultural forces. The methodological choices embodies reflexivity, recognizing that the researcher's positionality — being activist and non-neutral — influences the way migration stories are collected, interpreted, and represented.

Through participatory and collaborative methods that involve the active presence of the student migrants' narratives in the representations, the research foregrounds the agency of student migrants, ensuring that their voices are not merely recorded but actively shape the narrative. This methodological approach informs the subsequent discussion on knowledge production, ethics, and representation in migration studies.

The methodology employed in this research is based on a qualitative and representational approach that integrates case-study analysis, dialogic engagement, and the representation of the learning and creative process. By giving importance to the individual experiences of Syrian student migrants, the research relies on ethnographic methods such as recorded conversations and participatory mapping to reconstruct migration narratives, which are considered empirical data. The archival process involves the collection and use of this data for representation. This approach acknowledges the subjectivity of memory and the influence of personal, social, and political contexts in shaping each migrant's path. The research also considers the methodological implications of representation in migration research, questioning how migration stories are documented, visualized, and communicated. By incorporating creative processes such as mapping, archival research, and speculative cartography, the methodology seeks to move beyond conventional documentation and introduce alternative ways of understanding migration as a spatial, temporal, and emotional experience and event.

At the same time, the methodological framework accounts for ethical considerations, particularly concerning the protection of student migrants' identities. Given the complex realities, charged environment, and political and emotional weight of migratory paths and border crossings, certain aspects of the migrants' experiences remain intentionally obscured or approximated in the research. The necessity of balancing representation with confidentiality leads to the adoption of speculative techniques, where fictionalization serves as a methodological tool rather than a distortion of reality. This approach allows the study to address gaps in memory, trauma-induced omissions, and legal or political constraints on architectural representations of key transit points. Through this methodology, the research aims to construct an understanding of Syrian student migrations, navigating the challenges of representation while emphasizing the lived realities of displacement and education as a survival mechanism.

The methodological approach integrates fiction practice within practice-based research, aligning it with critical ethnography to construct an alternative representational framework. Fiction, in this context, emerges as a methodological tool to address the complexities of memory, trauma, and subjective experience in migration narratives. During the dialogical process, migrants' recollections fluctuate, shaped by their emotional state and the vividness of their memories at specific moments. As the research progresses, these verbal exchanges organically introduce new layers of inquiry, necessitating iterative, patient engagement with the interlocutors. Given that some aspects of migratory experiences may be obscured due to trauma or voluntary omissions, fiction is utilized to bridge these gaps, enabling a nuanced, sensible, and ethical representation of displacement. Inter-subjectivity plays a crucial role in this process, as the dialogue is not merely a one-way extraction of information but rather a reciprocal construction of shared meaning between researcher and subject. The fictionalization process, therefore, is not an act of distortion but a means of expanding the

communicative and visual potential of migration storytelling within the interdisciplinary academic field of architecture.

Fiction practice within this research follows an ethical and structured methodology to frame its application in architectural discourse. This methodology views fiction as a critical interpretative and speculative tool rather than a means of fabrication, positioning it as a mechanism for testing hypotheses, exploring alternative perspectives, and examining statistical data between the registered and unregistered, and deconstructing conventional representations of migration. Within the research, fiction operates as a representational strategy across four primary objectives: dialoguing with Syrian student migrants, mapping their migratory experiences, representing their stories and collected artifacts, and archiving both created and collected material. Each of these objectives reinforces the research's broader aim of repositioning migration within architectural discourse, where representation is not merely a depiction of reality but an active and activist process of storytelling. Fiction, as employed here, does not erase or distort the lived realities of migration; instead, it serves to reframe, accentuate, and reinterpret them within a critical and ethically grounded methodological and aesthetic framework.

To activate knowledge production through fiction practice, positionality must be defined and shaped to encompass the manifestations discovered through the learning and creative processes of the research within this architectural discourse. Positionality is a significant factor in this thesis, developed throughout its structure and through the learning and creative process. To deconstruct the idea of the researcher as a performer is to explain how this thesis integrates performance, building upon a performance-based research foundation that is part of the practice-based research. This research process unfolds in the following steps:

1. Performance as resistance in border and migration activism for higher education.

2. Performance of dialogue during conversations and interactions with student migrants.

3. Performance as a basis for inter-subjectivity and knowledge production in collaboration with student migrants through oral history, storytelling, and narrative discourse.

4. Performance as a theatrical act of manifestation and embodiment before an audience.

5. Performance as reflective fieldwork conducted during site visits.

Because the methodology framework of this thesis establishes fiction practice as practice-based research, it suggests that performance-based research can approach the textual and visual representation of the subject matter — Syrian (student) migrations — in several ways. These approaches involve application and experimentation through the learning and creative process:

1. Speculative, hypothetical, and analytical studies of narratives as research tools for representation: Fiction allows for the construction of speculative and hypothetical scenarios within the student narratives that not only represent but also actively shape, critique, and

reflect upon migration realities and the gaps found within the narratives. In performance-based research, this means creating embodied scenarios or enactments that imagine alternative pasts, presents, and futures, resist dominant spatial paradigms, or visualize lived experiences that are otherwise invisible — such as the Syrian migration context.

2. Drafting as performativity: The idea of drafting both the metaphysical and the raw realities in migratory contexts aligns with performance as a draft of possibility — a rehearsal of different worlds. In this context, drafting evokes a multifaceted tool that blends the mapping of possibilities and the rendering visible of what is often unseen; the provisional articulation of writing in narrative discourse — always unfolding, never settled; the drawn trajectories of movement shaped by forces such as political violence, structural inequalities, environmental pressures, and other coercive conditions; and the performative enactment of possibility, tension, and speculation — all resonating with the layered and shifting realities of migratory experience. When a performance enacts speculative time-intervals and marginal truths, it tests and exposes the socio-political stakes of displacement, much like a design draft renders an abstract idea concrete.

3. Fiction as method: Rather than treating fiction as the opposite of truth, this framework approaches it as a critical method — a means of challenging hegemonic knowledge and imagining student migrations and student migrants' pasts, presents, and futures. Performance-based research can inhabit these fictions, transforming them into experiences where research is not just presented but performed into being. Because the performance explores migration, using 'fiction practice' can mean designing stories, settings, and actions that disrupt expectations, reveal systemic border, migration, and war-related legacies, and imagine activist forms of mapping against dominant structures of control — drawing attention not only to what is, but to what could be.

Together, these elements establish a foundation for the research, emphasizing the significance of situated knowledges, the ethical responsibilities and reasoning of the researcher, and the role of inter-subjectivity in the construction of migration stories. This approach not only builds upon existing academic research in oral history and ethnography but also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of migration, power, and subjectivity within academic discourse.

Structure overview

The body of text outlining the **structure overview** of this thesis begins with an introduction, consists of three parts, and ends with a conclusion that critically reflects upon, identifies, defines, and analyzes the relationship between the theme of student migration and the academic fields of architecture and geography. Between the introduction and conclusion, this thesis is divided into three parts, **architecture for migration in words**, **architecture for migratory contexts through representation**, and **architecture for migrant auto-ethnography**. This structure is designed to explore the intersection of architecture, migration, and representation through multiple interdisciplinary approaches, ranging from theoretical discussions to performative practices. Each part addresses different dimensions of migration and its architectural implications. The parts are organized into chapters and sub-chapters, as outlined in the table of contents. Additionally, there are further subheadings,[3] not included in the table of contents, that expand on and provide more detailed descriptions related to the chapters and sub-chapters.

Regarding the textual component: the first part ,"architecture for migration in words," is a theoretical introduction that redefines key terms in migration and connects them to the interdisciplinary field of architecture. It begins by developing an architectural glossary and continues by theorizing and interconnecting ideas and concepts through this glossary. The second part, "architecture for migratory contexts through representation," presents a reinterpretation of the shared experiences of Syrian student migrants in the selected case studies. This part focuses on visual data and narrative representation, particularly the mapping of these students' migration to Portugal. The third part, "architecture for migrant auto-ethnography," examines the researcher's perspective on reverse migration through site visits, performances, and analysis. In doing so, the thesis reflects on the re-interpretation of the narratives, providing an analysis of intersecting themes and sub-themes.

Regarding the visual component: the first, second, and third parts feature visual and textual representations, including diagrams, montages, drawings, and photographs, each referred to as a 'figure,' accompanied by a description and positioned alongside the representation. These representations may be in vertical A4 format or horizontal formats, such as foldable A3 or foldable double A3, depending on the information conveyed in each image. The page formatting provides a visual sequence that relates the text to the image. The idea to fold the pages horizontally when the images occupy more than an A4 format takes into consideration the need to detail certain aspects of the representations. As identified and addressed during the oral communications throughout this thesis, reflection, approach, and adjustments to the format were necessary to fully encompass each representation, ensuring that details were captured without the need for excessive zooming.

3 There are subheadings marked in bold within the chapters to indicate transitions in the text, though they are not included in the table of contents. Although they may seem repetitive or lengthy if listed there, they are crucial for the flow of the text, connecting and transitioning between different parts, chapters, and sub-chapters of this thesis and linking chapters without disrupting the overall structure.

Part i: Architecture for migration in words

This first part is divided into four chapters that lay the foundational framework for this thesis, exploring the conceptual and theoretical aspects, as well as the ways in which migration and migration-related contexts are represented in architecture. The first chapter begins with an investigation of positionality, emphasizing the role of the researcher's experience and perspective in shaping knowledge. It also introduces key methodologies, such as critical ethnography, auto-ethnography, and dialogic performance, as tools for understanding migration. The second chapter explores the notion of border-thinking, which is then examined through the study of migration-related terms, helping to situate the discussion within the specific context of Syrian migration. Building on this foundation, the thesis introduces a glossary developed from practical research, with each component of the glossary complementing the visual. The glossary is structured around selected words in Formal Arabic and Syrian Informal Arabic (Levantine colloquial Arabic), the spoken language of the dialogues, alongside English, the written language of this thesis, to make its message and response accessible to a broader audience. The third chapter delves into the re-emergence of geo-architecture, a framework that integrates humanitarian concerns with architectural practice, highlighting the relationship between *poiesis*, *ethos*, and *aisthesis* in the migration context. The fourth and final chapter introduces the concept of the provisional chronotope, focusing on the temporal and spatial dynamics of migration and the in-between spaces, including notions of place, territory, and the changing configurations of time and space in relation to the Syrian student migration crisis and the Arabic language(s).

Part ii: Architecture for migratory contexts through representation

The second part is divided into two chapters that shift towards representation, examining how migration can be understood through architectural and artistic mediums and applying the developed methodologies for representation throughout the learning and creative process. The first chapter in this part, "geo-architectural moments," focuses on different aspects of migratory contexts, such as data representation, memory, margin, and mobility, providing a detailed analysis of both the material and symbolic dimensions of migration. The second chapter continues with "story-maps," a textual and visual exploration of migration through mapping. It includes five case studies that explore terms of belonging (*Intima'a*), forgetfulness (*Tatneesh*), numbness (*Tanmeel*), desensitization (*Tamsaha*), and displacement (*Shantata*) to reflect on the psychological and emotional experiences of migration. This chapter also highlights the impact of destroyed zones and Mediterranean escape routes, illustrating the diverse and complex conditions of displacement. Through these story-maps, the chapter aims to capture the varied migratory contexts across different territories, borders, and modes of transport, presenting an understanding of migration's lived, relational, affective, and sensory dimensions and experiences.

Part iii: Architecture for migrant auto-ethnography

The third and final part is divided into three chapters. It takes a more personal and reflective approach, utilizing auto-ethnography to engage with the migrant experience through embodied, creative practice. The first chapter begins by reflecting on a performative approach that serves to personalize the research, connecting the researcher's own experience to the broader migratory context. It explores performance as path representation, where migratory paths are mapped through objects and an exhibition. The second chapter discusses the

reverse narrative, emphasizing the value of site visits in fieldwork and providing insights into how these visits shape both the research process and the researcher's understanding of the migrant experience. This chapter highlights the role of fieldwork as an integral component of this thesis, linking theory, practice, and lived experience. The final chapter reflects on the findings of the learning and creative process, including a chronological order of colloquium and non-colloquium events, followed by conversations with two psychologists on migrants and migration, focusing on the impact of language.

Conclusion

The conclusion synthesizes the findings from the three parts, providing a reflection on the contribution of the research to both the architectural field and migration studies. The conclusion is divided and structured in six fragments: the first fragment addresses the socio-political issues concerning the current events in Syria, particularly in relation to the student participants in the case studies; the second fragment disconnects from the Syrian student migrations and focuses on what was achieved in relation to migration as a theme and context, developed from the initial and basic theoretical and methodological foundation of this thesis; the third fragment discusses the issues and limitations encountered throughout the research, as well as the catalysts for this thesis proposal, in relation to the results of the case studies; the fourth fragment reflects on the eventization of migratory flows facilitated through the APGES scholarship program; the fifth fragment contrasts the no-solution approach with the actual demands of the student crisis and the broader Syrian migration crisis; the sixth fragment explores how the expansion of these demands suggests a need for an expansion of representation of migration stories on a global scale.

Throughout these reflections, the conclusion underscores the importance of using interdisciplinary approaches to better understand and represent migration, emphasizing the need for architectural practices that are responsive to the complex realities of displacement and movement. It highlights the absence of universities and academic facilities in student migrants' descriptive narratives, as well as the broader challenges of representation within academic and institutional frameworks. It questions the no-solution response to the Syrian student migration crisis, which evolves from the broader circles of crises that Syria and the Syrian people are facing. Despite the limitations encountered in this research, the case studies presented have provided crucial insights into Syrian student migration to Portugal and, more broadly, into the entangled dynamics of Syrian student migration and Syrian migration more generally. This thesis emphasizes the ongoing struggles of Syrian migrants, the role of humanitarian scholarships, and the complexity of implementing real-world solutions. Ultimately, it advocates for educational access and sustainable support amid Syria's continuing crisis.

After the conclusion, this thesis includes references, an activity report, and a photographic archive, documenting the research process and the practical activities involved.

References

The references section provides a list of all selected academic sources, books, articles, reports, documentaries, and other materials cited throughout this thesis. This section ensures transparency and scholarly rigor, allowing readers to trace the theoretical, methodological, and

statistical foundations of the work. It serves as a resource for those interested in exploring the theories, methodologies, and case studies discussed in greater detail.

Activity report
The activity report summarizes the practical and research activities conducted before and during this thesis. This includes workshops, exhibitions, fieldwork, presentations, and other activities relevant to the research process. It serves as a record of the hands-on, experiential components of the study, documenting the methodologies applied and the outcomes of these activities. It also provides insight into the progression of the research, highlighting the integration of practice and theory throughout.

Archive of images
The archive of images serves as visual documentation of the research journey, including selected images shared by the student migrants that were either smaller in scale within the visual representations or not included at all, as well as selected personal photographs taken during the Samos fieldwork mission. These images, some of which were used in the representations, are displayed separately due to their detailed importance and are organized into sub-thematic categories. Each figure in the archive displays more than one image to ensure the relevancy of the theme and separation between figures, which serves to focus on the sub-themes. These figures are displayed in either foldable horizontal A3 or foldable horizontal double A3 formats.

Together, these parts provide critical documentation and insight into the research process and its outcomes. They deepen the understanding of how the research was carried out while contributing to the broader narrative of Syrian student migration and architecture explored in this thesis.

_State of the Art

While defining the components of this thesis used to build and develop the research process, the **State of the Art** starts to unfold, laying the groundwork for the context of this thesis and its research theme. It is built upon ethical and aesthetic principles that intersect with theories and ideas central to the emerging theme of migration within the interdisciplinary academic field of architecture, drawing on several foundational ideas that shape its theoretical and methodological framework. It establishes a point of articulation between the methodologies and the references studied, forming selection criteria developed throughout the learning and creative process regarding theoretical framing, cross-referencing, critical reflection, comparative analysis, and practical experimentation, which are made and discussed in this thesis. Given the vast volume of information on migration — an ongoing and current issue in the Mediterranean region and sea, with studies expanding daily — constructing the State of the Art required navigating a significant number of bibliographical, statistical, and visual references. Some of these references only appear after the first part of this thesis due to the already complex theoretical framework and because they emerged from the learning and creative process of identifying, finding, and selecting specific bibliographical and visual materials throughout the development of the representation. Additionally, there are references that were chosen early in this thesis proposal phase, during the curricular year of the Doctoral program in Architecture, and serve as a foundational base for the research. They are integrated within the textual body of this thesis and influence the representations produced throughout this research process, as the proposal remained consistent in its objectives over the course of the research. Taken as a whole, the references used in this thesis — both textual and visual — contribute to the development of the representation throughout the learning and creative process.

For the textual analyses concerning student migration, and in order to question the academic works that provided essential and significant insights into the migration crisis, it became clear that the sources relevant to this thesis could not be limited to architectural academia. This is primarily because migration is both a human and humanitarian crisis that spans continents, crosses global boundaries, implicates diverse contexts and human rights advocacies, and influences both human and territorial scales. In this regard, important contributions were also found in academic fields such as psychology and the social sciences. While no research was found that directly mirrors the approach and methodologies of this thesis, several academic works provide useful points of cross-reference. Although fragmented, these works address key aspects — whether student migration, Syrian student migration, Syrian migration more broadly, or general migration and border studies. Given the complexity of the research theme, acknowledging other academic studies that address migration and borders is crucial. First, to demonstrate that it is a theme critically relevant to today's realities — from academic discourse to political, social, and humanitarian contexts — where migration continues to reshape borders, identities, and access to fundamental rights. Second, to help address and clarify the intricate and layered aspects that inevitably characterize this subject, and to show how migration and border studies can be embodied through different approaches and methodologies.

The starting point is a work from the academic field of architecture that focuses on migrations in the Mediterranean region: the doctoral thesis of Giráldez López (2019), which represents the closest example to the approach in border-thinking taken in this research. His doctoral

thesis provides a framework for examining how borders, as dynamic and adaptable spatial apparatuses, shape the experiences of migrants, activating architectural responses that reveal the intersections of law, body, and space in contemporary territorial production. It serves as a tool for understanding how these borders — both legal and physical — impact migrants' mobility and rights. This can be particularly related to the pursuits and struggles of migrant students in the case studies presented in this thesis, focusing on their access to higher education. On the other hand, Heller's (2015) doctoral dissertation, also within architectural academia, traces a personal trajectory and evolving research methods that engage with the intersection of migration politics and aesthetic practices. Such practices are reflected upon in this thesis, particularly in relation to authoritarian laws imposed on citizens, which challenge the way they live within and leave their country — further exacerbated by the war conflict. Moreover, both doctoral theses approach the interdisciplinarity of architecture by expanding the research scope of territorial scale, going beyond conventional architecture. Similarly, Laier's (2014) master's dissertation, a social sciences study on African student migration to Brazil, uses key terms such as trajectories and crossings, higher education, migration studies, student migrations, identities, and a specific scholarship program — all of which align with the keywords of this thesis, despite the differing territorial focus and continental scope. To bring this territorial focus closer, Matos' (2022) doctoral thesis in psychology is considered a significant bibliographical reference in this thesis. It is dedicated to the migrant population in Portugal and establishes a foundational understanding of the psychological dimensions of migration, addressing the experiences and challenges faced by migrants — including Syrian students, who are among the participants in her study.

To complement the textual body of this thesis, various visual references and analyses are incorporated, engaging with themes of territory, migration, and border studies. Among these are academic works that have influenced aspects of the visual representations developed throughout this thesis. A notable contribution, building on these influences, is Labastida's (2013) doctoral thesis, which explores an alternative approach to understanding and engaging with contemporary diffuse territories, specifically within the Vale do Ave region in Portugal. Labastida (2013) employs the fragment as a tool in visual representation, using fieldwork to capture photographs and combine them with drawings in montages, superimposing them to study the territory through the act of mapping, while also exploring the human and historical relationship with the territory, and how its representation is at times visualized with lines contrasting orthophotomaps. On the other hand, regarding the socio-political representation of a territory, Giráldez López (2019) explores elements related to this thesis in terms of visual representation of borders, using photography, montages, isometric drawings, and diagrams that examine the relationship between words and images — and vice versa.

From the textual and visual presence of territory, migration, and border studies, the State of the Art is further fragmented and aligned with the structure of this thesis, which is divided into four sections corresponding to its three main parts and the conclusion. Before fragmenting the structure, this thesis first addresses performance-based research, which uses performance as a methodological approach — both as an active and activist mode of inquiry, and as a form of knowledge production. It draws on lived experience, reflexivity, and intersects with other methodologies to explore social, cultural, and political sub-themes related to migration. In this thesis, performance-based research is implemented through the influence of the fiction

practice idea, theory, and methodology in the collaborative work of Pestana (2019), within a practice-based research framework. This unfolds into an understanding of how to approach the theme of migration — specifically Syrian student migrations — through a research process that includes performance as: an approach to migration and border activism (Anzaldúa, 1987; Mignolo, 2000); an approach to dialogue and dialogism (Bakhtin, 1937; Madison, 2005); an approach to inter-subjectivity and knowledge production (Haraway, 1988; Abrams, 2010; Anzaldúa, 1987; Ingold, 2007, 2015; Sontag, 2005); an approach to theatrical performance (Abrams, 2010; Madison & Hamera, 2006); and an approach to fieldwork (Heider, 1975).

Part i: Architecture for migration in words

The first chapter [i.i.] establishes a methodological and theoretical foundation for this thesis by grounding it in the concept of situated knowledges, as developed by Haraway (1988). The concept of situated knowledges provides an approach that critiques and challenges traditional notions of objectivity in research, emphasizing the importance of positionality and subjectivity in knowledge production. This intersects with Abrams' (2010) oral history and inter-subjectivity, Madison's (2005) critical ethnography, Heider's (1975) auto-ethnography, and Bakhtin's (1937, 1975) dialogic performance. By rejecting the notion of objective, detached knowledge, this approach emphasizes that knowledge is co-constructed through the lived experiences of Syrian student migrants and their relationships with higher education, NGOs, and human rights organizations. Drawing on Foucault (1969), Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962), and Husserl (1931), the research foregrounds the embodied and subjective dimensions of meaning-making while questioning them, positioning the researcher as both participant and mediator. Oral history, as framed by Abrams (2010), is seen as an inter-subjective dialogue and a means for collaboration, shaping how migration narratives are recorded and interpreted. This thesis also integrates critical ethnography (Madison, 2005) to examine structural constraints on migration and ways to approach migrants, while auto-ethnography (Heider, 1975) demonstrates how inter-subjectivity can connect both ethnographic practices for knowledge production and, at the same time, produce a reflexive account of the researcher's own experience. The performativity of migration narratives is linked to activism, following Bakhtin's (1937, 1975) concept of dialogism, as well as Tomaselli et al.'s (2013) perspective on storytelling as a socio-political intervention. Ethical and aesthetic considerations play a central role, particularly in representing migration without victimization and in recognizing language as a site of both commonality and exclusion.

The second chapter [i.ii.] focuses on the concept of 'border-thinking' within architecture, which has gained significant attention through the works of multiple scholars and activists. Anzaldúa (1987) introduces border-thinking as a way to examine the psychological and cultural negotiations of those living at the margins, particularly migrants. Anzaldúa's focus on language and identity in borderlands set the stage for subsequent scholars, including Mignolo (1995, 2000), who refined the concept within decolonial studies, framing it as a critical lens through which to understand the interconnectedness of borders, knowledge, and power. Gržinić (2018) further explores these ideas, emphasizing how contemporary border regimes exclude and control migrants, questioning the physical and ideological constructs of borders. In architecture, border-thinking challenges traditional understandings of borders as fixed, physical demarcations, instead promoting a more fluid and relational interpretation. Pieris (2019), for instance, brings border-thinking into the architectural realm, illustrating how global events and

territorial boundaries impact both spaces and identities, using cross-scale analysis through maps, plans, and photography. This framework enables a deeper understanding of migration and the significance of borders in shaping both physical and emotional landscapes. The intersection of border-thinking and migration studies suggests a critical view for analyzing the lived experiences of Syrian student migrants, whose narratives form the core of this research. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2020) highlights, through various collaborations, how the movement of migrants challenges conventional territorial definitions, integrating interdisciplinary perspectives to demonstrate the fluidity of borders and identities. Within this research, Emami (2020) explores the duality of borders and doors, symbolizing both barriers and thresholds of connection. Meanwhile, Franz and Silva (2022), in their collaborative work, discuss borders as psychological constructs influencing migrants' senses of belonging and identity. These perspectives are crucial for understanding how migration-related terms, such as 'refugee' or 'smuggler,' carry different meanings depending on the context and scale, as reflected in the International Migration Law (2019) glossary. This research incorporates these evolving definitions, using border-thinking to propose a migration-related architectural glossary that bridges language, culture, and experience. By redefining migration-related terms through dialogue with Syrian student migrants, this research challenges the boundaries between architecture, social sciences, and geography, creating a framework that allows for a representation of migration within architectural discourse.

The third chapter [i.iii.] builds upon existing academic studies that have represented the Syrian migrant population in Portugal, including Syrian students in the APGES scholarship program. It delves into the Syrian migration crisis, the challenges faced by Syrian students, and the establishment of the Global Platform for Syrian Students as a humanitarian organization that grants scholarships and facilitates Syrian student migratory flows to Portugal. Notably, studies by Kinaan (2021), Matos et al. (2021, 2022, 2023), Matos (2022), Castro (2023), and Santinho and Rebelo (2024) primarily explore the psychological (including trauma as part of the migratory experience), social, and educational dimensions of migration. However, while these studies address the role of higher education in Syrian student integration, the intersection of architecture and the migratory experience remains under-explored. These references highlight the scarcity of architectural inquiries into the lived experiences and realities of Syrian student migrants. This research identifies a critical gap in understanding how architectural academia can contribute to investigating the role of interdisciplinarity in architecture to approach the subject matter. This gap addresses the central question of this research's originality and urgency, emphasizing its contribution to the field of architecture. It underscores the need for an interdisciplinary approach in response to the Syrian migration crisis and the challenges faced by Syrians seeking higher education — ultimately framing Syrian student migration as a crisis.

This chapter establishes a theoretical and visual foundation for understanding migration within the realm of architecture, with a focus on geo-architecture in relation to the Syrian student migrant experience in Portugal. The theoretical framework is anchored in migration studies, architectural representation, and spatial methodologies. Building on the migration context explored through Syrian student migration, the chapter addresses the re-emergence of geo-architecture as an intermediary scale of representation through historical and contemporary discourses, as outlined by Le Corbusier's (1945) introduction of the term and later theoretical

expansions by Sarkis (2017, 2019). These references frame geo-architecture as a practice of representing migration beyond cartographic delineations, integrating lived experience, territoriality, and the ethic-aesthetic dimension of displacement. The visual references extend this conceptualization through the lens of mapping as a generative tool rather than a neutral representation, building on Corner (1992, 1999). Similarly, this thesis reinterprets migration through path studies, integrating subjective and objective mapping methodologies to reconstruct student migrant experiences. Drawing on Lewin's 'life space' (1936, 1938), which highlights lived experiences and behavioral geography, it distinguishes between momentariness and immediacy to capture the transient realities of student migrants. This approach complements Awan, Schneider, and Till's (2011) agency-centered view, emphasizing migrants' role in reshaping urban environments. Building on Mathur (2011), Awan (2016, 2018), Turchi (2004), and Massey (2005), the research positions migrants as active agents in territorial transformation, challenging conventional cartographic and migration representations. It aligns with Smithson and Sumi's (1983) exploration of fragmented landscapes, where movement and path tracing capture personal experiences. Artistic and activist projects and investigations like Khalili (2008–2011) and Forensic Architecture (2010–present) reinforce mapping as a tool for storytelling, resistance, and knowledge production. By connecting mapping agency with narrative discourse, the thesis examines geo-architecture as a blend of architecture, geography, and artistic practice.

This research proposes methodologies that reconfigure geo-architecture within architectural discourse, extending representation beyond visual actions to include narrative. Genette (1991/1993) suggests that creative imagination adapts reality into a literary object, framing fiction as a tool for producing new contexts. Ette (2003) and Corner (1999) explore movement as archival narrative and mapping as a tool for revealing territories, linking various scales of spatial relationships. The study applies these methodologies to Syrian student migrations, addressing gaps in representations such as the APGES memoir (2021) and the RTP documentary (2021), which, while valuable and inspirational, face challenges in capturing the complexities of Syrian student migrations at both specific and general levels. By bridging narrative and visual representation, the thesis reframes the migratory experience, advocating for the representation of migratory paths as critical and urgent to human rights and educational survival. To lay out the objectives, this thesis incorporates a critical ethnographic approach (Madison, 2005), intertwining migrants' personal memories and emotions with dialogue, representation, and fiction practice (Pestana, 2019). Fiction practice structures research through ethically grounded, context-specific creative processes that reinterpret and resist dominant narratives, particularly in under-documented migratory contexts like that of Syria. It also stresses the ethical responsibility of the storyteller, addressing the migrant's aversion or difficulty in recalling certain events. Fiction in this thesis serves not to falsify reality but to reframe and reinterpret it, presenting individual and personal perspectives on migration. Rosenberg and Grafton (2010) challenge conventional temporal frameworks to read migration, while Sontag (2005) emphasizes the ethical duty of the storyteller to represent complex histories as lived realities, open to reinterpretation through creative methods.

The fourth chapter [i.iv.] bridges philosophical, literary, and architectural perspectives to analyze the spatio-temporal configurations of Syrian student migration as both an experiential and representational process. Central to this approach is Bakhtin's (1937) chronotope,

which frames time and space as interdependent and co-constitutive in narrative formation, allowing for a reinterpretation of migratory paths as temporal-spatial constructs. This extends from Madison's (2005) critical ethnography to Serres' (1995) notion of folded time, which reconfigures linear migration narratives into layered and affective experiences. Combined with Guattari's (1989/2013) notion of ethico-aesthetic eventization, the chapter situates architectural enunciation as a tool to render visible the affective, territorial, and temporal dimensions of survival migration — a concept defined by Betts (2013) as displacement driven by the absence of alternatives — emphasizing how migrant subjectivities reshape space and time across both narrative and representational registers. Borasi (2010) describes how migration, shaped by political forces and economic agendas, reshapes environments and human movement through complex interactions of time, territory, and space, thus providing a curatorial perspective aligned with the non-linear mapping of migratory paths. Eco's (1994/1995) further deepens this approach by presenting time not as a neutral continuum but as a fragmented and dislocated construct, where orientation collapses and place is imagined across thresholds that are never quite crossed — resonating with the disjunctive temporalities and suspended spatialities inherent to forced and survival migrations. Within this framework, Aravena's (2016) exhibition guide highlights how spatial interventions must respond not only to physical conditions but also to the sociopolitical and ethical urgencies of displacement — an approach that resonates with the chapter's emphasis on migration as an event that reshapes both built and lived environments.

Part ii: Architecture for migratory contexts through representation

The theoretical presence and reflection on the learning and creative process throughout this thesis integrate the methodological framework and guidance for textual and visual representation in the act of storytelling and narrative discourse. In this context, storytelling and narrative discourse become 'chronotopic,' reflecting how the lived experiences of migration are shaped by the interplay between time and space, as articulated by Bakhtin (1975/1981). This highlights the shifting and interconnected historical, socio-political, and territorial dimensions within migration contexts. Given the complexity of Syrian student migration specifically, and migration in general, a comprehensive understanding of these contexts is required. Thus, the theoretical presence in the second part relies mainly on empirical evidence and data gathered through dialogues with student migrants. To address the complexity of the narrative discourse, the statistical data, and the overall theme of this thesis, this approach also helps deconstruct the descriptive framework of the case studies. However, there are moments when textual and visual references cross-reference with the flow of storytelling. That is to say, the theoretical framework is implemented, influenced, and developed within the representation. What may appear as a brief detachment from theory or selective inclusion of certain theoretical elements in textual form is, in fact, intentional.

Since the student migrants from the five case studies had not previously shared these inputs, it is important to emphasize the empirical evidence and data collected from oral history— specifically, the voices of the migrants through their narrated stories and the inter-subjectivity shaped by their participation and narratives. There are also moments when referencing similar contexts and stories is crucial for the image-to-image reference within the context of migration reality, as seen in documentaries and investigative works. This thesis relies on oral history as the primary empirical reference and source for migration events, engaging with the student

migrants' own testimonies to represent their migratory paths and experiences. As a result, the weight of empirical data takes on greater prominence, serving as the principal source for these stories, in contrast to the collected statistical data. The empirical data in the second part is deconstructed across the two chapters to elucidate the rationale behind the moments emphasized in the oral history.

This deconstruction begins by emphasizing the idea of migratory paths and experiences, as explored through the narratives of student migrants who moved to Portugal as part of humanitarian scholarship programs. These migrations are conceptualized not as fixed routes with specific origins and destinations, but as evolving paths that shift over time, incorporating multiple routes, moments, and layers of complexity. The superimposition of these complexities suggests the need for their deconstruction. In this context, Ingold (2007) connects human movement with storytelling and path-making, viewing paths as lines that evolve through lived experiences. The students' migratory paths, influenced by political, social, and geographical factors, are depicted as dynamic processes that intersect with the broader humanitarian crisis, reflecting personal hopes and the impact of war. These paths are shaped not only by immediate geopolitical contexts but also by limited access to technologies and information in conflict zones, as discussed by Monmonier (1996) and Snyder (1993), who address the distortions inherent in map projections and cartographic representations of migration.

The methodology for studying these paths combines geographical analysis with an ethical and aesthetic approach to mapping. Drawing from the work of Forensic Architecture (2010 - present), this thesis explores the challenges of accurate spatial, placial, and territorial representation, especially when dealing with irregular paths and the distortions introduced by map projections. As Ingold (2015) suggests, lines, as both physical and conceptual entities, are not static but are constantly influenced by time, place, and human interaction. The notion of migration as both a physical and emotional path and experience is supported by Bruno (2002), who connects movement with emotional states, and by Corner (1999), whose idea of extending the agency of mapping in representing migration events further develops this concept. Both emphasize that mapping is not only about representing geography but also about constructing narratives. This thesis applies these ideas to the representation of the migratory paths and experiences of Syrian students, emphasizing the intersections of personal narratives with the broader Syrian migration crisis and war conflict. The research also highlights the challenges posed by borders, both physical and conceptual, using the work of Khoury (1987) and Rabil (2016) to critique the socio-political dynamics of modern-day Syrian identity and the implications of borders that have historically fragmented the Levant. The result is an understanding of migration that goes beyond mere movement, showing how these paths are deeply intertwined with histories of displacement, identity, and geopolitical tensions.

The migratory paths of the Syrian student migrants underline the entangled relationships between space, time, power, and movement, framed through interdisciplinary, humanitarian, and architectural perspectives. Foucault (1977) provides a foundational framework for understanding border spaces — particularly no-man's-lands — as institutions of surveillance and control, where discretionary authority exerts fear and reinforces hierarchies. These liminal, often arbitrary zones, which Augé (1995) defined and built upon, reflect the 'deprivation of liberty' and 'arbitrary interference' in migrants' civil and political rights, as articulated in the International Migration Law by the IOM (2019). Serres (1995), with Latour, informs

the fractured and layered temporality of the migratory experience, which is further explored through the visualization of chronotopes and time-lines in Rosenberg and Grafton (2010), emphasizing the historiographical structuring of migration as folded, non-linear time. These folds of time and transitional spaces are animated by the migrants' modes of transportation — especially walking — which Ingold (2015) describes as a way of becoming-with the path, where movement and subject coalesce. Careri (2002) repositions walking as a spatial practice that generates and alters landscapes, resonating with how Syrian students' dotted trails through militarized, institutional, and environmental obstacles become cartographic imprints of memory and displacement.

The first case study [ii.ii.a.] examines the impact of the Syrian housing crisis, exacerbated by the war, which displaced millions of people, leaving homes lost or abandoned. Al-Sabouni (2016) discusses the meaning of home, emphasizing the intersection of home, family, and belonging amid displacement, highlighting the emotional and physical losses many Syrians endure. The statistics on Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (Al-Terkawi, 2023) provide essential context, illustrating the vast scale of displacement and the ongoing search for home. The humanitarian data provided by Al-Terkawi (2023) and other agencies ground this analysis in the lived realities of those displaced. Skeiker (2021) further adds to this understanding by portraying the migrant experience as a simultaneous existence in multiple places, reflecting the continuous negotiation of home through migration. This theme is further explored through memory and mobility, where Bruno (2002) connects memory to visual representations with an emphasis on mapping, while Abrams (2010) discusses the interpretative mode of oral history and its role in constructing memory. While Ingold's (2007) theorization of wayfaring explores the relationship between movement and spatial configuration, Franz and Silva (2020) expand this understanding by positioning home as both a physical and metaphorical space, intricately linked to political and societal structures, highlighting physical dislocation and emotional detachment from homeland. As reflected in Krishnan's (2020) account, home is shown as an emotional and symbolic space, where displacement severs both physical and affective connections, complicating the migrant's struggle to reclaim belonging.

The second case study [ii.ii.b.] draws upon Matos (2022), whose research examines the psychological impacts of trauma among resettled Syrian refugees and migrants in Portugal, emphasizing the complex interplay between pre-migration and post-migration stressors — particularly as experienced by Syrian individuals within the resettlement context. She discusses the challenges of refugee integration, particularly the lack of prioritization of psychological well-being. Matos further contributes to the understanding of refugee resilience and posttraumatic growth through the empirical evidence gathered from her interviews with migrant participants. Additionally, the Migration Data Portal and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provide statistical data on Syrian migration, while the Asylum Information Database (2019) references emergency relocation schemes that facilitated the migration of Syrians to Portugal. Moreover, Freud's (1925) concept of negation, understood as a psychological mechanism that blocks or excludes traumatic memories, provides an architectonic perspective through which the psyche can be seen as structured by mental boundaries — thresholds that simultaneously shield and imprison — echoing architectural processes of spatial compartmentalization and aligning with Emami's (2020) notion of the door as a border.

The third case study [ii.ii.c.] includes contributions from several key sources, each providing essential insights into the destruction caused by the Syrian conflict and its subsequent impact on education and migration. The United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) has provided satellite data on damage assessments of war zones, particularly focusing on areas such as Rif Dimashq and the Eastern Ghouta region, with reports spanning the period from 2014 to 2018. On the other hand, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), a local documentation and advocacy group, plays a vital role in documenting human rights violations, including the destruction of educational and vital facilities. Their database remains a critical resource for understanding the scale of the destruction. Documentary works like Mohammed and Bedirxand (2014) provide a raw depiction of both physical and psychological damage. Additionally, Najjar's (2018) analysis highlights the extent of damage in Damascus and its suburbs, including Ghouta and Douma. These sources contribute to a broader understanding of the war's humanitarian crises, particularly the challenges faced by displaced populations and those seeking education under unstable conditions. From a theoretical standpoint, Madison (2005) and Guattari (1989/2013) explore how trauma and displacement create a fragmented sense of self, with memories that resurface and shape present identity. Pieris (2019) adds that spatial imagination, linked to border-thinking, challenges the neutrality of space by tying it to the lived realities of migration, where histories, conflicts, and inequalities continuously redefine place.

The fourth case study [ii.ii.d.] involves the analysis of a Syrian student refugee's migration across the Mediterranean, focusing on forced and survival displacements. The documentary by Alzakout and Abdulwahed (2020) provides crucial insights into the emotional and physical toll of migration, highlighting the perilous realities of sea crossings. The work of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) underscores the scale of these escapes, documenting thousands of migrant vessel incidents and the tragic outcomes, including numerous deaths and disappearances between 2015 and 2017. This context aligns with the student's experiences, as discussed through his individual narrative, including the role of smuggling networks and escape attempts. To understand the spatial fragments of this context, Massey's (2005) relational view of space and place, alongside Lewin's (1936) notion of momentary spaces, reframes irregular migration as a non-linear, power-laden process shaped by transient environments, political conditions, and embodied experience.

The fifth case study [ii.ii.e.] draws on an exploration of the complexities surrounding displacement, migration, and the Syrian crisis. Ferris and Kirişci (2016) explore the enduring urgency and complications of the Syrian migration crisis, focusing on the environmental, financial, and political challenges that exacerbate displacement. Al-Sabouni (2016) addresses the impact of mass migration on infrastructure and social dynamics, highlighting the strain on both neighboring countries and European nations in accommodating refugees. Her work also delves into the role of architecture in shaping the experiences of those displaced. Additionally, Ferris and Kirişci (2016) note the crucial connection between education and livelihoods for displaced individuals, while also acknowledging the challenges of selective allocation in distributing humanitarian aid. The APGES scholarship program's role in facilitating and supporting Syrian student migration further highlights this framework of displacement. Astolfo and Boano (2020) challenge the notion of home as a fixed place, questioning its meaning for migrants and suggesting instead that, for displaced individuals, home is a condition defined by

the experience of being at home in the world.

Part iii: Architecture for migrant auto-ethnography

From the idea of auto-ethnography as explored by Heider (1975), through performance as a form of storytelling and the enactment of these stories, emerges the possibility of a performative mapping of migratory paths. This emphasizes that auto-ethnographic practice is an act of resistance, highlighting its potential as a tool for demanding political and social change, as articulated by Kizito (2020). The approach of the first chapter [iii.i.] builds upon theoretical intersections to establish a method of path personification through embodied practices. Drawing on Ingold's (2007, 2015) theorization of the line as a living trajectory shaped by gestures, tension, and relational movement, the performances discussed in this chapter challenge cartographic conventions by rendering migratory paths as spatial stories enacted through material memory and theatrical embodiment. Massey's (2005) critique of static spatial representation reinforces this shift, advocating a conception of space as relational and unfolding, where time and space are co-constitutive. Performance, in this sense, becomes a form of mapping that captures the flux of displacement, aligning personal memory with collective history. This is further echoed in Barba's (2010) metaphor of theatrical scars, where internal and external wounds of history are processed through artistic expression, and in Bebiano's (2013) exploration of fiction's role in confronting violent pasts. The objectual dimension of performance — the use of objects on stage — embodies these concepts materially. As Skeiker (2021) suggests, applied theatre with Syrian refugees creates spaces where stories of waiting and displacement gain visibility and transformative potential.

The second chapter [iii.ii.] explores migration dynamics through personal experience, auto-ethnography, and fieldwork, blending the academic with the experiential. It begins with the author's fieldwork from Porto, Portugal, to Samos, Greece, reflecting on the migratory experience of Syrian migrants, contrasting with regular migration case studies. Drawing on Heider's auto-ethnography (1975), Kizito's critical auto-ethnography (2020), and Ingold's path-making and storytelling (2007, 2015), the researcher examines her role (as a migrant) within the broader context of migration while considering and reflecting on socio-political realities faced by refugees. The chapter connects Massey's relational space (2005), Merleau-Ponty's embodied perception (1945/1962), and Smithson and Sumi's exploration of mobile representation (1983) to contrast the researcher's hyper-mobility with migrants' immobility and struggles. Focusing on the RIC in Samos, the fieldwork reveals overpopulation and refugees living outside the camp, reflecting the harsh realities faced by asylum seekers and drawing on Giráldez López's (2019) representation of borders. It links personal narrative with broader migratory issues and Bakhtin's comparative chronotope (1975/1981), contributing to discussions on migration and the role of NGOs. The chapter also highlights challenges in accessing information and support from humanitarian organizations, illustrating the difficulty of gathering accurate data in a complex, politically charged context.

The third chapter [iii.iii.] examines how various research initiatives, academic collaborations, activist engagements, and personal experiences have shaped the representation process in this thesis. It begins with archival research about Syria, developed at the Centro de Estudos da Escola de Arquitetura, Arte e Design da Universidade do Minho (2019–2024), and extends to findings that evolved through engagement with organizations such as Humans Before Borders



Figure 1: A grid of book and article covers representing some of the textual and visual references used to build the State of the Art bibliography, as well as the methodologies for practice and representation within the thesis structure.

From left to right: Bruno, G. *Atlas of emotion* (2002); Sarkis, H., Gage, M., & Canniffe, E. *The world as an architectural project* (2020); ASCORAL, *L'urbanisme des trois établissements humains* (1945); Turchi, P. *Maps of the imagination* (2004); Massey, D. *For space* (2005); Corner, J. "The agency of mapping" (1999); Silva, C., Labastida, M. J., Carlos, R., & Ferreira, F. P. *Cartografias* (2020); Mathur, S. (Ed.) *The migrant's time* (2011); Latour, B. *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* (1995) ; Foucault, M. *Discipline and punish* (1975); Awan, N., Schneider, T., & Till, J. *Spatial agency* (2011); Awan, N. *Diaspora agencies* (2016); Awan, N. "Architecture and movement" (2018); Batuman, B., & Kelingk, K. *The urban refuge* (2020); Fuller, M., & Weizman, E. L. *Investigation aesthetics: Conflicts, commons, and the politics of truth* (2021); Weizman, E. *Forensic architecture* (2017); Al-Sabouni, M. *The battle for home* (2016); Madison, D. S. *Critical ethnography* (2011); Abrams, L. *Oral history theory* (2010); Pestana, M. *Fiction practice* (2020); Gérard Genette, G. Fiction and Diction (1993); Ingold, T. *Lines: A brief history* (2007); Ingold, T. *The life of lines* (2015); Smithson, A. *AS in DS* (2001); Eco, U. *The island of the day before* (1994); Careri, F., *Walkscapes* (2002); Pieris, A., *Architecture on the borderline* (2019); Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., *Refuge in a moving world* (2020); Franz, M., & Silva, C. *Migration, identity, and belonging* (2022); Bakhtin, M. *The dialogic imagination* (1981); Global Platform for Syrian Students. *A minha terra é linda: Histórias dos estudantes Sírios em Portugal* (2021); CALYPSO36°21, *On drifting* (2020); Tufte, E. *Envisioning information* (1990); Rosenberg, D., & Grafton, A. *Cartographies of time* (2010); van Houtum, H. *Free the map* (2024); Monmonier, M. *How to lie with maps* (1991); Snyder, J., P. *Flattening the Earth* (1993); Gržinić, M. *Border thinking* (2018); Anzaldúa, G., *Borderlands/La frontera* (1987); Mignolo, W. D. *Local histories/global designs* (2000).

(2020) and research into documented escape events within and from Africa, carried out during a summer school and exhibition participation (Sarmento, 2020–2021), where Forensic Architecture's methodologies provided critical insights into migratory trajectories. Interactions with humanitarian efforts, such as the AAA-Refugiados initiative (2022), which supported Afghan musicians, and academic participations, further expanded the scope of analysis. Psychological perspectives — particularly through brief conversations with Matos (2021) and a volunteer psychologist (2025) — reinforced the significance of trauma, language, and belonging in migration narratives.

Conclusion

The State of the Art surrounding the theme of Syrian student migration to Portugal incorporates a range of theoretical and practical perspectives on migration, representation, and the intersection of the academic field of architecture with humanitarian crises. After exploring a critical issue in recent Syrian politics and its relation to re-engaging with student migrants, the conclusion establishes a distance from the specific theme of Syrian student migration to focus instead on the broader theme of migration, as well as on the theoretical infrastructure and methodologies that initially informed this thesis. It also questions the utility, relevance, and intrinsic value of the theoretical results, and how this established theoretical infrastructure and these methodologies further open up points of questioning, argumentation, and intervention in the theme of migration. This part draws on Bakhtin (1975/1981), Guattari (1989/2013), ASCORAL (1945), Anzaldúa (1987), Mignolo (2000), Pieris (2019), Madison (2005), Heider (1975), Genette (1991/1993), Pestana (2019), Corner (1999), Serres (1995), Franz and Silva (2022), and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2020) to frame migration through dialogic, affective, and border-thinking perspectives, while integrating representation, performance, and mapping as co-constructive tools.

It then returns to present fragments of thought, drawing on authors such as Turchi (2004), Abram (2010), Guattari (1989/2013), Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962), Al-Sabouni (2016), Corner (1999), Aravena (2016), Sarkis (2017), and Bártolo (2019), who contribute to understanding migration as an eventized process that can be represented through mapping and storytelling. This thesis draws from the Global Platform for Syrian Students (founded and supported by Jorge Sampaio), examining the complex realities of student migration and the barriers to education and integration in the host country. In addition, it considers the contemporary realities of border restrictions, as discussed by Batuman (2024), highlighting the growing challenges migrants face in their movement, which ultimately hinders their access to opportunities, particularly education. The work further explores the limitations and potential of architectural interventions in addressing these crises — first by reflecting on Aravena's (2016) arguments, and then by drawing on Le Corbusier's ideas on geo-architecture and the humanitarian importance of emergency higher education programs (ASCORAL, 1945; Sarkis, 2017; Anzaldúa, 1987). This theoretical framework highlights the importance of the expanded role of the interdisciplinary academic field of architecture in responding to political and social challenges. It advocates for more inclusive and organized migratory paths for students, along with the representation of these facilitated migrations — placing particular emphasis on irregular migration to highlight chronotopic comparisons — while acknowledging the ongoing realities of migration crises.

part i.

Architecture for migration in words

Architecture for migration in words is an interchangeable sequence of four chapters that theoretically expands the field of architecture into an interdisciplinary domain concerned with migration. The focus lies on the perception and translation of words that describe migratory paths and migrants' individual experiences during these paths. The four chapters can be read in any order, but their structural arrangement builds progressively in complexity, exploring the process of interlocking words into theory, then words into image — and vice versa — through a body of references. The layered structure in Part i deconstructs this thesis, providing a theoretical and representational framework to explore the complexities of migration and its connection to architecture. Each of the four chapters in the interconnected body develops an approach through specific theoretical tools to address the complexity of this thesis proposal:

Positionality, meaning, and the dialogue explores the concept of situated knowledges, particularly through an feminist and activist theory, emphasizing the importance of positionality, inter-subjectivity, and oral history in research. It critiques traditional objectivity, advocating for a more relational and embodied approach to knowledge production, where both the researcher and participants' experiences shape inter-subjectivity. This thesis integrates critical ethnography and auto-ethnography to investigate the subject matter of Syrian student migrations, challenging power dynamics and highlighting ethical considerations.

Border-thinking: an architectural glossary of Syrian migration-related words questions the idea of border-thinking to create a learning and creative process with a glossary — a collection of terms, expressions, and languages, especially in Arabic and English as used in the dialogues, that merges architecture with geography through words. This process compiles echoes of the student migrants' migratory experiences, oral fragments of memory that emerged during dialogues. Words are selected based on their repetition, significance, vividness, and/or descriptive uniqueness in the migrants' recollections. These words are then defined within the context of the migratory experiences and associated with theoretical terms that connect to the meanings behind the migrants' narratives. By breaking the barrier between personal and theoretical translation, the glossary establishes a foundation for understanding the relational, affective, socio-political, cultural and lived aspects of Syrian migration.

A re-introduction to 'geo-architecture' focuses on translating words into images, serving as examples of how textual descriptions can catalyze visual projections. Reintroducing the concept of 'geo-architecture' into the discourse, these extraterritorial translations emphasize the importance of mapping as an interdisciplinary tool linking architecture and migration. This approach bridges the gap between reading maps and representations, to establish proximity to migratory paths through articulated, speculated, assimilated, and simulated visual depictions.

Provisional chronotope: configurations of temporary time-space, examines how, through the diagrammatic articulation of words, it can redefine the relation between architecture and migration. This reconfiguration begins with the notion of time and space as provisional states, measured by the temporary duration of moments and events. Migration, with its changing time-space dynamics, imposes a provisional character on the entire experience. The migrant and their migration become part of this transient condition. The memory of the migration event and its factual documentation intersect at points of juncture, which may partially overlap.

chapter **i.i.**

_Positionality, meaning, and the dialogue

i.i.a. Between inter-subjectivity and oral history

This body of text begins to unfold, laying the foundation for the context of the researcher's intentions, the research process, and the significance of the research theme. In this foundation there is the emphasis on how the knowledge produced in this thesis is constructed. The concept of situated knowledges is coined by Haraway in "Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective" (1988). Haraway (1988) criticizes the traditional objectivity in research that is presented as though from a neutral, all-seeing, detached, and universal vantage point, which erases the context and positionality of the 'knower.' In this case, the knower is multi-layered: it includes the student migrants from the case studies, the universities, the scholarships, the NGOs, and the human rights organizations that contributed to these migratory paths and experiences, as well as the readers — scholars, activists, and researchers — who can have a standpoint and relation to this thesis, and myself. The knowledge produced comes from social interactions with these individuals and their lived experiences, framed through a situated objectivity. It consists of empirical evidence derived from their oral histories, recorded materials, and, undeniably, their collaboration on this subject matter. This form of advocacy is situated, experiential, and context-dependent, arising from specific lived experiences and shaped by the dynamics of power, social advantage, struggle, survival, and resistance.

In "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" (1969) ("What is an author?"), Foucault explores the notion of authorship and knowledge production, which intersects with the concept of situated knowledges in Haraway (1988), particularly in the context of creative practice as research. Foucault examines the role of subjectivity in research and the relationship between discourse and authority in meaning-making[4] — that is, the production of meaning through discourse, power, and knowledge — emphasizing how the researcher-practitioner's positionality and knowledge production are shaped by specific contexts, practices, and discursive formations. That is to say, Syrian student migrations are not just demographic phenomena — their meanings emerge through the discourses that define them, the policies that govern them, and the narratives that represent them in academic, humanitarian, cultural, and socio-political contexts, particularly through the method of oral history. Moreover, Foucault argues that it is through 'experiencing' that the researcher becomes closer to the subject, stressing that knowledge is produced not only through abstract theorization but also through the embodied and situated experience of the researcher-practitioner (Foucault, 1969). This aligns with phenomenological perspectives, such as those of Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of perception* (1945/1962), where experience is central to perception and meaning-making.

Foucault (1969) emphasizes that in practice-based research, the researcher engages with knowledge through doing, making, and reflecting, rather than solely through detached analysis. This experiential approach challenges traditional academic structures that separate theory from practice. Foucault's critique of authorship argues that meaning emerges not from an isolated individual but from interactions with discourse, materials, and creative processes. Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) extends this by asserting that "the world is not what I think, but what I live through" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xviii), highlighting the embodied and situated

4 In "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" (1969) ("What is an author?"), Foucault argues that discourses are systems of knowledge, language, and practice that shape how we think, speak, and act about a topic. Meaning is produced not by individual intention alone but through historically and socially situated discourses.

state of perception within lived experience. Similarly, Husserl, in *Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology* (1929/1960), argues that objective knowledge — that is, knowledge about the external world based on facts and verifiable evidence — does not exist independently of human experience. Instead, it is grounded in the subjective dimension and structures of consciousness, meaning that the way we experience and interpret the world is what makes objective knowledge possible (Husserl, 1960, p. 66). Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) supports a relational view of knowledge, focusing on the idea that perception is shaped through embodied interaction with the world. This view allows for a collaborative dimension in knowledge production, where meaning is co-constructed rather than dictated by a single, authoritative subject. Similarly, Foucault's *The archaeology of knowledge* (1969/1984) concept of subjectivity challenges the notion of authority, asserting that meaning is not fixed by an author but is part of larger discursive network, practices, and formations, with subjectivity shaped by external power dynamics, discourses, and structures. While both theorists reject the notion of an objective, universal subject, Foucault expresses how subjectivity is decentered and redefined in relation to discourse, whereas Haraway emphasizes how subjectivity is actively positioned and how this positionality informs knowledge production. This thesis aligns more closely with Haraway (1988), as both her work and the focus of this thesis are rooted in activism and in situated, ethically accountable knowledge production.

Connecting activism to knowledge production involves evaluating how this relationship informs, applies to, and shapes positionality. It also requires identifying the key elements that make this positionality contribute to the originality and criticality of this thesis. To define positionality in this thesis, following the situated knowledges method, first and foremost involves acknowledging a non-neutral position, with a partial foregrounding of an origin and experience I am familiar with — Syrian migration, particularly student migration — as I speak from the position of a Syrian student migrant. This positionality leads to inter-subjectivity arising from the understanding of these lived experiences. To theoretically frame the (critical) subjective perspective of this research, Abrams, in *Oral History Theory* (2010), describes the interrelation with the subject in the oral history process as an inter-subjective relation. Oral history is a mutable, naturally evolving product of inter-subjectivity between the interviewer and the interviewee (Abrams, 2010, p. 24). However, due to the power of dialogue, I prefer using the terms 'dialogist' and 'interlocutor,'[5] as it is the act of engaging with the other and interpreting their words and reactions during the dialogue — rather than merely interviewing them — that matters. This mutability of inter-subjectivity suggests that one cannot omit the presence of the subject[6] in the writing of oral history or in recording their narrated (remembered) story, nor can one omit oneself from the process, as one is the mediator of the reinterpretation of that story.

How much reality exists in fiction is an undetermined factor in the writing of oral history and in representation shaped by inter-subjectivity. This unknown level of accuracy and fallibility in one's memory and in its reinterpretation varies according to the trauma the subject

5 'Researcher' and 'dialogist' refer to the author of this thesis, Sarah Shrbaji. The interlocutors are the student migrants and participants from the selected case studies, who contribute to the narrative discourse in the second part of the thesis.

6 Instead of using 'other' or 'the other,' I prefer to use 'the subject.' The term 'other' imposes otherness on the subject of study and matter, creating a separation from what is, at its core, rooted in being human and in the human struggle.

carries from the act of remembering, and how emotionally draining this act is (Abrams, 2020, p. 93). Migration, as a theme, evolves in representation and becomes associated with different methodologies for re-reading individual itineraries and stories. One such methodology is explored in Abrams (2010), which examines the relationship between oral history and inter-subjectivity, wherein the object created through the encounter with recalled and narrated memory is inherently inter-subjective. The objective of representing with ethics and aesthetics proposes a relation between architecture and geography that intersects with a human(e) dimension — a dimension shaped through the interchange between both fields. Another essential aspect of this human(e) dimension is language. The shared mother tongue(s) — Syrian Arabic dialect and formal Arabic — between the student migrants and the researcher serves as a determining factor. It not only establishes common ground with the subjects and the subject matter but also dissolves linguistic borders and barriers that might otherwise emerge in dialogue between participants and interlocutors from different contexts and backgrounds. Another important aspect of language is its role in integration into the host society. In the case of student migrants, the Portuguese language is one of the key integration factors. However, not all students have mastered it, and many struggle to attain fluency — especially in the cases presented in Figures 2 and 3, drawn from the phase before the establishment of the case study framework in this thesis, when I was experimenting with dialogue during volunteer work. While the difficulty with language is not explicitly highlighted in the second part (the case studies) — as none of the student migrants emphasized this struggle — it is addressed in the third part, within an auto-ethnographic representation.

On critical ethnography, auto-ethnography, and dialogic performance

When discussing a non-neutral positionality, I adopt not only a non-neutral stance but also an activist one. Activism and non-neutrality represent a position rooted in the dialogic relationship and performance, as conceptualized by Bakhtin in his essay "Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel" (1937), later included in *The dialogic imagination: Four Essays* (1975/1981).[7] This position requires collaboration and a response to meaning. In this context, auto-ethnography, a practice adapted by Heider in "What do people do? Dani Auto-ethnography" (1975),[8] raises questions about dialogue as the primary research method for analyzing individual and collective lived experiences. Since memory serves as the primary source of analysis in this thesis, it is crucial to emphasize that the truth of any auto-ethnography is not fixed. Rather, it embodies a fictional scope and component grounded in the migrant's memory, which is active, dynamic, and constantly evolving. This thesis explores

7 Bakhtin's essay "Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel" was originally written between 1937 and 1938. It was later included in his collection titled "Вопросы литературы и эстетики" (translated as *Problems of Literature and Aesthetics*), which was published in Moscow in 1975. This collection was subsequently translated into English and published as *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* in 1981.

8 The idea of auto-ethnography was also explored in Hayano's "Auto-ethnography: paradigms, problems, and prospects" (1979). Though both Hayano and Heider contributed to the development of auto-ethnography, their approaches differ in focus and purpose. Hayano's (1979) work emphasizes auto-ethnography as a methodological tool to reflect on the researcher's positionality and personal experiences in understanding broader social processes, advocating for reflexivity and the role of the researcher within the ethnographic tradition. In contrast, Heider's (1975) approach, particularly in his memoir, is more narrative-driven, focusing on the emotional and personal aspects of the researcher's experiences, using storytelling as a means to explore cultural and social insights. While Hayano seeks to position the researcher within the context of cultural analysis, Heider emphasizes personal narratives and emotional connections as tools for understanding culture, making his approach more introspective and relational, which aligns more closely with the focus of this thesis.

the transition of auto-ethnography within its structure to dismantle the theoretical framework of ideas and principles connecting architecture and geography to Syrian student migrations within path studies. It then takes a position that distances the researcher's involvement in the narration of contexts, where the re-interpretation of shared stories is determined according to the methodologies outlined in the theoretical part and the researcher's familiarity (and unfamiliarity) with the migration contexts, socio-political, and cultural analyses. Finally, the auto-ethnography takes form in the researcher's own narrative as a migrant, recounting the researcher's experiences with path studies.

Another ethnographic layer in this positionality is ethics, specifically the ethical dimension of this thesis. Addressing the theme of Syrian student migrations as an ethical subject involves engaging with its social and political aspects through ethical means. Madison, in Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance (2005), highlights the role of research in carrying an ethical responsibility, emphasizing reasoning and performance rooted and grounded in dialogue with student migrants and the representation of their migratory paths and experiences. Ethics inherently raises questions of aesthetics, as this positionality constantly intersects with it in dialogue. Ethical responsibility entails not only respecting the boundaries, silences, and gaps set by student migrants during the dialogues but also addressing their narratives through representations that respond with meaning — giving, growing, and acting in relation to it. This process involves a collaborative effort between student migrants and the researcher, aiming to address both the gaps and the expressed realities and events. Madison (2005) also distinguishes between critical ethnography and auto-ethnography. She emphasizes that critical ethnography is about a meeting of multiple perspectives in an encounter with the subject, rather than focusing solely on the researcher's personal experience. Whereas auto-ethnography centers the researcher's lived experience, blending personal narrative with practice-based research. While Madison acknowledges the importance of subjectivity in research, she contends that auto-ethnography, which centers the researcher's personal experience (such as autobiography or memoir), is different from the collaborative, dialogic aspect of critical ethnography. In auto-ethnography, the researcher's personal narrative is the central focus, whereas in critical ethnography, the goal is to create a dialogue between the researcher and the subject (student migrants), leading to shared understandings and interactions to make it collaborative and multi-perspectival.

However, critical ethnography and auto-ethnography can work interchangeably and simultaneously in this thesis, but with consideration of their distinct purposes and methods. In this sense the connection between these ethnographic practices enabled a simultaneous transition from ethical-relational research practice (critical ethnography) to a more personal, subjective, and experiential engagement with the theme of migration (auto-ethnography). What distinguishes them is the degree of personal involvement and reflexivity of the researcher's presence in the stories. Critical ethnography prioritizes social critique and transformation, foregrounding the perspectives of participants to challenge power structures and systemic inequalities. This approach is applied to data studies, statistics, migration processes and opportunities, and other determinants, contrasting them with the success stories of the Syrian student migratory flows. These success stories refer to formal aspects of border facilitation and granted academic pursuits, while centering on the migration stories of the student migrants, their migratory paths, and experiences.

i.i.b. From activism and performativity/performance for education

What also sets apart these two ethnographic practices and methodologies is the attribution of 'social advantage.' The question of the student migrants being Syrian, holding a Syrian passport, which by structural norms hinders their movement to other places and across other countries, is key. In other cases, the passport, if processed at all, is most likely replaced by the self-identification of nationality, which a Syrian migrant utilizes without any written document in situations of forced migration and displacement. In cases of survival displacement, such as with the Syrian student migrants, the passport becomes an object that labels individuals, categorizes them socially, marks them as disadvantaged, and restricts their movements through systematic political restrictions, social discrimination, and marginalization.

At the same time, these certain groups of Syrian students were granted exceptional emergency academic and humanitarian migration scholarships, raising questions about the criteria and implications of such opportunities within the broader context of displacement and restricted mobility in the Syrian migration crisis. Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, consistently emphasized the importance of integrating higher education support into refugee assistance programs. Additionally, in interviews with Jorge Sampaio in 2012 and 2016, he addressed the need for universal access to higher education for migrants, stating, "Queremos sociedades multirraciais, multiétnicas, com pessoas vindas de várias proveniências, enriquecendo uma comunidade. É preciso colocar o ensino universitário de emergência numa das principais atividades de apoio aos refugiados." (Translation: We want multiracial, multi-ethnic societies with people from various backgrounds, enriching a community. It is essential to make emergency university education one of the main support activities for refugees.)[9]

These opportunities bring up concerns about whether such 'exceptional scholarships' and 'advantages' should even be questioned in relation to human rights when education is a fundamental human right that aligns with resilience. As emphasized by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres[10] in his message for the International Day of Education, on January 2025 "Education is a basic human right and an essential building block for every person [...]." Also on February 2025, he wrote a similar written statement, as he had formerly talked about this issue of education on many occasions, "quality education is a ~~privilege~~ human right," while crossing out term 'privilege.' The question of what it means to be advantaged and what social advantages entail takes on conflicting turns, with a number of Syrians gaining access to these life-changing opportunities, while also enduring the challenges during their migrations. A different perspective is then presented, with social and structural advantages viewed from the position of the researcher, who holds another nationality and passport in addition to the Syrian one, and chooses to undergo and experience a site visit mission. This experience manifests as an auto-ethnographic textual and visual representation of the fieldwork, which is meant

9 "Jorge Sampaio, High Representative for the The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), speaks about International Migrants Day, December 18th 2012."
Interview retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PvjceJhzXo&ab_channel=UNAOC
and "Grande Entrevista: Jorge Sampaio | 29 jun. 2016 | temporada." Interview retrieved from: https://www.rtp.pt/play/p2234/e241697/grande-entrevista

10 "Humanity, Not Artificial Intelligence, May Remain at Centre of Learning, Education Systems, Secretary-General Says in Observance Message."
Article retrieved from link 1: https://press.un.org/en/2025/sgsm22519.doc.htm
Article retrieved from link 2: https://www.instagram.com/antonioguterres/p/DFkum9VAFgy/

to be part of the performance-based research aimed at questioning border contexts. For the performance to have an active role, it must take a position. As Tomaselli, Dyll-Myklebust, and van Grootheest explain in *Personal/political interventions via autoethnography: Dualism, knowledge, power, and performativity in research relations* (2013), "the performativity of these personal narratives can be considered a personal/political intervention in that identity and experience are symbiotic of performed story and the social relations in which they are embedded" (Langellier, 1999, as cited in Tomaselli, Dyll-Myklebust, & van Grootheest, 2013, p. 129).

When critical ethnography and auto-ethnography methodologies are combined — superimposed, rather than seen as separate practices — they create a layered approach in which the researcher's lived experience (auto-ethnography) is interwoven with a critical analysis of broader social structures (critical ethnography). The combining factor is inter-subjectivity, which enables a more reflexive and engaged methodology. It balances personal narratives with collective realities to challenge dominant discourses and provide insights into migration, identity, and social justice. At the same time, it maintains distance in the researcher's self-involvement in the narratives, where the stories of student migrants are told and shared. That is to say, empirical data and evidence — collected from lived experience — through dialogue, which is considered an instrument of data generation, appear in both critical ethnography and auto-ethnography. However, the lived experiences are presented from different perspectives: in the second part, from a third-person perspective, as it focuses on Syrian student migrations, and in the third part, from a first-person perspective, as it explores the researcher's own experience with migration. This thesis is written in both the first and third person. The first person is used when I, as the researcher, personify the path and describe my narrative, as well as specific moments during the dialogues with the student migrants. This does not disrupt the narrative's scope and flow but rather serves to express moments of familiarity with these student migrants, such as mentioning when I met them, if it serves the purpose of the discourse. The third person is used when I refer to the textual and visual representation of the student migrants' case studies through storytelling and when describing these student migrations in the personification part, reflecting a shift in narrative perspective or point of view. In writing, this often reflects a shift in the storyteller's focus or distance from the subject (student migrants and their narratives), rather than a change in positionality.

Ethical reasoning compels me to bring forth untold and unrepresented stories of our migration realities, both successful and current. This is not to portray the voices of Syrian student migrants as victims, as many dominant views and mainstream media outlets often do, but to counter-narrate their stories through representation and deconstruct them from their true, multiple voices (Skeiker, 2020, p. 5). I cannot deny the many unsuccessful stories of those who were unfortunate enough not to make it to a safe haven. However, at the same time, I aim to foreground those who were fortunate, even if some have faced their share of different hurdles and obstacles along their migratory paths. I also position myself close to the subject matter of student migrant migration, as I am a Syrian student migrant. I reject the victimization and exploitation of any Syrian student migrant's identity and their personal choice not to share parts of, or the whole of, their itinerary during or after the dialogue. The positionality of the researcher is, thus, a determining factor in how the dialogue with the student migrants proceeds. When each student migrant recalls their migratory paths and

experiences, the positionality and proximity to the student migrants determine the level of access to memory-events of their itineraries, which may be distressing and/or bring back repressed memories. Inter-subjectivity (Abrams, 2010) during the dialogue gives positionality a sense of self-reflection for the dialogist toward the subject. This means that the output of the representation is a (learning and creative) research process of the researcher/dialogist, focusing on how to dialogue, represent, map, and archive the material shared by student migrants, as the researcher is the composer of the dialogue setting. This also means that the positionality with inter-subjectivity places the researcher consecutively, simultaneously, and interchangeably inside and outside the picture of the narrated stories during and after the dialogue, as the researcher hovers over them and then represents them. The narration and storytelling of these stories form a multiple narrative that serves to tell the stories of many protagonists. To multi-narrate in academic research is to present and project singular stories with a similar focus. As the research is a narrative discourse of migration contexts, the migration processes within these contexts, in accordance with the theoretical and practical work developed and explored throughout the investigation, become a process — a discursive formation. In order to make this process function and be applied in practice, Madison (2005) serves as a foundational guide that is methodologically explored and reinterpreted theoretically and practically throughout the duration of the investigation.

In Madison and Hamera's *The SAGE handbook of performance studies* (2006), there is an adherence to and exploration of performance-based research, with its mention. With collaborations from different fields, where performance is treated as a site of intervention, research can be performative in its ability to do something in the world, not just describe it. Performance is seen as a critical and political act, especially in ethnographic contexts (such as migration as movement across borders and countries), as expressed by Langellier and Peterson in "Shifting contexts in personal narrative performance," where they state:

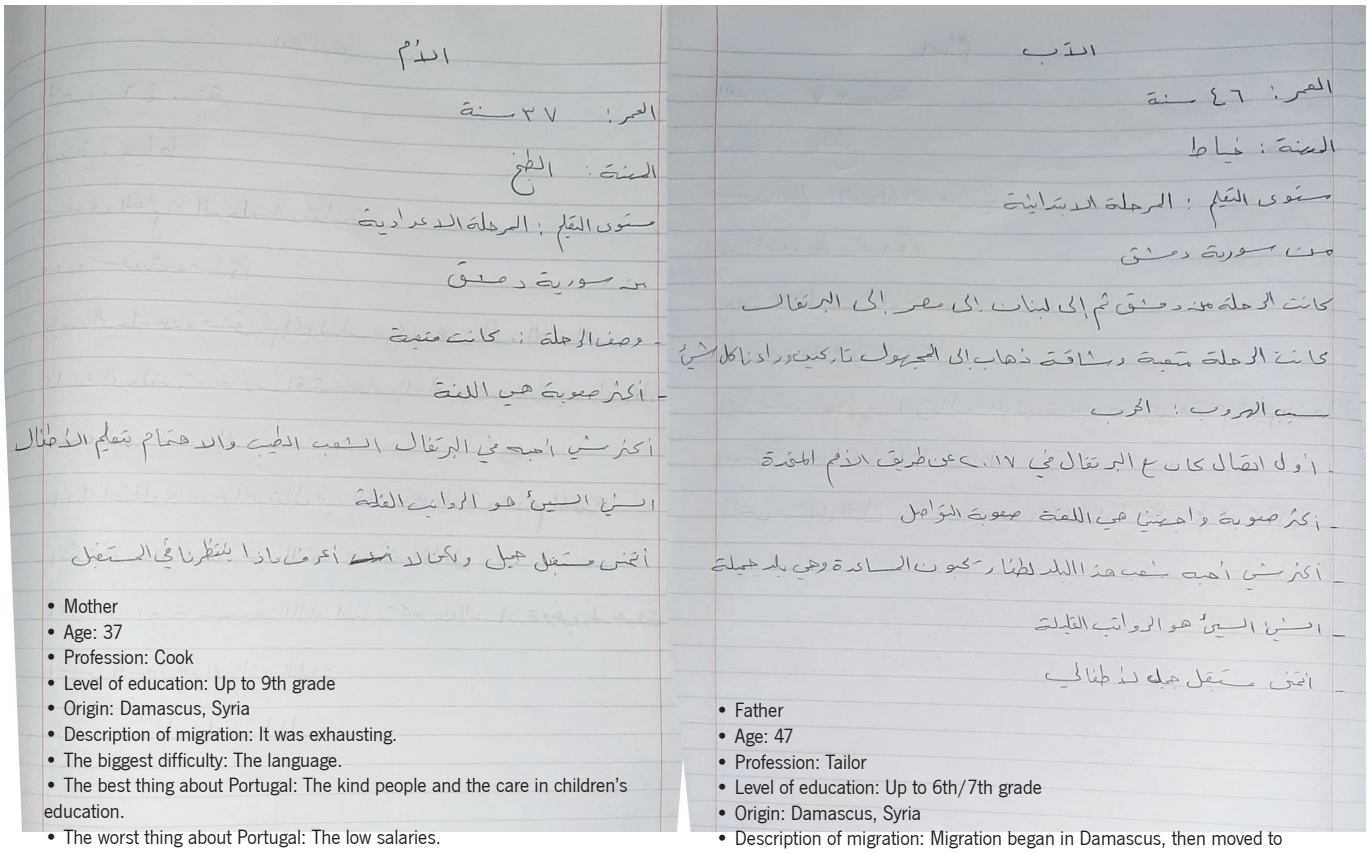
> Performance as a political act emphasizes performer creativity to ground possibilities for action, agency, and resistance in the liminality of performance as it suspends, questions, plays with, and transforms social and cultural norms. Personal narrative offers an especially promising candidate for emergence, embedded as it is in the uniqueness of the performer's body narrating a personal experience to construct a self-text for audience evaluation in a particular performance event. (Langellier & Peterson as cited in Madison & Hamera, 2006, p. 155)

This understanding and embracing of Madison's approach to ethnographic practice reform the way the investigation unfolds, depending on various factors such as questioning the methods and the dialogic performance. As Madison argues, this performance is used to reach an appropriate positioning of the author/researcher — where the researcher should not be found in the narrative's language — in dialogue with migration contexts, expressing, "Dialogue is framed as performance to emphasize the living communion of a felt-sensing, embodied interplay and engagement between human beings" (Madison, 2005, p. 9). Following Madison's approach to ethnographic practice changes the way the investigation is conducted. It highlights the importance of considering various factors, such as questioning the methods and the dialogic process (the interactions and conversations involved in the research). According to Madison, the researcher should not be directly present in the language of the

narrative they are creating. In other words, the researcher should avoid inserting themselves into the stories or perspectives being told, particularly in the context of student migrations. The goal is for the researcher to engage with the subject matter (Syrian (student) migrations, in this case) without overshadowing or altering the participants' voices (Syrian student migrants). However, there is an exception to this: in some cases, I specify the time I first met some of these student migrants and the time I requested the dialogues, as well as how many times I conducted and performed dialogues with them, without altering the flow of the description, as these elements determine the time-intervals and the re-interpretation of the narrated and shared stories.

Because the dialogue is part of the communication and engagement with the subject, the discursive formation of the process, Bakhtin's idea of the dialogic relation with the subject in *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (1975/1981), hence, complements the foundational framework of this thesis. With Madison's approach to the ethnographic practice — as the former and latter bibliographical references pose similar questions and arguments and are connected with the emphasis of the subject — a further understanding of the context, the world, of the subject and the sensitivity and complexity of the communication in the dialogue are taken into the course of the process. Bakhtin (1975/1981) introduces the concept of 'dialogism' as a foundational idea in his exploration of language, literature, and culture. According to Bakhtin, language is inherently social and always part of a dialogue between voices, rather than a monologue where a single voice dominates. He emphasizes that all communication, including written works, is a product of multiple voices interacting, each with their own perspective and context. For Bakhtin, dialogism refers to the idea that meaning is not fixed or static but is constantly being shaped through interaction. This interaction occurs between different voices, genres, and cultural discourses. Bakhtin argues that every text, even within the same genre or discourse, is influenced by and responds to other texts, creating a dynamic and evolving exchange of meanings. This contrasts with a monologic approach, where one authoritative voice controls the interpretation and direction of the discourse. In literature, Bakhtin uses the example of the novel to show how it allows for a multiplicity of voices, each with its own language, perspective, and tone. He highlights how characters in a novel, for example, engage in a dialogue not only with each other but also with the broader societal, historical, and cultural contexts.

In Flusser's terms, as described in Roth's "A note on 'the gesture of writing' by Vilém Flusser and the gesture of writing" (2012) and in Flusser and Roth's *Gestures* (2014), writing is expressed as an active form of translation. When we write, we translate ideas into symbols, and this translation is never neutral — it carries cultural, historical, and ideological implications. Furthermore, he discusses how different languages shape thought differently, suggesting that translation is not a simple transfer of meaning but an active recreation of ideas in a new linguistic framework. Every translation involves a loss and a gain, as certain ideas and words may not have direct equivalents between languages. This is why Flusser uses a process of translation and back-translation to interpret what is being written (Flusser & Roth, 2014, p. vii).



- Mother
- Age: 37
- Profession: Cook
- Level of education: Up to 9th grade
- Origin: Damascus, Syria
- Description of migration: It was exhausting.
- The biggest difficulty: The language.
- The best thing about Portugal: The kind people and the care in children's education.
- The worst thing about Portugal: The low salaries.
- I hope for a beautiful future, but I am uncertain about what awaits us.

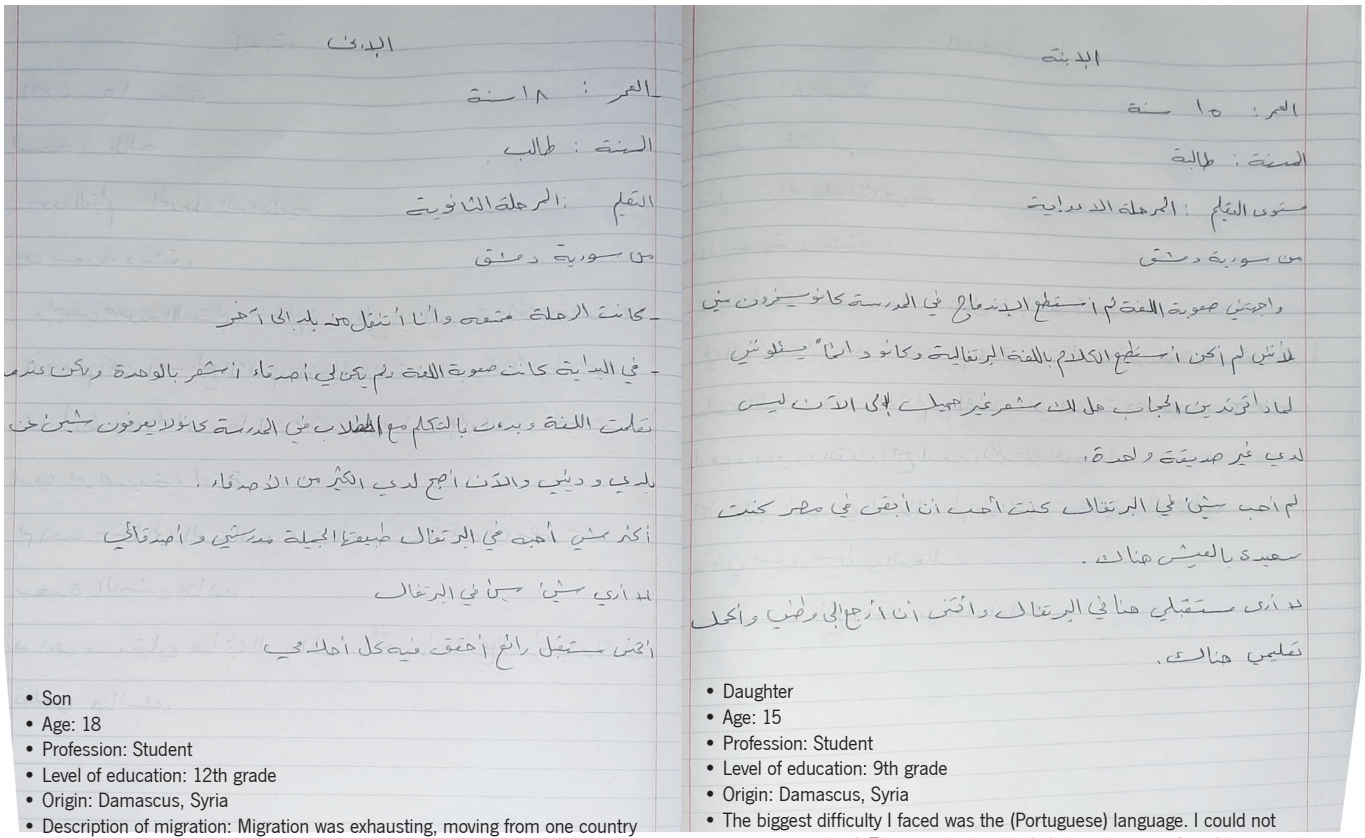
- Father
- Age: 47
- Profession: Tailor
- Level of education: Up to 6th/7th grade
- Origin: Damascus, Syria
- Description of migration: Migration began in Damascus, then moved to Lebanon, followed by Egypt, and finally Portugal. It was exhausting and difficult—going into the unknown, leaving everything behind.
- Reason for escape: The war.
- First contact with Portugal: In 2017 through the United Nations.
- The biggest difficulty we faced: The Portuguese language and the challenge of communication.
- The best thing about Portugal: The people are kind, they like helping, and the country is beautiful.
- The only downside: The low salaries.
- I hope for a beautiful future for my children.

Figure 2. The image above is a written and recorded testimony by the mother of the family to archive the dialgoues. First part: mother and father.

Pre-practical work experience, on-the-spot, brief opportunity

As a Red Cross volunteer during the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine, a request was made on behalf of the Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa (CVP) (Portuguese Red Cross) to conduct an interview with a Syrian refugee family residing in Guimarães since 2017–2018. This request originated from a personal academic inquiry by a CVP volunteer. I acted as the mediator, dialogist, and translator for this task, marking the first dialogue initiated within the curricular year of the Doctoral Program in Architecture (PDA) at EAAD.

Although the questions were initially prepared by the CVP volunteer, modifications were made during the translation process. Each member of the family answered the questions individually to ensure personal perspectives. Figures 2 and 3 represent the answers written by the mother of the family for registration, with my translation superimposed. With ethical considerations, such as maintaining anonymity and refraining from sharing names, the interview questions included family role, age, profession, education level, country of origin, migratory path, trip description, country of destination, reason for escape, first contact with Portugal, integration difficulties, what they like most about Portugal, what they like least about Portugal, and future expectations.



- Son
- Age: 18
- Profession: Student
- Level of education: 12th grade
- Origin: Damascus, Syria
- Description of migration: Migration was exhausting, moving from one country to another.
- At first, the (Portuguese) language was difficult, and I had no friends. I felt lonely. But when I learned the language and started speaking with my classmates, I realized they knew nothing about my country or my religion. Now, I have many friends.
- The thing I like most about Portugal is the beautiful nature, my school, and my friends. I do not see anything bad about Portugal.
- I hope for an incredible future where I can fulfill all my dreams.

- Daughter
- Age: 15
- Profession: Student
- Level of education: 9th grade
- Origin: Damascus, Syria
- The biggest difficulty I faced was the (Portuguese) language. I could not integrate into school. They mocked and belittled me because I could not speak Portuguese and always asked, "Why do you wear the headscarf (hijab)? Do you have ugly hair?" Until today, I have only one friend.
- I did not like anything about Portugal. I wanted to stay in Egypt, where I was happy.
- I do not see my future in Portugal. I wish to return to Syria and continue my studies there.

The Syrian refugee family (the father, the mother, the daughter, and the son), as documented, first contacted Portuguese soil in 2017 through the United Nations (UN). The family passed through different countries (from Syria to Lebanon to Egypt) to reach Portugal. Their migratory path(s) and experience(s) were very tiring and exhausting, "especially considering the part of going into the unknown," quoting the father. They all think that the best part about migrating to Portugal is the kindness and helpfulness of the locals. However, the daughter thinks otherwise due to the cultural shock, which turned things badly for her, especially as she is a teenager wearing a headscarf. The part that did not go well for the family is the problem with low salaries, as the father is a tailor and the mother is a cook. The shared difficulty of the family is the Portuguese language barrier, which, once improved for the son, expanded his circle of friends and facilitated communication, integration, and social interactions. Other than that, the parents wish for and are working towards a future in Portugal for their children.

Figure 3. The image above is a written and recorded testimony by the mother of the family to archive the dialgoues. Second part: son and daughter.

Chapter **i.ii.**

_Border-thinking: an architectural glossary of Syrian migration-related words

i.ii.a. What is to border-think in architecture?

What was lost when the words "representation of Syrian student migrations" were written, imagined, and reflected upon?
I struggled to find the right words while imagining how to represent these migrations. I was lost not only in visual representation but also in textual expression. Through brainstorming and mental maps, I began facing fundamental and unavoidable questions that shaped and justified the course of my research: Is this architecture? How can it become architecture? How is it related to architecture? Why approach it through architecture? As these questions resurfaced throughout the research, I recognized a prerequisite for answering them: by redefining migration-related words used by the Syrian student migrants in the case studies, architecture adapts, acknowledges, interprets, and simulates what is not conventionally architectural in its fundamental and traditional form, expanding into a more interdisciplinary domain that, in an initial step, explores the research's purpose.

Through the practice of performing in dialogue, the very use of words shaped an approach to representations, creating a common ground to facilitate an understanding of a student migrant's struggles and resilience through their words and language expressions. Redefining specific migration-related terms that emerge from dialogues and interactions between the student migrants and me serves as a step to reintroduce and reconfigure familiar and unfamiliar, formal and informal terms relevant to geography, geopolitics, ethnography, other social sciences, culture, and architecture in relation to language. These words highlight the significance of language in the practice of border-thinking in a specific scope and in the Syrian student migration and Syrian migration crises in a broader one.

To border-think is to examine the experiences and shared stories of student migrants from an activist standpoint, to engage with their narratives, and to take what is learned from these stories and share it through translation. In this context, translation refers not only to language but also to the redefinition of emotions expressed during dialogues into a glossary component. Although a glossary of border-thinking cannot encompass all the words used by Syrian student migrants during these dialogues, its inclusion in the first part of this thesis underscores the role of language as a fundamental aspect of a humane approach to Syrian student migrants, their experiences, and the broader issue of the Syrian student migration crisis.

The body of text in the following second chapter situates this research within the process of dismantling the notion of border-thinking and explores how, from a learning approach, it could relate to architecture. The diagram (Figure 4) represents a sequence of connections and articulations developed through a reflection on border-thinking to address the question: "What is to border-think?" Through this diagrammatic approach, words and lines begin to connect and branch inward. From the question of the Syrian student migration phenomenon

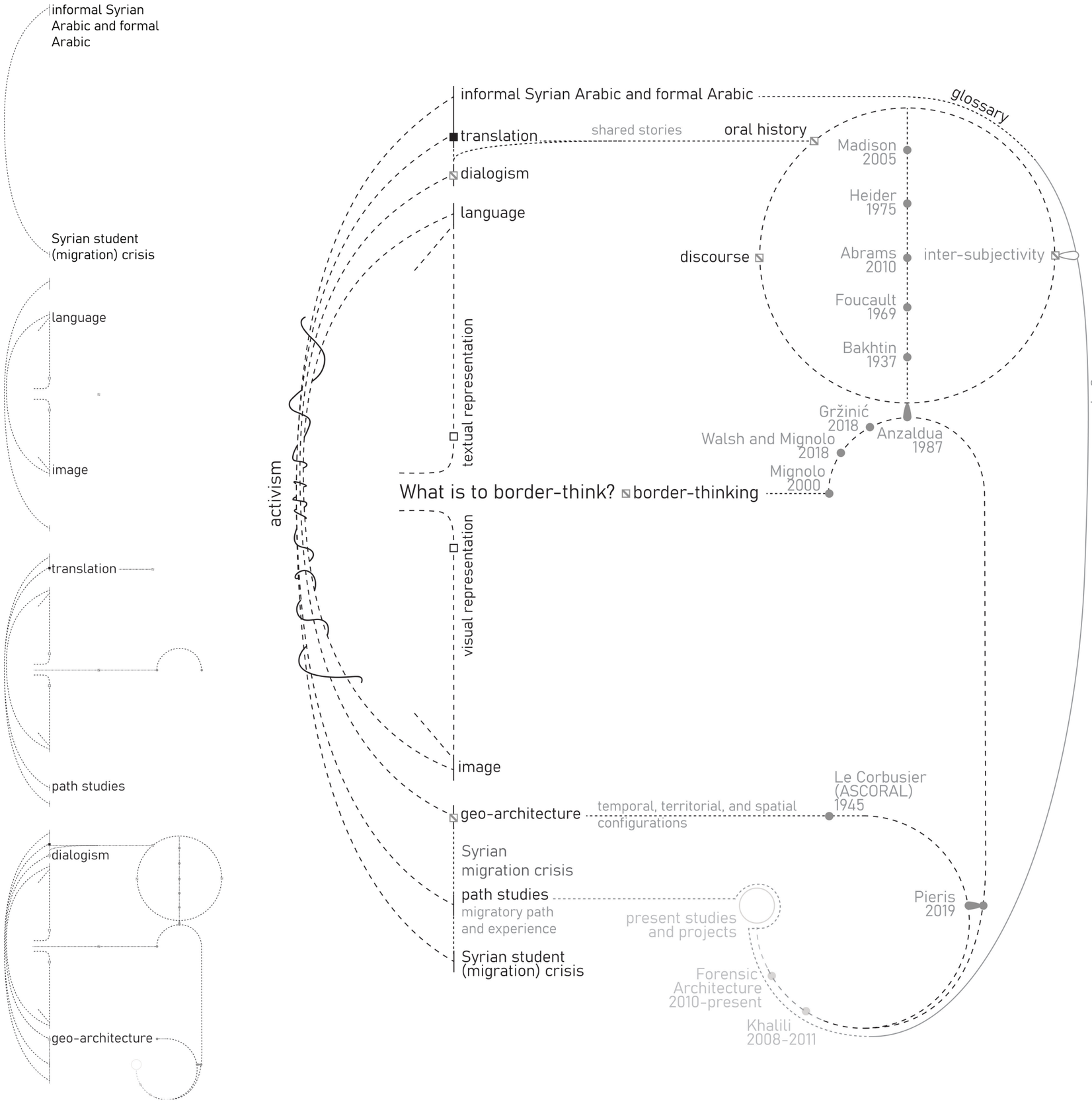


Figure 4. Diagram questioning the representation of "what is to border-think?" in the context of the Syrian student migration crisis; consisting of five branchings. The first branching: Syrian student migration crisis and Informal Syrian Arabic and Formal Arabic. The second branching: image and language. The third branching: path studies and translation. The fourth branching: geo-architecture and dialogism. The fifth branching: activism and knowledge production. All branchings encompass principal ideas to activate activism for knowledge production.

and crisis to the relation of language usage and emphasis, more terms emerge to contribute to answering this chapter's question. From visual and textual representation comes the importance of image and language, which express an interplay in representation that functions not only as a descriptive tool but also as a means of deconstructing, constructing, and re-interpreting the theme of migration and its relation to borders in broader terms and migratory paths and experiences in specific terms.

To define borders through border-thinking, it is essential to consider how borders operate beyond territorial demarcations, shaping migrant experiences through both visible and invisible forces and power dynamics. In this sense, the borders created by power structures contradict those that humanitarian agencies — bodies concerned with supporting and defending migrants — are trying to deconstruct. Territory is seen from the perspective of power structures as zones involving defense mechanisms of control and vigilance, which are physically, legally, and administratively embodied in borders — broadly, being territorial in their own terms where power and authority are exerted. Territory, however, is not merely a fixed space; it is actively produced through political, social, cultural, and economic processes and exchanges that shape how land is perceived, governed, and controlled. Instead of being defined by rigid borders, territory can be understood as relational, where movement, resistance, and negotiation redefine the boundaries. In this context, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's *Refuge in a moving world* (2020) underscores the continuous aspect of migration by integrating multiple disciplinary perspectives from different researchers, revealing how mobility challenges fixed notions of borders. One of the collaborators, an architect, explores the duality of the word 'door' as a border on two scales — territorial and human — each carrying distinct yet connected meanings. Emami, in "Exploring In-betweenness: Alice and Spaces of Contradiction in Refuge" (2020), expresses, "Thresholds of a larger scale are materialized by checkpoints and may shrink or expand according to changes in regulations, laws and individual circumstances such as nationality" (Emami, 2020, p. 4533). Recalling that nationality serves as a border for the Syrian migrant population, it establishes a form of exclusion and restriction based on legal and socio-political frameworks. According to Emami, when the idea of the border is scaled down, the door is described as:

> On a smaller scale, doors act as thresholds between personal space and the space of the outdoors, the space of solitude against the rest of the world. The multivalence of the checkpoint as an element of separation, connection, passage or interruption and a signifier of territoriality and identity can be substantiated in conjunction with the dual nature of doors. Frontiers or borders are dominant factors in delineating boundaries and contouring local identity; they become the manifestation of doors at large, urban scales. As well as a linear interpretation of doors as symbols of the permission of passage, a second – circular – interpretation is that of the door as marker of interiority and domesticity: a closed loop. (Emami, 2020, p.453)

Similarly, Franz and Silva, in Migration, Identity, and Belonging: Defining Borders and Boundaries of the Homeland (2022), expand on this by examining how borders are also social and psychological constructs that influence and are influenced by migrants' identities and

sense of belonging, with the collaboration of different researchers.[11] Taken together, these works express that borders are not static lines but dynamic processes that structure social and political inclusion, exclusion, advantage, disadvantage, and the continuous negotiation of territory and identity. Building on this, border-thinking emerges as a critical framework that is lived, negotiated, and socially embedded; it questions the power structures behind borders but also reclaims the epistemic agency of those who move across and inhabit them.

'Border-thinking' encompasses multiple ways of understanding migration as one term among many interconnected ideas, actively guiding and forming its variations, contexts, and trajectories. Grounded in migrants' lived experiences at borders, border-thinking is an expression introduced by Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/la frontera: The new mestiza* (1987). Anzaldúa (1987) explores the cultural, linguistic, and psychological negotiations of those who exist at the margins, or in in-between spaces, particularly migrants, indigenous communities, and other historically marginalized groups, along the United States of America–Mexico border. Border-thinking in Anzaldúa's theoretical and practical research, rooted in activism, expanded into other studies and became central to decolonial studies, where it is understood as a way of resisting and re-imagining dominant narratives imposed by colonial and imperial structures. Scholars such as Mignolo further developed the expression, arguing that border-thinking emerges from the perspectives of those who have been historically marginalized, suggesting alternative ways of knowing, being, and constructing identities beyond colonial knowledge systems. Gržinić's *Border-thinking: Disassembling histories of racialized violence* (2018) also critically examines the geopolitical and ideological structures that define contemporary border regimes, engaging with decolonial perspectives such as those of Mignolo. Gržinić's (2018) work exposes how borders function as mechanisms of exclusion and control while shaping migrants' lived realities within global power structures. By analyzing how migration is governed, Gržinić challenges dominant narratives of space, knowledge, and territoriality, establishing a critical view on how borders define not only movement but also identity and agency. Though Gržinić (2018) does not explicitly engage with or focus on Anzaldúa's ideas about border-thinking, their works share conceptual parallels in addressing borders as ideological constructs that shape identity, movement, and exclusion. However, Gržinić's analysis is more directly aligned with Mignolo's decolonial framework.

Through Mignolo's work on 'decoloniality' in *The darker side of the renaissance* (1995) and *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking* (2000), a more precise understanding of border-thinking in relation to language and translation is developed. Mignolo's perspective opens new ways of articulating thought and reflection, complementing Anzaldúa's approach to border-thinking as a critical approach to knowledge production and a way of knowing. Anzaldúa (1987) also explores language metaphorically, reflecting on how to 'tame' (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 53) a language by blurring its territorial boundaries. Anzaldúa links languages to lands, words to interwoven borders, and, in doing so, influences cultural geography. Relating border-thinking to language, Walsh and Mignolo, in *On decoloniality: concepts, analytics, praxis* (2018), also circle around the idea of border-thinking

11 The collaborations of these researchers are addressed throughout the structure of this thesis to explore the lived experiences of migrants and the condition of being a migrant — for instance, by questioning the conflicted feeling of belonging, and then by responding to the power structures embedded in the idea of home and to the reconfiguration of auto-ethnography from a personal practice to a political act.

being a process of learning and unlearning that challenges dominant epistemologies and embraces marginalized knowledge systems. These dominant epistemologies are mainstream systems of knowledge that shape how societies define truth, reality, and ways of knowing. While Mignolo formalizes border-thinking within decolonial studies, Anzaldúa, through mestiza consciousness and other feminist and pedagogical approaches, highlights the role of border-thinking in transforming identity, language, and knowledge production through subjectivity and advocacy: "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition." (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 1)

From thinking to acting, Mignolo emphasizes the researcher's position in actively engaging in migration studies, stating, "Border-thinking is actional" (Mignolo, 2000, p. xviii). Acting is a continuous, non-neutral verb that requires and demands a reaction, a performance, and an exertion of active effort as a response. This emphasizes what Bakhtin (1975/1981) expresses:

> In the actual life of speech, every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is indissolubly merged with the response, with a motivated agreement or disagreement. To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other. Thus an active understanding, one that assimilates the word under consideration into a new conceptual system, that of the one striving to understand, establishes a series of complex interrelationships, consonances and dissonances with the word and enriches it with new elements. It is precisely such an understanding that the speaker counts on. Therefore his orientation toward the listener is an orientation toward a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse; it is in this way, after all, that various different points of view, conceptual horizons, systems for providing expressive accents, various social 'languages' come to interact with one another. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282)

The action in border-thinking lies in recognizing that the delimitation of borders in geography also involves the delimitation of language and translation. Replacing these delimitations with engagement in border-thinking involves studying and interpreting border contexts in relation to the subject matter through various forms of creative action. In the student migration contexts explored in this thesis, engagement implies participating in an inter-subjective discourse and gathering and recording data as it unfolds with the subject. Within this discourse, dialogue takes shape — language is acknowledged, dissected, and words gain frequency through repetition. The pre-dialogue phase involves setting objectives centered on the discourse's purpose. However, once the dialogue begins, language opens new possibilities for rethinking both the subject and the subject matter of study, providing a ground for reinterpretation visually and textually. Engaging with a migrant in dialogue about the migratory path and

experience means both thinking and performing translation. Border-thinking thus becomes a process of linguistic scanning and mediation between the dialogist (researcher) and the interlocutors (the student migrants).

For each case study, this process is carried out separately and individually, followed by theorization both before and after the dialogue(s), and reinterpretation during and after the dialogue(s). These dialogues are considered a co-construction of knowledge and understanding through the image of language — an artistic representation of language that is raw and unfiltered, producing empirical data and evidence, which, as defined by Bakhtin (1975/1981):

> In a word, the novelistic plot serves to represent speaking persons and their ideological worlds. What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own horizon within someone else's horizon. There takes place within the novel an ideological translation of another's language, and an overcoming of its otherness-an otherness that is only contingent, external, illusory. Characteristic for the historical novel is a positively weighted modernizing, an erasing of temporal boundaries, the recognition of an eternal present in the past. The primary stylistic project of the novel as a genre is to create images of languages. Every novel, taken as the totality of all the languages and consciousnesses of language embodied in it, is a hybrid. But we emphasize once again: it is an intentional and conscious hybrid, one artistically organized, and not an opaque mechanistic mixture of languages (more precisely, a mixture of the brute elements of language). The artistic image of a language-such is the aim that novelistic hybridization sets for itself. For this reason the novelist makes no effort at all to achieve a linguistically (dialectologically) exact and complete reproduction of the empirical data of those alien languages he incorporates into his text-he attempts merely to achieve an artistic consistency among the images of these languages. (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 365–366)

The novel, in Bakhtin's (1975/1981) idea, is 'heteroglossic,' meaning it incorporates multiple voices (Bakhtin, 1981, p. xix). It consists of the chronotope, "[...] literally, 'time-space' [...]" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84), which connects time and space to shape the narrative's structure and meaning. The novel is also dialogic, meaning it is shaped by the interaction of different voices, ideologies, and historical contexts. No single voice in a novel stands alone; every word is influenced by past and future responses, forming an ongoing dialogue. In this sense, this thesis, to an extent, adopts the form of a novel, including multiple lived experiences, interlaced narratives, and evolving re-interpretations. From an active standpoint, it emphasizes the significant impact of shared words within dialogue — through language, translation, and reinterpretation. This process transforms shared words into narrated images — a progression and translation of words into images and images into words. Through this process, representation begins to take shape.

Similarly, the significance of words is emphasized in Anzaldúa (1987). While addressing migration and border crossing, Anzaldúa explores the definitions of the border domain, relating them to real-life contexts rather than restricting them to fixed, technical meanings.

In Anzaldúa's view, words must manifest through images, projected onto a screen created by narrating and writing a story (Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 69–70). Words and images are complementary elements that build the narration of a context. To narrate a migratory context is to perceive lived experiences, territories, borders, and spaces of transition. This suggests an architectural connection with discourse and its narration, creating a space for representation and providing tools familiar to me as an architect and researcher in the field of architecture and its interdisciplinarity.

Border-thinking has been introduced into the field of architecture in Pieris' *Architecture on the borderline* (2019). Pieris expands the concept of architecture into a territorial cross-scale, illustrating ways of border crossing in global events through plans, maps, and photography. Pieris (2019) also defines border spaces, referring to them as rajando — literally, spaces of splitting and separation. Similarly, in "The Archaeology of Section" (1989), Guillerme and Vérin discuss how sectioning, segmenting, and, in simpler form, cutting allows space to be cut transversely or longitudinally, revealing the inside from the outside and its correlation with the plan (Guillerme & Vérin, 1989, p. 234). Border-thinking, as an expression, responds to current events, adapted as a tool for analyzing and deconstructing situations through critical reflection to expose their internal dimensions. To border-think is to approach borders through a geopolitical epistemology — a political understanding of human and physical geography — while critically examining the existence of borders and the impact of migration on a region. In the context of this thesis, this approach specifically examines the Mediterranean region. To maintain an architectural language, this thesis seeks an adaptive geopolitical interpretation of border-thinking that views geo-architectural traversed places and places of transition as temporal-territorial-spatial configurations drawn from dialogism. It recognizes that the border exists as both a material (constructed, militarized, and physical) and immaterial (administrative, controlled, experienced, remembered, or even non-existent) entity, challenging conventional perceptions.

In architecture, border-thinking involves dissecting and critically reflecting upon migration-related terms to understand and represent their significance visually and textually. These terms, central to migration, remain under-explored in architectural discourse (from an activist and humane position), with their meanings neither fully analyzed nor integrated into the field. Therefore, this research invites readers to engage with a border-thinking approach to a migration-related glossary within architecture. As a field of representation, architecture relies on understanding terms that enrich its cultural and aesthetic dimensions. The idea of the border in architecture has traditionally been shaped by its materiality — as an architectural element that restricts crossing. However, beyond its physicality, the term encompasses broader meanings. Migration-related terms often carry multifaceted definitions — tangible and intangible, real and fictional — especially when connected to an adaptive and evolving discipline like architecture. This research views architecture as an interdisciplinary field that absorbs and adapts ideas shaping humanitarian perception, influenced by emerging disruptions, events, and everyday realities relevant to the Mediterranean migration crisis. Just as borders create dichotomies between people, ideas, and objects, border-thinking also operates within this duality.

Border-thinking is a composite term that raises dual arguments, such as freedom versus restriction in mobility, migrant statuses versus lived experiences, and territories versus migrating populations. To deepen its relevance within architecture, border-thinking functions as an architectural glossary, dissecting and articulating the definitions of words while tracing their role in representing Syrian student migration and condensing their contexts. *International migration law: Glossary on migration* (2019) and Tinti and Reitano's *Migrant, refugee, smuggler, savior* (2017) serve as glossarial references that define border- and migration-related terms. The latter employs border-thinking to explain these terms through fieldwork-based storytelling, examining how they are understood and applied individually. In contrast, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) *Glossary on migration* (2019) provides a standardized glossary, presenting neutral definitions in alphabetical order alongside synonyms and related terms.

In response to undefined words and expressions — terms not defined elsewhere in migration contexts but integral to and inseparable from the Syrian migratory experience — this thesis presents a glossary developed through performance-based research, bringing together key textual elements. It features key terms in Formal Arabic, Syrian Informal Arabic, and English — the languages of dialogue and writing — to ensure broader accessibility and understanding of the Syrian migration context. Arabic terms used in conversation are translated into English, though certain words without direct equivalents are retained in Arabic to preserve their meaning within the narrated experiences. A few Greek[12] and Portuguese words are also included, as they emerged in theoretical research and share linguistic and conceptual connections with the selected Arabic and English terms. The chosen words stem from and adapt to the practical engagement with Syrian student migrants, who shared and contributed to representing their migratory paths and experiences. The translation between languages and the transformation of these terms enable cross-referencing of related concepts, creating a network of meanings.[13] This glossary takes on an architectural dimension as the selected words help visualize and represent a range of migratory contexts, transitioning spaces, and emotional landscapes. Additionally, it brings together individual migration narratives, as many participants expressed similar emotions and spatial descriptions through words. Constructing an architectural glossary through border-thinking enables the reconfiguration of terms rarely examined in architectural discourse. It integrates path studies, inter-subjectivity, and other core elements through activism into an architectural framework, creating a methodology for researching migration and representation in knowledge production.

12 The etymologies of the Greek words are adapted from *Origins: A Short etymological dictionary of modern English* (1958), with an effort to simplify the original meanings of the selected terms.

13 The selected words are also reintroduced later, in a shorter form, within the body of the text when referenced in the glossary.

i.ii.b. Glossary of words in the practiced languages within the dialogues and the theoretical research

The glossary in this thesis is a fundamental tool that helps bridge the gap between language, migration, and architecture. It serves as a mesh where concepts tied to migration are not only defined but also reinterpreted and made accessible throughout the text. By using both formal and informal Arabic alongside English, the glossary highlights the linguistic and emotional nuances of migration, emphasizing the role of language in shaping the reading and understanding of the migratory experiences of Syrian student migrants. While not exhaustive, this glossary becomes a key component in creating a more inclusive and humane approach to architectural representation and migration studies. Through this tool, architecture as an interdisciplinary field encompasses what lies beyond its conventional boundaries, exploring the intersections of language, culture, and migration within the broader context of humanitarian crises.

This glossary reflects terms commonly used in the context of Syrian student migration and its associated experiences. The words are defined with an understanding of the unique Syrian context, focusing on their relevance to migration and displacement, often omitting general or redundant terms like "in Syria" for brevity while maintaining geographical or contextual significance. Because many of the words defined after each Arabic term are generic, it is important to recognize that these words are considered within the established Syrian context. For example, based on the principles of the research that concerns the subject matter, 'ethic' should be defined as "ethic(s) of the research and representation on the Syrian student migratory paths and experiences." In this sense, these expressions are shortened to focus on the meaning of the word without overlooking the Syrian context.

In terms of a border, 'roadblock' should be defined as "roadblock in Syria," but instead of including and repeating 'in Syria' for redundancy, it is omitted while the meaning remains. That is to say, the emphasis of 'in Syria' identifies where the roadblock, as a place, even if temporarily exists, is located geographically. The concept of a roadblock is broad and can exist in various geopolitical contexts; that is why the context is established when defined. Another example, more concerned with the action and interaction, is 'dialogue,' which should be "dialogue with a Syrian migrant," ensuring that the focus remains on the experiences of Syrian migrants rather than a generic performance in the dialogue. The glossary entries — the individual terms or words listed and defined — highlight how they relate to the Syrian migrants' experiences, ensuring the definitions are tied to their migratory context. The glossary includes expressions from formal Arabic and informal Syrian dialects, such as "ala rasi" (an expression of respect and agreement) or "tabald al-masha'er" (an expression of emotional numbness related to trauma), which express key aspects of familiarity with words, migration process, and emotional states experienced by migrants.

The glossary also delves into various physical and emotional aspects of migration, including terms for spaces, places, territory, and time specific to migration events, placing them within the narrative framework, such as 'migration space' and 'migration time.' These definitions are shaped by both the subjective experiences of migrants and the recalled and/or studied geographical and temporal dimensions of their migratory paths. Words like "Hajez" (roadblock) or "Hodoud" (borders) reflect the physical barriers faced by migrants, while terms

such as “Tanmeel” (emotional numbness) and “Tatneesh” (selective forgetfulness) describe the psychological impact of migration, trauma, and the coping mechanisms of the displaced.

The glossary paves the way for the intersection of time-territory-place-space, identity, and emotional states that define the migratory experiences of student migrants, translating words into images and images into words in representation, which commences in the second part of this thesis. To begin defining this translation of words into images and then images into words, the term “Edrak” إدراك used in both formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic refers to the act of realizing or perceiving something at a deep cognitive and emotional level. It’s a noun that conveys a sense of understanding or awareness, particularly when the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of a subject come together. This term has a specific connotation of recognizing or imagining an idea and is often used to describe a specific level of understanding — one that integrates both the sensory and moral aspects of an experience.

In the context of the migration experience, “Edrak” can be interpreted as the realization or recognition of the complexities involved in the migrations of the Syrian student migrants. For example, in dialogue with Syrian student migrants, “Edrak” might be used to describe the moment when they fully grasp the significance of their migration, not just in terms of the physical migration, but also the ethical and emotional layers surrounding their experience. It is about coming to terms with their situation, understanding their displacement, and the implications it has on their identity, pursuit of education, and future. This term ties into the research’s exploration of how Syrian students understand and represent their migratory paths, highlighting the connection between cognitive awareness and emotional engagement with their experiences.

“Edrak” reflects a level of awareness greater than simply recognizing a fact — it is about perceiving a larger context, a broader understanding that integrates both aesthetics (how the experience feels or is represented) and ethics (how it is morally understood or acted upon). It is not just about knowing; it is about truly coming to terms with what is being experienced through the shared narratives of Syrian student migrants. It is not just about perceiving the physical aspects of migration (like crossing borders or adjusting to a host country), but also acknowledging the psychological and existential weight of that migration. Edrak plays a role in how these individuals interpret the experiences tied to migration time, how they adapt to or transform the migration space, and how they perceive the migration events that define their paths, which may or may not be affected by migration trauma. Together, these terms produce a layered understanding of migration — one that acknowledges both the realities of displacement and the emotional, ethical, and aesthetic transformations that occurred during the duration of this thesis.

From A to Z:

Ala rasi على راسي

First-person expression: A Syrian informal Arabic expression, written in Formal Arabic but commonly used and pronounced informally. It literally means 'on/over my head' and carries three metaphorical uses: 1. Agreeing to do something, as in "with pleasure" or "you are welcome." 2. Showing respect, indicating "I hold you in high regard." 3. Expressing gratitude, meaning "I appreciate what you have done for me."

Edrak إدراك

Formal Arabic; singular noun; expressing a state of realization and perception of a layered aesthetic and ethical meaning related to a subject matter; to imagine an idea; a cognitive notion for when the aesthetic and the ethic follow one another. The word "edrak" has been used during the dialogues with the student migrants to explain as a response to the migrants' questions about the objective of the dialogue.

Aes.the.tic: Definition: Derived from the Greek aisthetikos, meaning sensory and sensitive, and ***aisthetes***, meaning a keen perceiver; from the Greek *aisthesis*, meaning sensation and active sense-perception. Aesthetics refers to the mode of experiencing, appreciating, and receiving art. It pertains to perception as well as sensory and emotional responses to representation, encompassing the recognition of representation in its various forms. Aesthetic functions as both a noun and an adjective, denoting the tendency to conceive and perceive an appealing image of a subject. The concept of aesthetics inherently involves ethics, as reflected in the Portuguese word *estética*.

Eth.ic: Definition: from Greek ***ethos***, meaning the character or fundamental nature of something or someone. Often used in its plural form, ethics; refers to the moral framework through which a subject is perceived and engaged with, whether by projecting it or interacting with it. It involves the discernment of what is considered right or wrong.

Po.et.ics: Definition: from the Greek ***poiesis***, meaning the act of bringing something into existence that previously did not exist; the making of a story through representation. The act of making and arranging in a creative process. Poetics integrates aesthetic and ethical dimensions in the formation and expression of subjectivity.

Faragh فراغ

(plural noun form *faraghat* فراغات)

Formal Arabic; singular noun; literal meaning for emptiness, but mostly used to define space; also, used to indicate three common and relevant meanings, 1. an occupied volume: space, area, or room, 2. an empty volume: space, area, or room, 3. a feeling of an interior emptiness in a person.

Other words that could relate to *faragh* are:

Masaha مساحة (plural noun form *masahat* مساحات)

Formal Arabic; singular noun; measured space and distance.

Masafa مسافة (plural noun form *masafat* مسافات)

Formal Arabic; singular noun; refers to the physical distance or expanse between two points or locations that could be measured.

Waqet وقت (plural noun form *awqat* أوقات)

Formal Arabic; singular noun; literally meaning time. It could refer in the definition of hours, minutes and seconds. It could also refer to the time that something will happen or has happened without defining when exactly. Similar terms: Zaman زمن/ Zamaan زمان (plural noun form *azmina* أزمنة) Formal Arabic; singular noun; relatively meaning time, period, age, past, and era.

The usage of these words in English is contextual, shaped by their attribution to and association with the term migration. Their definitions are not fixed; instead, they emerge through the understanding of the case studies:

Mi.gra.tion space

Definition: an expanse or area with imagined or speculated dimensions and scales, which may be occupied or empty, and may or may not correspond to physical reality. Migration space can be appropriated and associated with one or more function and use. It can

also be associated with having no specific function or us. Migration space is a more abstract term, relating to the imagined or perceived spaces that migrants occupy during their migratory paths. It is the mental and emotional space they navigate, as well as the physical spaces they move through. This could range from the actual geographic areas they traverse, to the conceptual spaces they inhabit as they move between home, transit countries, and potential destinations. It reflects both the physical and psychological landscapes that migrants interact with, and how these spaces are either appropriated or perceived by the migrants. For instance, a refugee camp, a border checkpoint, or a foreign city could all be seen as components of migration space — each with its own significance, both spatially and emotionally.

Mi.gra.tion terri.tory

Definition: for a portion of space and an environment that may or not be familiar to the migrant. It is a geographical space affected by regional changes and official designations; it is context-dependent. A migration place, which exists within migration space, is also context-dependent. Migration territory refers to the geographical areas that migrants move through, stay in, or settle in. It is influenced by the political, cultural, and illegal and legal landscape of the area in question. This could include spaces like specific and/or safe regions to which migrants attempt to escape. Migration territory is often associated with real, legally recognized locations where migration takes place, but also includes irregular escape attempts and illegal smuggling routes. It highlights the external frameworks that shape the migrant experience, such as borders, territorial disputes, or governmental policies that regulate or disrupt migration movement.

Mi.gra.tion move.ment

Definition: refers to the physical and metaphorical paths of migrants as they transition through various spaces and times during their displacement. It captures the dynamic process of moving from one place to another, which can include both voluntary and forced movements. This term not only encompasses the logistical aspects of migration — such as modes of transport, routes taken, and the shifting geographical locations — but also the fluidity of movement across borders, regions, and countries. It highlights the sense of ongoing transition and the constant, often uncertain, motion that defines the migrant experience. The idea of migration movement also speaks to the emotional and psychological shifts migrants experience, as they move between identities, cultures, and even forms of belonging during their migratory paths. It underscores the perpetual state of change and adaptation that is intrinsic to the migrant condition, often fueled by a combination of necessity, hope, and survival.

Mi.gra.tion place

Definition: for a place that may or may not be associated with geographic coordinates, North orientation, and / or regional specification and may or may not include physical setting. Migration place with specific locations or environments refers to where migrants live, experience, and interact with the world during their migratory paths. It focuses on the physical, socio-political, circumstantial, and institutional, among other, characteristics of the locations where migrants find themselves.

Mi.gra.tion time

Definition: for a duration of a (continued, discontinued, or sparse) period(s) between past, present and future. Migration time is both a personal sense of events and a precision registered data of the itinerary that may change and progress with space at once. Migration time is also attributed to the time zone between countries traversed and the climate, day and night influence and on the migration event. In Arabic language, time is always mentioned alongside place, making space inherently intertwined with both. Simultaneously, space is also conceived as an architectural volume. The migration time can be determined by the migration within a chronological time-line and aspects of migration (the dates, hours, and durations of travel). It also refers to the subjective experience of time as shaped by

displacement. The sense of time for a migrant is often fragmented — marked by different phases such as departure, transit, arrival, and settlement, followed by a layer of unfamiliarity with the surrounding environment. It captures how time is experienced differently in the path, often with a heightened awareness of waiting, uncertainty, and transition. It also extends to the time zone shifts and the daily rhythms that shift as one moves from one place to another. It is central in understanding how migrants, especially those displaced by conflict, experience time not just as a linear sequence of events, but as a complex, often fragmented, emotional process.

Migration event

Definition: for an occurrence in migration time representing a migration flow of migrants along a chronological timeline. This includes sub-events in a chronological time-line, such as start of the time-line, migration flow initiation, departure, transit, arrival, settlement and /or relocation, and any subsequent sub-events, as identified and described. It refers to specific moments or milestones within the migratory path. These sub-events include not only the physical aspects of migration like crossing a border or arriving in a new country, but also the emotional and psychological sub-events that accompany these transitions. A migration event might be something like the moment of departure from one's home country, a significant encounter with border authorities, the experience of being welcomed or rejected in a new country, or even moments of personal reflection during the journey. Each of these events carries its own weight, contributing to the migrant's evolving sense of self and place.

Hajez حاجز

(plural form *hawajez* حواجز)

Formal Arabic; singular noun; relatively meaning the gap or space between one thing and another or one person and another. It also refers to a physical manifestation as a temporary military barricade, in a political and territorial context, that interrupts movement through a given area — affecting both vehicular and pedestrian passage. In this barricade, cement blocks, metal tanks and/ or cross wooden sticks are usually located

Road.block

Definition: A roadblock is a physical barrier set up to control movement along a road, often for security purposes. It is placed at the entrance or exit of a specific road or street, often in areas with heavy human traffic, such as open markets or main entrances to roads or highways, to conduct security checks and maintain control. At these roadblocks throughout the city, suburbs, or villages, many detainment events have occurred.

Ma'bar معبر

border crossing checkpoint [in Arabic: معبر (ma'bar) for singular and معابر (ma'aber) for plural.

Bo.rder cross.ing and check.point

Definition: a stop and entry point that pauses transition and crossover from one area to another. After security checkups are conducted and certain procedures are performed, a person crosses over a checkpoint.

Harban (m.) هربان | Harbane (f.) هربانة

Informal Syrian Arabic; formal Arabic for (hareb) هارب (m.) and (harebah) هاربة (f.); adjective; relevant meaning: an escapee. It is derived from *Hurub* هروب, which is the noun for escape. In this context, an escapee may also be referred to as a مهاجر (muhajer) for a migrant and لاجئ (laji'e) for a refugee.

E.scap.ee (relational term to *escape*)

Definition: an individual who flees forcibly or by choice from a harsh situation into another safer or better one.

Mi.grant: Definition: for an individual who changes location of origin by moving from one place to another, more specifically move out of their country of origin to a relatively or completely foreign land. Word connections: a migrant can become a refugee if their request to be granted a refugee status is approved from the country of residence.

Viewpoint(s): Such as of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) views a migrant and a refugee as part of a inclusivist view, which views all who move from one place to another as migrants including

refugees. On the other hand, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has a residualist view separates these two cases; refugees are not migrants, in its viewpoint.

Re.fugee: Definition: for an escapee, an individual that seeks a refuge in a neighboring or foreign country. This individual holds a legal document that identifies them as a refugee in the country of residence.

A.sy.lum see.ker: Definition: for an escapee, an individual that seeks a refuge in a neighboring or foreign country. This escapee awaits to be listed then granted the refugee status from the receiving country. Therefore, until refugee status is granted or refused, this escapee remains an asylum seeker. If the escapee has not yet settled in a temporary camp during the waiting period, or remains mobile and outside their country of origin, they may be considered stateless.

Hodoud حدود

Formal Arabic; plural noun; meant to refer to one or more borderlands. The singular form of this noun is *al-had* الحد, which is a noun for an action of stopping, splitting, and cutting and does not refer to a political and land context as the plural form of the word. But the basic, singular form of the word dissects the meaning of borders as the word *Rajando* suggests, which is a gerund form of the verb form in Spanish *rajar* for splitting, slicing, and separating. In this context in formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialect crossing spaces with risks, such as borders, checkpoints, and pedestrian crossings from side walk to street into another sidewalk are accompanied with the verb to cut/split قطع (qate'e); cross borders (qate'e hudoud) قطع حدود; cross checkpoint قطع حاجز (qate'e hajez)

Bor.der Definition: a physical limit that limits crossing, protects from outsiders, keeps under surveillance, and sustains boundaries between a place and another. A borderline . A boundary

Fron.tier Definition: is an area near and in-front of the borderline that is between two countries.

Mar.gin Definition: is a border area of land that is between two countries.

Intimaa'a انتماء

(noun) used in formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialect: verb form in informal Syrian Arabic dialect *bentimi* بنتمي; meaning, a positive and personal sensation to belong to a place, person, group or any relevant subject that gives one the sensation of pertinence. It is often accompanied with the nostalgia of home and the search to find home in another place, person, or community. Within Syria, the term often used patriotically within Syria; outside, it reflects an ongoing process of coping with the loss of home. In this case, it might involve either or all the following: literal, physical distance, or sentimental loss. The state of *intima'a* follows the migrant and may guide them toward understanding and possibly rediscovering belonging. At the same time, it consists of a feeling of detachment from that home, subsequently seeking to find home somewhere else.

M'kharbet مخربط

(plural adjective form third-person *m'kharbateen* مخربطين) Informal Syrian Arabic dialect; singular (m.) adjective in past form. There is no direct English translation. The relevant meaning refers to a person who is involuntarily confused or (mentally) disoriented. From the context of the dialogues, the verb is mainly used when recalling wrong turns made by the drivers or pilots responsible for the transportation methods during the migrations. Similarly from the third-person past tense verb *kharbat* خربط (m.) (plural form third-person past tense verb *kharbato* خربطوا) that a person has been or got confused; originally from the singular noun خربطة (*kharbatah*) that is disorder, disarrangement, mix-up, and confusion. A lot of incidents and experiences were created by the word ***kharbatah***, usually accompanied by the route; diversion from the route. It was used during the dialogues to describe either the first or third person active involvement in leading into a sub-sequential event.

Muhawara محاورة

(plural form muhawarat محاورات)

Formal Arabic; singular noun; relevantly meaning a dialogue; comes from the noun حوار (*hiwar*), which means discussion and conversation.

Dialogue: (plural form dialogues)

Definition: a performance between two individuals the dialogist and the interlocutor. The performance of the dialogue is an interaction between the former and the latter towards an objective and a set of questions and curiosities that are transformed into a process of familiarizing, learning and recording.

Shantata شنططة

(noun) used in informal Syrian Arabic dialect, first and third person verb form in past tense تشنططت *tshantatet*: meaning: to struggle in moving from one place to another away from home while being displaced. *Shantata* is the phenomenon of hurried, scattered, and shuffling movement — often representing the feeling of being displaced without a sense of control or stability. It could be experienced within a city, country, or between countries It is normally told with the feeling of being tired from this performed action. It is an experience and state of feeling tired of being away from home for a long time (for no specific duration or distance). It is also used as a venting expression from this experience frequently used along the dialogue with the student migrants and that is usually phrased in a rhetorical question, as in شو هالشنططة؟ (*shu hal shantata?*) what is this *shantata*? It is a means of catharsis to temporarily express and release the emotions, with which continue to be dealt, as a result of being displaced and at the same time yearning to be stable. The word originates from *shanta* شنطة, which refers to a bag of any size.

Tamsaha تمسحة

(noun) used in informal Syrian Arabic dialect; *tamsah'na* first-person plural form تمسحنا; third-person singular *tasmsah* (m.) تمسح | *tamsahet* (f.) تمسحت) used multiply by the student migrants during the dialogues, also used to describe the civilian status of a Syrian individual inside and outside the homeland. Untranslatable word into English; first person singular past tense verb; metaphoric meaning used to transform the noun crocodile تمساح (*temsah*), more of the toughness of a crocodile, into a verb to signify the combination of numbness, normalization, and familiarity with struggle that a person develops toward a particular situation or life in general. It is accompanied with a sort of a negative, yielding sense. But it also conveys the idea of a person's tolerance, adaptation, and coping mechanism to enduring a situation marked by hardship. *Tamsaha* delves into how migrants use mental mechanisms like avoidance or suppression to deal with the brutal realities of their migratory paths and experiences

Tanmeel تنميل

(noun) used in formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialect; literally means the sensation of ants in the body and technically means the temporary tingling and numbness sensation of a part of a body due to an unusual corporal position. *Tanmeel* metaphorically refers to total emotional numbness; the state of being dormant. It is used as the verb form *namalet* نملت: singular first person, refers to a person's feelings toward that scenery, situation, or memory. *Namalet* is a first-person verb-expression used to describe the feeling of emotional numbness and developed detachment towards something — such as an event, emotion, or life in general — often in response to an accumulation of past events and hardships. The term originates from the noun form of ant the formal word in arabic *namla* نملة: plural form: *namel* نمل. It is also similar to the word *anamel* أنامل in Arabic refers to fingers or finger-tips. *Tanmeel* could also refer the formal Arabic expression *tabalud al masha'er* تبلد المشاعر, which translates to 'emotional numbness' or 'blunting of emotions'. This phrase refers to a state where a person feels detached or indifferent, often in response to trauma or prolonged stress. When connecting "Tanmeel" with "tabalud al-masha'er" in a specific context, the idea of numbness or emotional detachment is explored through both terms, which would relate to the experience of displacement or trauma. This expression comes from the verb form in the third person تبلدت (*taballadet*) and تبلد (*tabalad*), which generally describes something (emotion and sense of self) that 'became dull,' 'became numb,' or 'became emotionally detached.' It is typically accompanied by an adjective. Both are derived from the noun root بلد (*balad*), which literally means country or city.

Tatneesh تطنيش
(noun) used in informal Syrian Arabic dialect: from the noun, *tanash* طناش, which means choosing to ignore in totality; verb form *Tanashet* طنشت; meaning, to ignore, from the state of ignoring and forgetting at once, either selectively, randomly, or entirely, within the consideration that it might be intentional or non-intentional. Non-intentional forgetting and disregard of the surrounding and/ or events in the case of migrants are followed by experiencing uneasiness and distress. *Tatneesh* works to protect one's memory from recollecting events that may or may not disturb ones emotional state. Therefore through the forceful leaving of one's home, trauma becomes present in a migrant's itinerary experience. *Tatneesh* is defense mechanism and process in which traumatic experiences are mentally 'wiped away' as a survival strategy, even as the impact of those experiences continues to shape their lives. Also related to: *Bitnasaa* بتناسى: Informal Syrian Arabic dialect; first-person present tense verb. There is no exact literal translation into English. The verb conveys an expressive sense of attempting to forcibly, automatically, or immediately self-forget and erase a memory or situation. It originates from the formal Arabic first-person present verb اتناسى (atansaa), which is related to the verb انسى (ansaa), meaning 'to forget.' The noun form النسيان (al-nisyan) translates to 'forgetfulness.' Complete forgetfulness caused by a traumatic event is referred to as نسيان تام (nisyan tam).

Mi.gra.tion trau.ma Definition: for a condition when a migrant experiences fear, distress, and/or disturbance that affects their psychological state. It is when their memory cannot erase that experience; a fluctuation in a memory in a migration event. It may or may not be affected by prior trauma(s). It can be associated to the state of displacement, longing for home, loneliness during migration event and/ or overseas, and impact of resettlement or relocation, among many others.

War trau.ma Definition: for a condition when a person is affected directly or indirectly by war. That condition also causes distress and disturbance, among other associated consequences of trauma, namely non-safety and instability. Being affected may also mean fearing that something may hurt home, family, and or anything related to one's homeland.

Tle't طلعت (related to *Hurub* هروب)
Formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialect; singular noun (plural form: *tle'na* طلعنا); relative meaning for escape. However, it was used more frequently by the student migrants than *Hrebet* هربت. Also, this differentiates the experience of struggle of forced and survival migration along the itinerary between a student refugee and a student migrant. From the verb *tle't* طلعت first and second-person form, third person *tale'* طلع, past tense; meaning, to get out, leave a place, a land, or a subject. With the student migrants used as *tle't ghaseb* طلعت غصب, which translates to 'I forcibly left.'
Antonym of *tle't*: *rje't* رجعت, meaning 'I came back.' (plural form: *rje'na* رجعنا)

Hurub هروب (related to *Harban*). Formal Arabic; singular noun; literal meaning for escape. *Hrebet* هرب; verb, first and second person form, past tense; literal meaning for escape and flew. Formal Arabic Related to: Forced displacement: formal Arabic النزوح القسري, pronounced as *al-nuzooh al-qasri*; related to: survival displacement: formal Arabic, النزوح من أجل البقاء, pronounced as *al-nuzooh men ajel al-baqa'a; al-baqa'a* also means 'remaining.'

E.scape Definition: for a possibility of fleeing upon a temporary or permanent runaway from a situation in search for a safer zone. Verb form:to runaway, isolate, or avert oneself from a situation.

chapter **i.iii.**

_A re-introduction to ‘geo-architecture’: *poiesis*, *ethos*, and *aisthesis* of migration in the field of architecture

The text body in the second chapter begins with the central question of this research's originality and urgency. It then compares this with existing academic studies that have examined and represented the Syrian migrant population in Portugal, including Syrian students from the APGES scholarship program. During my research, using keywords such as Syrian students and Syrian refugees in Portugal, I found several studies across different disciplines, namely psychology and mental health, public health, social sciences, lexicology, and architecture[14] — all falling under the broader category of migration studies. However, studies specifically focusing on Syrian student migrants and mentioning the Global Platform for Syrian Students scholarship program are fewer. These include works by Kinaan (2021), Matos et al. (2021, 2022, 2023), Matos (2022), Castro (2023), and Santinho and Rebelo (2024). Among them, Matos is the researcher most dedicated to studying Syrian migrants in Portugal, particularly through her doctoral thesis in psychology, *Journeys in meaning: psychological adjustment to trauma in resettled Syrian refugees* (2022), which focuses on the trauma experienced by Syrian refugees in Portugal as a host country.

Aside from the contributions of Matos et al. (2021, 2022, 2023) and Matos (2022), Santinho and Rebelo's "Integrating refugees and migrants into higher education in Portugal? An action research experience in a Portuguese university" (2024) is the only bibliographical reference listed that explicitly examines the role of higher education and academia in the lives of refugees in Portugal. It also provides a contextualization of their migratory paths through transit countries, where they also sought academic opportunities and pursuits. Santinho and Rebelo's (2024) research explores higher education as a critical space for integration, addressing both institutional challenges and student experiences. However, there are also references concerning Syrian student migrants in tertiary and higher education across different geographical contexts — particularly Türkiye, which hosts the largest population of Syrian refugees and migrants, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in "Syria refugee crisis explained" (2025).[15] In Türkiye, higher education institutions have played a crucial role in accommodating Syrian students, although these students face significant barriers to integration, as noted in "Syrian students in Turkish higher education: A systematic review and thematic synthesis" (2025). Additionally, the following references discuss Syrian students at various educational levels. Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network that protects academic freedom by supporting and advocating for scholars who face threats, persecution, or displacement due to their work or ideas. Among the countries they advocate for is Syria, and this advocacy includes a range of articles and reports on Syrian scholars, students, and education.[16] Al-Atrash et al.'s *We are Syrians: Three generations, three dissidents* (2017) compiles narratives from displaced Syrian scholars and students, shedding light on the academic, emotional, and societal challenges they face. Similarly, Dryden-Peterson's *Right where we belong: How refugee teachers and students are*

14 Research in architecture conducted in Portugal that addresses either migrants or Syrian migrants includes the master's theses of Kanan (2021) and Pinho (2023). Kanan's work focuses on refugee camp design in the Middle East and does not specifically address the Portuguese context or Syrian student migration. Pinho's project, on the other hand, involves designing community spaces for refugees in Portugal, but again, not specifically for or about Syrian (student) migrants.

15 Additional information on Syrian students abroad can be found in the annual reports, which are part of the archival work of APGES. Information retrieved from: https://www.globalplatformforsyrianstudents.org/

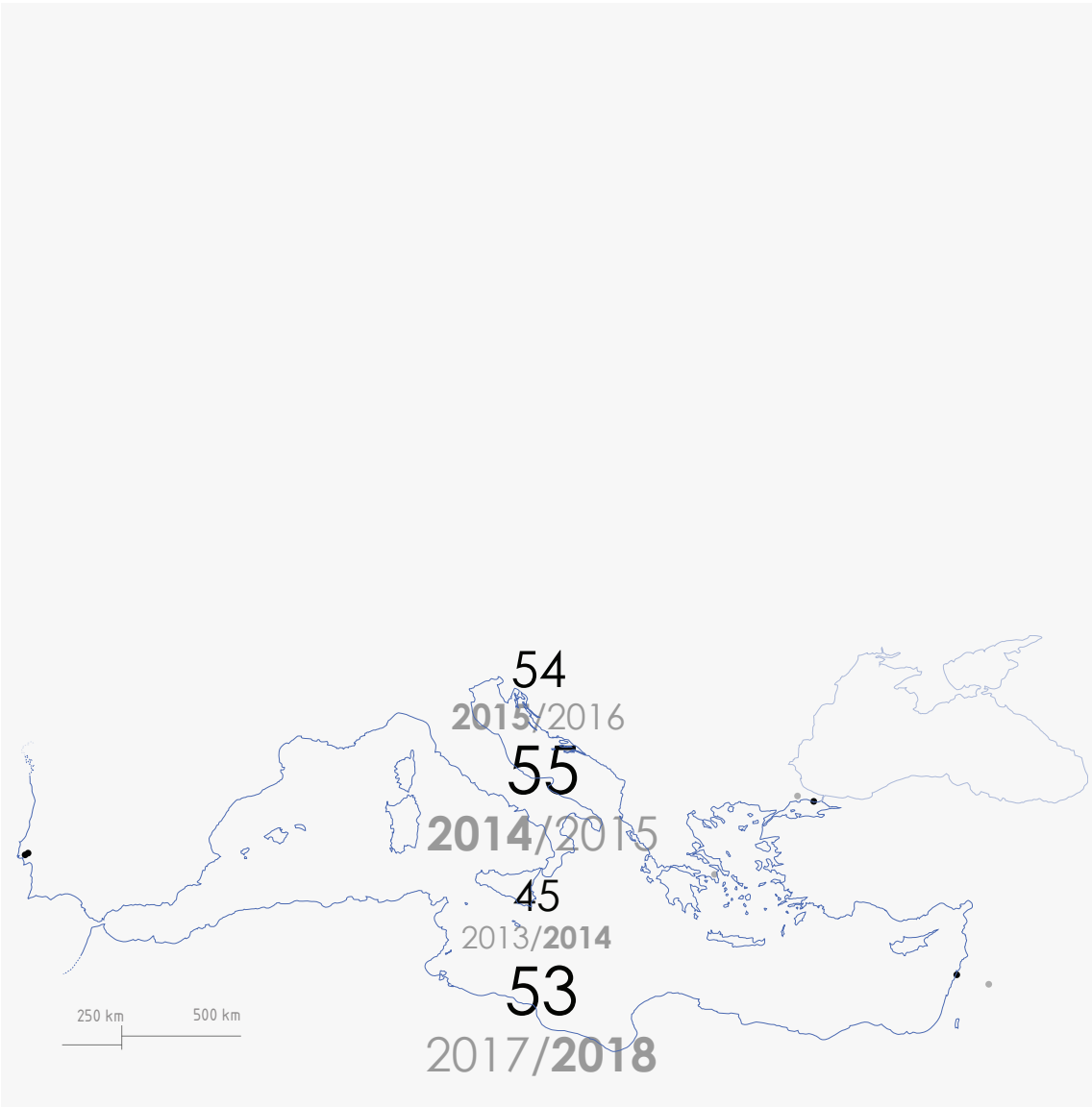
16 This bibliography reference is part of the resources suggested by the Scholars at Risk website. Information retrieved from: https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/?s=syria.

changing the future of education (2022) examines the transformative role of refugee students and teachers — including Syrians — in reshaping education. Lastly, Al-Rabeeah and Yeung's *Homes: A refugee story* (2018) is a memoir that follows the personal journey of Syrian refugee Al-Rabeeah, highlighting the emotional and physical challenges of displacement. For a context detached from Syrian student migration but situated in a student migration and scholarship framework, Laier's *Ensino "além mar": Trajetórias e travessias de estudantes africanos no ensino superior em Juiz de Fora* (2014) (*"Overseas" Education: Trajectories and Crossings of African Students in Higher Education in Juiz de Fora*) is a master's dissertation about African students migrating to Brazil through the PEC-G program. Laier (2014) highlights how migration influences identity and social integration — particularly in academic settings. The dissertation may suggest parallels with Syrian student migration, particularly in relation to identity negotiation and the role of government-supported programs in facilitating educational mobility.

Although there is a wide range of academic bibliography available, current academic discourses have not explored how the interdisciplinary field of architecture could contribute to understanding Syrian student migrations — including the migratory paths and experiences of Syrian student migrants, whether in Portugal or elsewhere — nor have they addressed this issue as a subject of study. While there are studies on Syrian refugees and migrants in Portugal from psychological, social, educational, and public health perspectives, there is a gap in research that examines how these students interact with, navigate, and traverse physical environments — such as borders, academic institutions, student accommodations, and geographic settings — during their migrations, academic pursuits, and integration processes. This highlights the need for further investigation into how these environments condition and shape their daily lives, mobility, and integration in both academic and social contexts. With the role, struggles, and challenges of pursuing education in the tertiary cycle highlighted, the representation of Syrian student migrations to Portugal should also be brought to the forefront.

This thesis aims to fill a crucial gap by examining migration through methodologies from architecture, geography, and path studies, focusing on their relation to representation while considering the intersection of time–territory–space configurations, memory, and identity. Further comparisons with studies on Syrian student migration in other European contexts could provide valuable forms of knowledge production into how Portugal's educational policies and integration frameworks align with or diverge from global demands for higher education and human rights. Moreover, situating Portugal within the broader Mediterranean context — considering its role alongside other Mediterranean countries facing similar migration and academic challenges — involves analyzing the provision of necessities, accommodations, language courses, and scholarships for higher education to migrants from various crises. This research also contributes to discussions on higher education as both an opportunity and a challenge for displaced populations. Examining Portugal's policies and integration mechanisms through Syrian students' oral histories and APGES scholarship program archival reports highlights the variances in support structures, accessibility, and the role of education in long-term social and professional inclusion. This demonstrates the contribution of Portugal, aligning with international frameworks that advocate for the right to (higher) education as a fundamental human right — particularly for young displaced individuals from Syria striving to rebuild their academic and professional futures and contribute to the reconstruction of their war-torn country.

Figure 5. Diagram for legal migrations of Syrian students to Portugal within a time-span of four non-consecutive years. The two years, separated by a slash, correspond to the school year in which each student arrived to join the university and/or be integrated into a language program.



i.iii.a. *Poiesis* of a humanitarian academic scholarship and a re-emergence of geo-architecture

After the war-conflict that began in Syria in early 2011, Syrian individuals started fleeing geographically the critical situation that prevented them from continuing their lives normally. Many Syrian students, especially those in higher education, had their studies interrupted, suspended, discontinued, or even completely stopped. Subsequently, mass migrations of Syrians — mainly through irregular routes — began entering Europe at varying times. This highlights the critical significance and state of the year 2014, as:

> "the substantial increase of Syrians seeking protection in Europe occurs only after 2014, 3 years into the brutal conflict." (Carlson and Williams, 2020, p. 6)

And that,

> "According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2014 almost 60 million people have been forced from their homes by conflict, violence, and persecution." (Ferris and Kirişci, 2016, p. xiii)

then that,

> "the Syrian displacement crisis compels the international community to look beyond short-term humanitarian solution." (Ferris and Kirişci, 2016, p. 18)

In hopes of a better, more stable life and to start or continue their studies, many Syrian students among these migrants risked their lives and left everything behind to reach Europe, contributing to a large migration crisis. Many others remained stranded and despondent in their homes, surviving each day in a war-torn, financially unstable region. As a rapid humanitarian response to this student crisis, after nearly three years of ongoing conflict in Syria, an international organization headquartered in Portugal, Associação Plataforma Global para Estudantes Sírios (APGES), also known as the Global Platform for Syrian Students, founded by Jorge Sampaio, initiated an emergency program to bring Syrian individuals as academic candidates to Portugal. In late 2013, many participated in this emergency call for scholarships, but only around forty-five students were granted these opportunities. Six months after applying for the scholarship, the first group of students received their acceptance letters and, in a matter of days, crossed the Mediterranean with visas stamped on a Portuguese military transport aircraft, landing in Portugal.

Following the success of the first emergency call, APGES decided to reopen another call in late 2014. Over the next four years, it opened two more calls,[17] bringing the total to four, each with between forty-five and fifty-five students, according to APGES's archive. This number does not include those accepted into the APGES scholarship program between these calls, such as student refugees residing in Portugal and student migrants in other parts of Europe and beyond. In 2013, a Portugal-based humanitarian organization founded by Jorge Sampaio, the former Portuguese president, launched an emergency call for academic scholarships through the Global Platform for Syrian Students, focusing specifically on Syrian students who, at that time, faced difficulties in starting or continuing their higher education. In the spring semester of 2014, 45 Syrian students were granted these scholarships, which were unique

17 This includes Syrian students who were part of different scholarship programs, such as the Erasmus Mobility Program (PEACE II Project) and the Aga Khan International Scholarship Programme, who received short-term scholarships and later joined the APGES scholarship program to continue their studies in Portugal.

Figure 6. Diagram for gender demographic segmentation.
Legal migrations of Syrian students to Portugal within a time-span of four academic years as a result of APGES emergency calls.

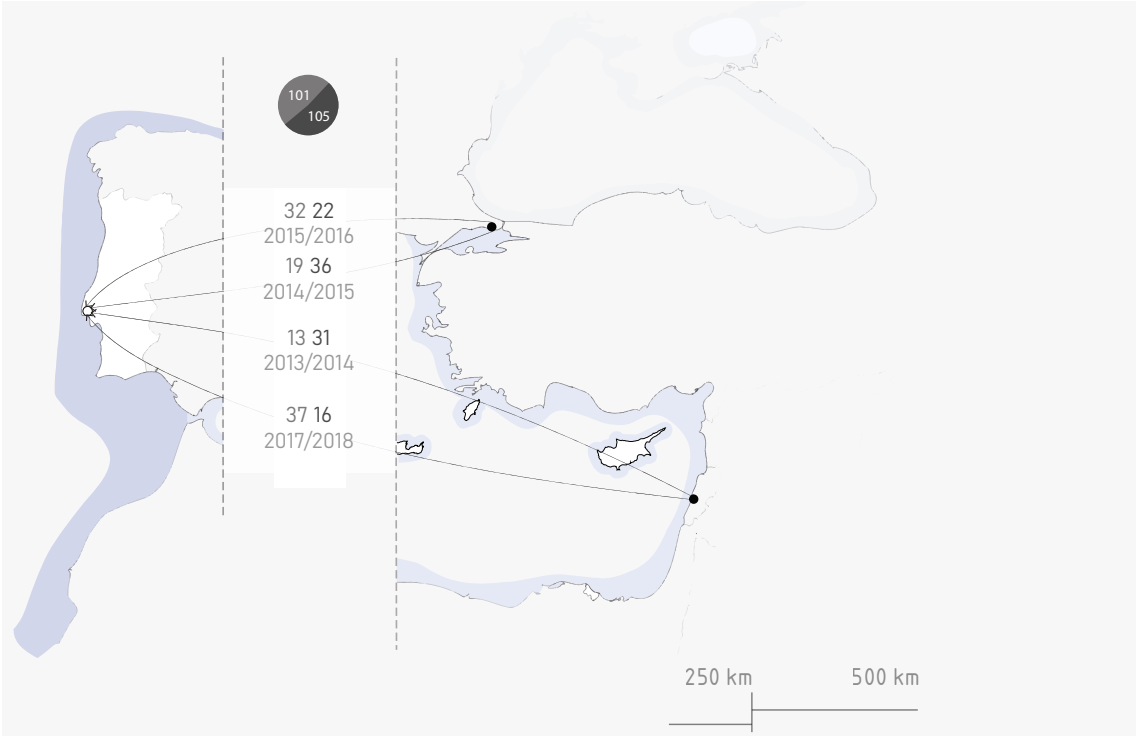
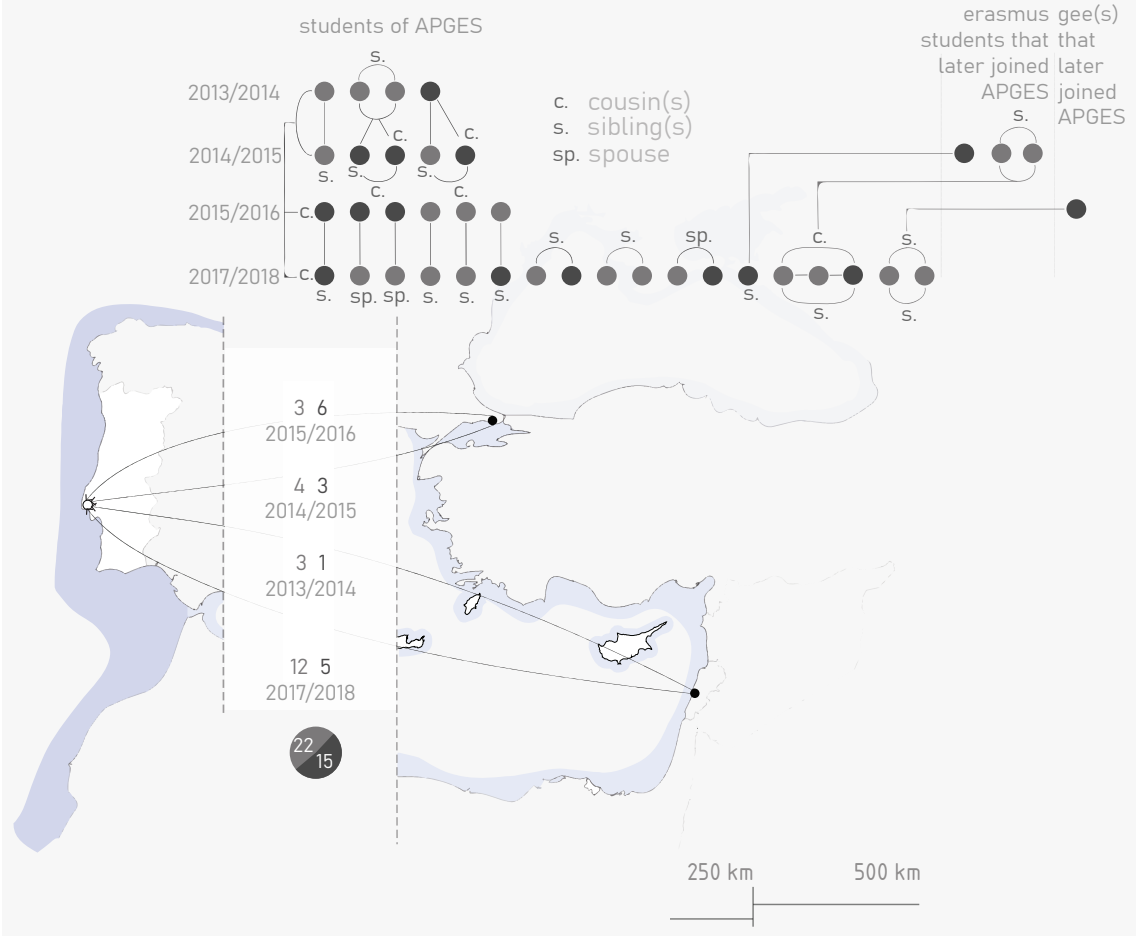


Figure 7. Diagram for gender demographic segmentation of student family members.
Legal migrations of Syrian students to Portugal within a time-span of four academic years as a result of APGES emergency calls. The diagram also includes former Syrian Erasmus students and a Syrian refugee whom joined the scholarship of APGES during their stay in Portugal. These students also have part of their families brought to Portugal through the emergency calls of APGES.



opportunities of a life-time to traverse the Mediterranean, from the Middle-East to Europe, without the hindrance of border processing procedures. One of the largest migrations of Syrian individuals, with expedited processing of humanitarian admissions (granted legal statuses), safely entered Portugal in 2014. Following the early 2014 migration, three other emergency calls and migrations took place in the same region, as shown in Figure 5.[18]

The past and ongoing emergency calls announced by APGES since 2014 are the result of seven years of successful international migration systems and schemes that have positively impacted both the Syrian migrant population in Portugal and the host country itself in its humanitarian role. With the aim of articulating the narratives of these Syrian migrations, the emergency calls since 2014 raise questions about the architectural and geographical contexts behind their migratory systems and schemes on both human and territorial scales. According to the latest demographic analysis of APGES archives, around "100" students were supported in 2014, and "171" students in 2019 (latest archive); this number is on the rise. These numbers also include individual students who joined the scholarship program but were not part of the four migrations. A total of "650" scholarships have been granted to Syrian students by APGES, with participation in other countries, though the majority are situated in Portugal (APGES archive, 2019).

In the gender demographic segmentation (Figure 6), the average number of female students has been increasing over the years. This is no coincidence; it has become an objective of the APGES scholarship program. The scholarship has focused on providing more opportunities for female students due to the complicated cultural and financial situation that female students and new female graduates have faced and endured in Syria during the war. APGES, therefore, has firmly supported human rights and sought to secure the future of many Syrian students, particularly females. The ongoing conflict worsens levels of discrimination and underscores the scarcity of educational and job opportunities for females, as they are culturally, to some extent, perceived to have fewer opportunities than males. In the gender demographic segmentation of family members (Figure 7), APGES has achieved another humanitarian objective by bringing together parts of the students' families through the scholarship program. From a humanitarian perspective, many siblings and cousins of the students have joined the scholarship through later emergency calls. Not all siblings or cousins have been placed in the same Portuguese cities, but they have been placed in the same country to ease their contact while also fostering their independence. Moreover, had it not been for APGES's initiation of this humanitarian academic proposal for emergency calls, many of these Syrian students, who have already received their academic certificates (or are close to doing so) and are currently staying in a much safer environment, would likely not have been able to achieve what they are achieving in Portugal.

The *poiesis* of a humanitarian academic scholarship is embodied in APGES's initiative, which enabled new paths of migration to take place. APGES created possibilities for legal migration and access to geo-architecture, rediscovered as a point of departure. The diverse migrations

18 The numbers indicated in all the diagrams are based on an analysis of the APGES open-access archive and surveys answered by Syrian students in Portugal for greater accuracy, as in many cases, the APGES scholarship program does not specify the exact number of students by gender or the number of students who joined the scholarship between these four calls but were not part of the migrations.

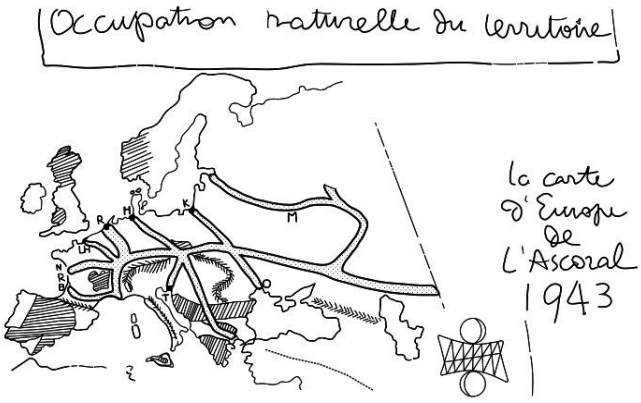


Figure 8. The northern Mediterranean is expressed in "Natural occupation of a territory" with a description: "The map of Europe ASCORAL 1943," by ASCORAL 1943-1945.

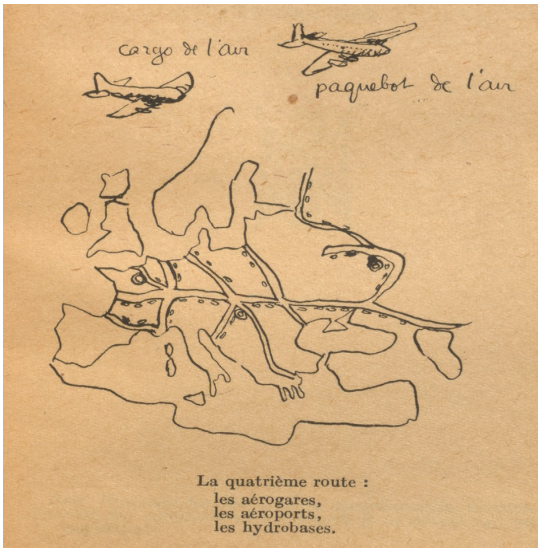


Figure 9. The last image displayed in *L'urbanisme des trois établissements humains*, which shows the Mediterranean as a whole, resembles "Natural occupation of a territory: The map of Europe" by ASCORAL (1945, p. 239). It discusses aerial and maritime infrastructure, emphasizing the role of air and sea transport in regional planning and urbanism. This aligns with Le Corbusier's vision of modern mobility and how transportation networks shape urban and territorial organization.

of Syrian students have brought about a re-emergence of geo-architecture within the field of architecture. The novelty and immediacy of these migratory paths call for geo-architecture to be recomposed and revived in a new form. From mass legal migrations to their evolving configurations — resilient in the face of Europe's current border restrictions — geo-architecture emerges as an intermediary scale capable of representing these migration events. The responsibility and aim of representing Syrian student migrations align with the very definition of *poiesis*: a creative method of making. This constitutes a critical engagement with the narratives of these individuals in their immediacy — their present condition in relation to memory, sequential events, and how representation renders these narratives part of a geo-architecture.

Geo-architecture in the agency of mapping, an intermediary scale for representation

In 1945 Le Corbusier introduced the theory of geo-architecture into the field of architecture briefly through an urban planning and architectural manifesto in ASCORAL's *L'urbanisme des trois établissements humains* (1945)[19] (The Three Human Establishments) in an attempt to articulate architecture at a large territorial scale. According to Sarkis et al. in *The world as an architectural project* (2019) and Sarkis' "Le Corbusier's 'geo-architecture' and the emergence of territorial aesthetics" (2017), geo-architecture is only briefly mentioned in ASCORAL (1945), appearing twice (pp. 27 & 65). Le Corbusier suggested "to practice geo-architecture" when reconsidering land use and experimenting with the concept of territory and aesthetic possibilities. In this treatise, Le Corbusier has frequently used the word geography, especially in reference to maps, expressing extraterritoriality that goes beyond the confines of a territory. The extraterritorial is an integration of the functional with the expressive as a connecting the geography of the world and territory to architecture with, without, and beyond the mediation of a city (Sarkis et al., 2017, pp. 118-120).

Le Corbusier's objective in introducing architecture in correlation with geography was to expand the study of architectural settings through a broader scale and the notion of human geography, in pursuit of the order and production of space in the world.[20] Geo-architecture, as a term, became an intermediary scale between geography and the ever-changing field of architecture — used to address broader contexts and settings, and to represent them to the public, including individuals who may or may not be aware of these contexts or their relation to the world. This convergence of geography and architecture at a large territorial scale responds to both aesthetic and ethical reasoning in the discursive study of territory. Le Corbusier's

19 Before *L' urbanisme des trois établissements humains* (1945), *Les 4 Routes* (1943) was a start point for Le Corbusier to think about architecture and geography in the relation of words. The idea was firstly projected in the "Natural Occupation of a Territory: The Map of Europe" by ASCORAL (1943), *Assemblée des Constructeurs pour la Rénovation Architecturale* (assembly of constructors for a renewal of architecture) that Le Corbusier founded also in 1942-1943. It reflects his wartime vision for rebuilding cities, particularly in response to the destruction of World War II.

20 The term geo-architecture originates back to its relation with urban planning, part of *L'institut De Géoarchitecture* (Center for Géo-architecture) *in Brest*, France. It is not an original coining of Le Corbusier; it originated in the field of geomorphology and has then become more involved in urban planning, as a combination between engineering, architecture and planning (Sarkis, 2017, p.117). Le Corbusier links geo-architecture to the world as he uses it to experiment in both an ethic and aesthetic dimension and to show what multiple-scale (human and territorial) geo-architecture could involve and evolve.

hypothesis — that geo-architecture could evolve to help acknowledge the world — made it possible for this intermediary scale to contribute to today's global thinking of the world as a sum of many elements in need of representation. For Le Corbusier, the idea of the world in representation was an ethical question, combining both aesthetics and ethics, as there is ethics within aesthetics, from the Portuguese word estética. In representation, Le Corbusier emphasized the aerial view — a two-dimensional projection of territory — while the lived experience of geo-architecture forms a third dimension (Sarkis, 2017, p. 124).

Though Le Corbusier did not extensively pursue the use of the term geo-architecture, many theories later developed by other authors are directly or indirectly influenced by his brief introduction of the concept within architecture and the cultural-aesthetic realm. To understand the history and potential of representations in expanding the foundations for learning and the creative process of representation within the theme of migration, critical works on representation[21] serve as guides for constructing visual elements and narratives. Each contributes to understanding how, at interchangeable territorial and human scales, lines, trajectories, and cartographies within path studies can be translated into representations that move beyond conventional cartographic methods. These approaches incorporate abstraction, layering, and dynamic visualization to convey movement through time, territory, place, and space. Although these references individually approach representation through diverse methodologies and themes, they collectively emphasize that migratory paths are not merely geographical traces. Instead, they are narratives shaped by socio-political, environmental, and economic conditions, reinforcing the connection between movement, time, territory, place, space, and representation in geo-architecture.

This expansion of territorial (and human) representation is addressed in *Agency of mapping: Speculation, critique and invention* (1999), where Corner conceptualizes mapping not as a passive act of representation, but as an active agent in shaping and generating spatial understanding. Territorial representation is not only about reflecting existing geography; it also involves the ways in which mapping influences and creates new perceptions and engagements with space. Corner's concept of the agency of mapping suggests that maps are not neutral — they shape power, identity, and meaning within a given territory. He emphasizes that mapping possesses an inherent agency that extends beyond documentation, actively shaping how space and territory are perceived, structured, and even produced. This builds upon Corner's earlier exploration in *Representation and landscape: Drawing and making in the landscape medium* (1992), where he first established the foundational argument for the significance of representation in landscape architecture. In that earlier work, Corner discusses how drawing and mapping serve not only as representational tools, but also as instruments of spatial intervention, framing the act of mapping as an imaginative and projective practice rather than a static depiction of reality.

21 Through theoretical foundations for representing data visualizations — both visual and textual — Tufte's *Envisioning information* (1990), Rosenberg and Grafton's *Cartographies of time: A history of the timeline* (2010), and Döring and Nagel's *Free the map* (2019) explore the role of visual representation in capturing movement, temporal–territorial–placial–spatial configurations and relationships, and complex geographic narratives.

Reading representation

Migration, in this context, evolves in representation to become associated with different approaches to re-reading individual itineraries and stories of migratory paths and experiences. This occurs through a two-fold subjective-objective abstraction of traditional and conventional cartography into maps: subjective, in the narration retrieved from the student migrant's account, where the story, experience, and path serve as the case study; and objective, in the textual and visual translation of that case study, produced through the researcher's storytelling and situatedness. These re-readings of representation can be perceived as methods of re-writing part of migration history within the agency of mapping. When configuring a language of map-making capable of translating migration stories, this thesis expands the scale of inquiry to engage broader contexts. The level of detail in representation may shift depending on the nature of the questions posed — it may remain accessible and concise or, conversely, become intricate and multi-layered. This leads to a central concern: How can representation reflect the ever-shifting motion of migration?

This question finds resonance in earlier approaches to spatial experience, such as Lewin's *Principles of topological psychology* (1936), where the concept of a path study was introduced. Lewin used it to describe paths within an individual's 'life space' — an experiential, real, and lived space — emphasizing the spatial and momentary environment of the person (Lewin, 1936, p. 18). Lewin's idea of 'life space' was adapted into geography through behavioral geography and hodological space theory, which he further explored in *The conceptual representation and the measurement of psychological forces* (1938), influencing studies[22] on spatial behavior, mobility, and migration. His notion of 'hodological space' — the paths individuals take based on psychological and environmental factors — was applied to the analysis of human movement. His emphasis on the forces shaping movement also influenced migration studies, highlighting both constraints and facilitators in mobility. This shift helped move beyond static maps toward exploring how people experience and navigate space. Le Corbusier's ASCORAL (1945/1979) work similarly explores hodology through spatial organization. Le Corbusier approaches hodology through urban planning, proposing a structured, functionalist method for organizing space at different scales to expand and develop human circulation and connectivity.

In Lewin's framework, the environment dynamically shapes the individual's experience in real time. In this sense, this thesis distinguishes between the immediate and momentary environments. 'Momentary environment' refers to the environment as experienced in the present moment, influenced by the individual's perception and interaction with it. It emphasizes its temporary, transient nature, reflecting how the environment is briefly

22 Researchers like Hägerstrand and Lynch incorporated Lewin's work into urban studies, time geography, and cognitive mapping. Hägerstrand, in "What about people in regional science?" (1970), developed time geography, emphasizing how individuals navigate physical and social constraints over time — much like Lewin's idea of life spaces and pathways. Lynch, in *The image of the city* (1960), applied similar principles to cognitive mapping, exploring how people perceive, structure, and move through urban environments. Both scholars extended Lewin's ideas beyond psychology, demonstrating how spatial behavior is shaped by both internal cognition and external physical and social structures. Sartre also draws on Lewin's ideas in "Sketch for a theory of the emotions" (1939/1962), where he presents the phenomenological experience of lived space as hodological, analyzing how movement and accessibility — known in academic terms as path studies — shape human behavior.

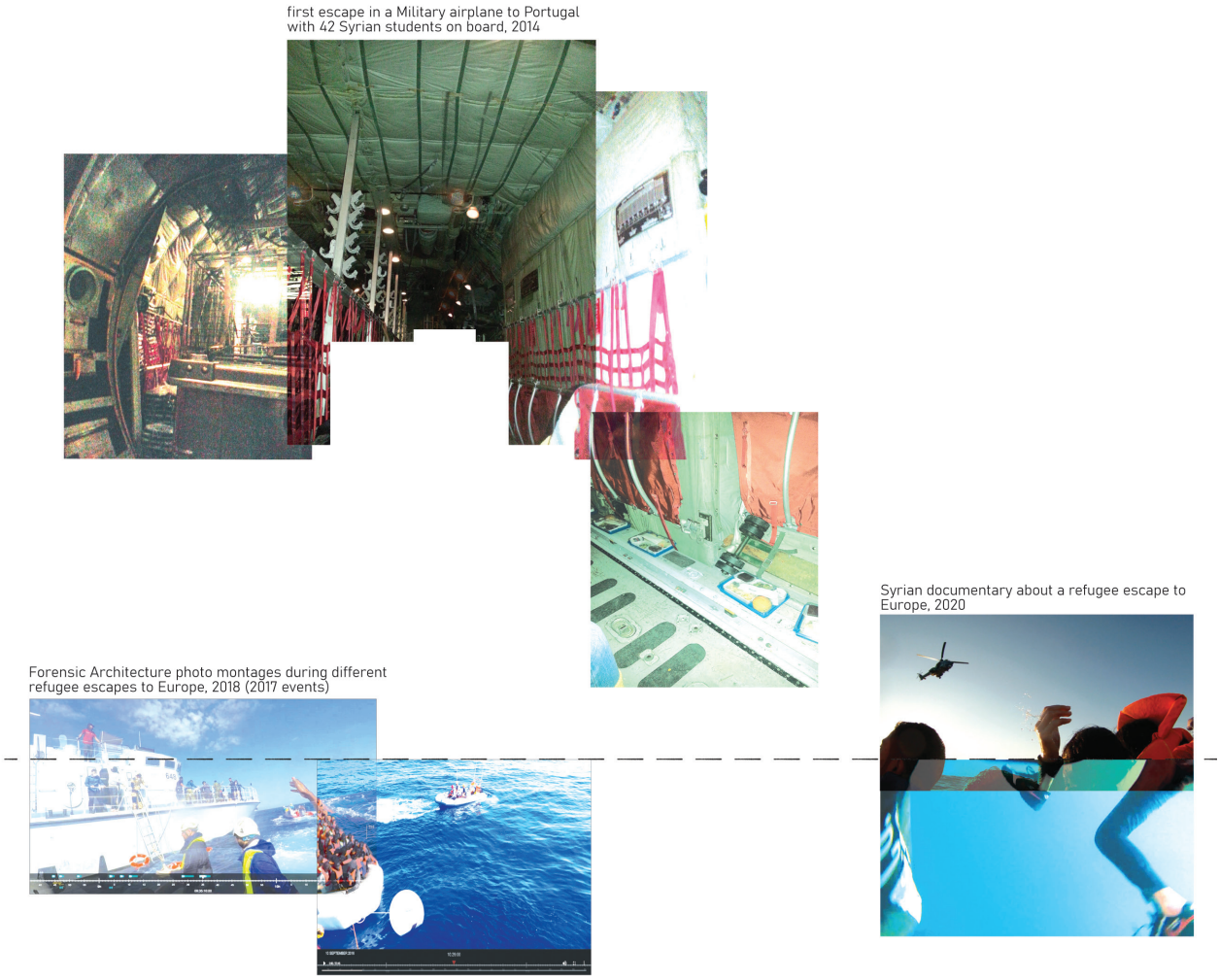


Figure 10. Scheme representation of overlapped sea and land contexts during migratory escapes across the Mediterranean.

Different (e)scapes amidst the Mediterranean, using various methods of transportation across sea and sky levels. Source of images used in the montage: above: from a student migrant's escape to Portugal; below left: Forensic Architecture photo-stills from "Seawatch vs. Libyan Coastguard" (2018) and "The seizure of the Iuventa" (2018); below right: photo-stills from Alzakout & Abdulwahed's Syrian documentary "Purple Sea" (2020). The documentaries at sea level show the inevitable dependence on, and malevolence of, the Mediterranean Sea, simultaneously affected by the multiple human actors who play different roles in these real, documented scenarios. The sky and sea levels thus express a hypothesis, where some Syrian students who have arrived (or will arrive) in Portugal might have gone through forced migratory escapes across the Mediterranean Sea. In this context, the sky provides advantages and safety over the sea level in terms of elevations for migratory escapes.

experienced. ‘Immediate environment’ refers to the physical surroundings or context that are directly around the individual at a given time, but it does not necessarily focus on the transitory, experienced aspect in the same way. ‘Momentariness’ and ‘immediacy’ are both related to time but emphasize different aspects of temporality. ‘Momentariness’ refers to fleeting, short-lived states, highlighting transience and change — such as a brief feeling of relief or a passing glimpse of an event. Immediacy, on the other hand, signifies instantaneity and presence, as in immediate proximity (being physically close) or immediate action (acting without hesitation). In relation to provisionality, momentariness aligns with fluidity and change, while immediacy relates to the direct experience of a situation before it shifts. Transience and fluidity — characterized by momentariness — contrast with physical and social proximity, which are marked by immediacy.

Based on Lewin’s framework and the distinction between momentary and immediate environments, in relation to Figure 10, one could hypothesize that the sky — as an elevated space — symbolizes a form of momentary safety in survival migration, in contrast to the sea level, which represents immediate danger and prolonged uncertainty. The sea, with its unpredictable and often perilous conditions, embodies the immediate environment of forced migration, where survival is dictated by physical and situational proximity. The sky, however, can be seen as part of the momentary environment, providing a transient perspective of security and elevation, whether metaphorically (aspiring for safety, distant perspectives) or physically (as in aerial escape routes). For Syrian students who have arrived or will arrive in Portugal, this distinction could frame their migration as a negotiation between momentary escapes (the fleeting relief of crossing borders, the transient sense of security in movement) and immediate realities (the legal, social, and physical conditions shaping their status upon arrival). The sky and sea levels, therefore, may serve as spatial and experiential metaphors for the interplay between transience and immediacy in their migratory paths. This distinction raises the question of the provisional: to what extent are these states temporary, and how do they shape migrant experiences?

For student migrants, provisionality defines their migration, as they navigate between transient conditions and immediate realities. Whether in terms of an invitation letter, visa stamp, legal status, accommodation, or social belonging, their situation is shaped by its temporary nature, influencing both their present and their perception of the future. They experience momentariness and immediacy not only through their lived itineraries within their migratory paths and experiences but also when recalling migration moments that gain vividness through dialogue, by telling their stories and creating the history of the Syrian student diaspora. In *The migrant’s time: Rethinking art history and diaspora* (2011), there is an emphasis on mapping migration story through the concept of the migrant’s time, which suggests that migrants possess a distinct perception and experience of temporality — shaped by displacement, rupture, and non-linear trajectories — what it means to live in time, across time, and out of time. This rethinking of temporality is central to Mathur’s broader exploration, where she suggests that art and diaspora suggests new ways of understanding the migratory experience, challenging traditional historical narratives. This aligns with Awan, Schneider, and Till’s *Spatial agency: Other ways of doing architecture* (2011), which challenges the conventional ways architecture interacts with space and migrants, arguing for a more agency-centered approach to understanding how migrants reshape urban environments. Awan’s later works, *Diasporic*

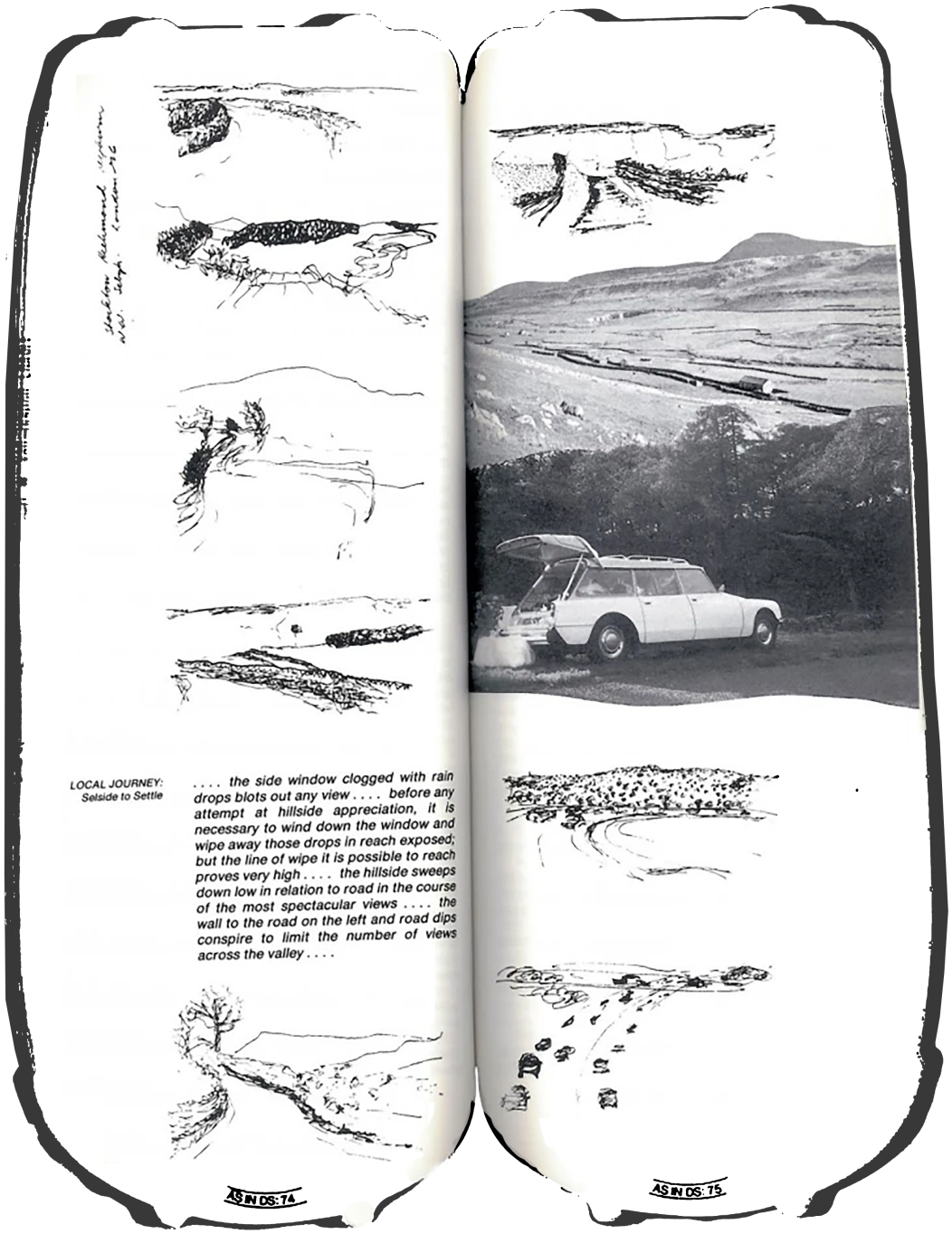
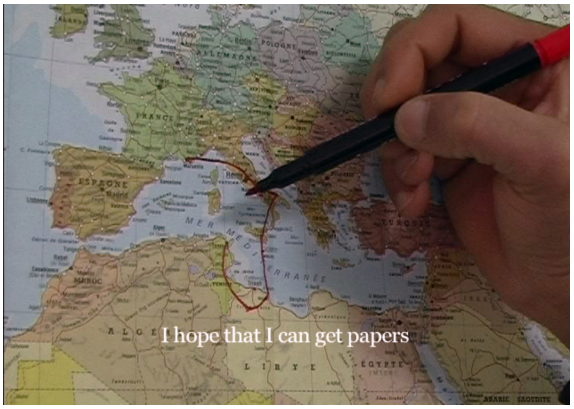


Figure 11. Photocopy image showcasing pages 74 and 75 from Smithson and Sumi's *AS IN DS: An Eye on the Road* (1983). The image presents a composition of sketch diaries and photographs taken during the field trip conducted by Alison and Peter Smithson. The book is a visual and textual collage, documenting roadside observations and thoughts during their field explorations.

agencies: Mapping the city otherwise (2016) and "Architecture and movement: Diaspora experience and the need for topological methods" (2018), expand on these ideas, particularly in showing how diaspora communities actively influence urban space. This focus emerges from a central challenge he identifies: "Historically, architecture has struggled with how to represent movement" (2018, p. 251). By addressing this representational challenge, his perspectives reposition migrants as active agents in the construction of cities, infrastructures, and spaces, shaping them through their presence, movement, and actions, and thereby re-framing conventional notions of migration.

To capture the significance of fieldwork in understanding mobility and path tracing, a study of the landscape and its surrounding and adjacent environments — framed as a case of path studies applied to representation — *AS IN DS: An Eye on the Road* (1983) by Smithson and Sumi explores the act of movement as both a physical and perceptual passage. The fieldwork path becomes a passage and journey of observation not only along the road taken by Smithson in a Citroën DS from London to Wiltshire, but also through the dynamic relationship between human and machine, the vehicle in nature, and the post-industrial landscape and how they interact. Through her diary, Smithson (1983) documented methods of representing motion — ranging from hand-drawn sketches and fragmented maps to photography — revealing how different media can shape the experience and memory of a path. These forms of representation challenge conventional ways of capturing the landscape, reflecting the fragmented and non-linear characteristic of travel. The photographs taken along the travel path, in particular, emphasize the transient quality of both the landscape and the experience itself, while the maps and sketches add layers of abstraction, representing a personal and subjective connection to the path taken. The work connects with Smithson's broader architectural ideas, where she often explored the intersection of human interaction with the built and natural environments. *AS IN DS* (1983) is not merely about the physical journey but also about the way we represent and remember places, questioning the limitations of traditional representation. In this sense, Smithson's work speaks to the complexity of modern landscapes, where the personal experience of space is fragmented, mediated, and layered through both technology and memory.

For an architectural response at a larger territorial scale, over time, the topic of migration has become integrated as a subject for representation in the fields of architecture and information arts and analyses. This began with one of the change agents of the 20th century, namely The Architects' Resistance, which called for a social blurring between the urban and architectural realms (López, 2019). The Architects' Resistance was an architecture student action group active between 1968 and 1969 and aimed to demand ethical responsibility toward society (Schuman and Barker, 2018). Here, in this case, that ethical responsibility is directed toward migration. Another example of architecture student action in producing statements through their projects and studies is *Cartografias: Entre lugar, tempo e escala* (2020). Silva, Labastida, Carlos, and Ferreira (2020) (*Cartographies. Between place, time and scale*) discuss the role of cartography in understanding the pedagogical process, emphasizing how cartography, territorial contexts, and spatial representations — through student work in the areas of city and territory at the School of Architecture, Art and Design at the University of Minho (EAAD) — are crucial to the learning and creative processes involved in the agency of mapping. Silva et al. (2020) examine how the perception of territory within space, time, and place is interwoven in



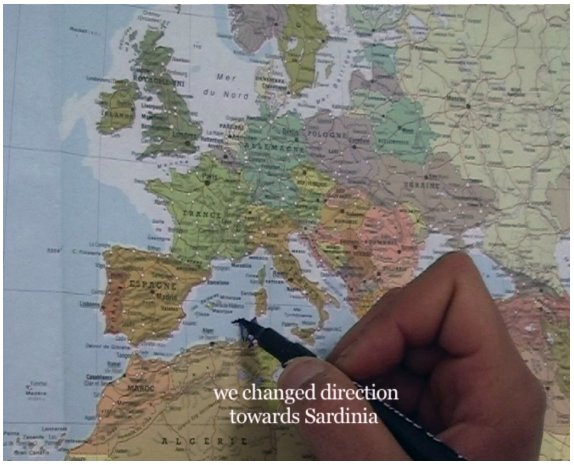


Figure 12 and 13. Photo-stills expressing an overlapping of hands over the Mediterranean from *The mapping journey project*, (Khalili, 2008 - 2011).

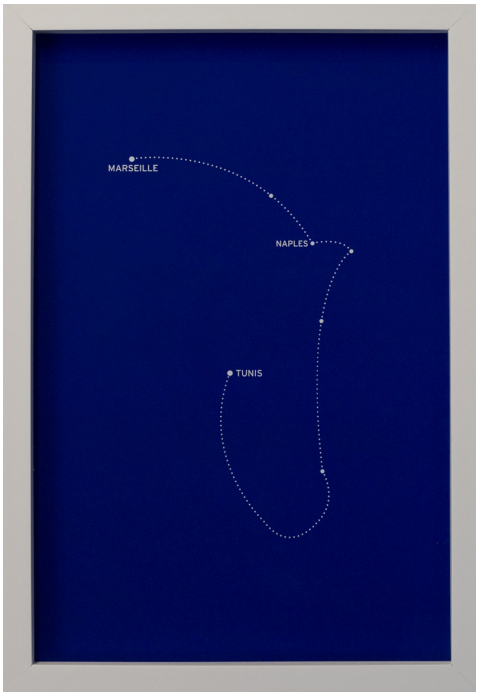


Figure 14. *The constellation series* (2011), Figure 7, part of *The Mapping journey project* (Khalili, 2008–2011).

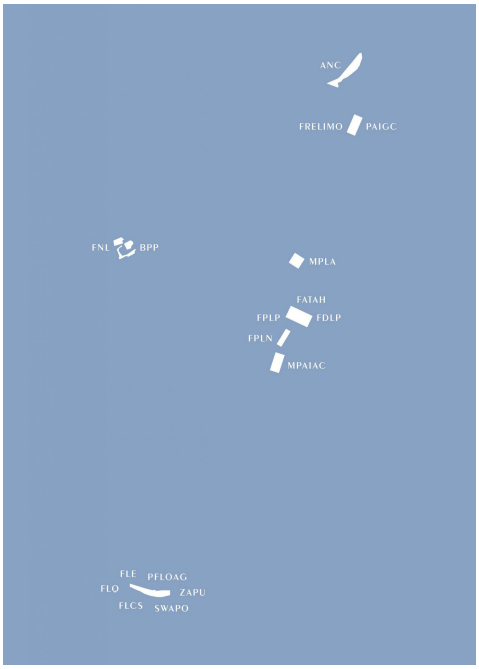


Figure 16. *Foreign Office*, (Khalili, 2015).



these representations of mapping, revealing how themes like migration — though not directly addressed in broader terms, except for (Syria's) internal displacement (Silva et al., 2020, p. 186-187) — are reflected in the students' creative processes, demonstrating a complexity that goes beyond simple geographic movements.

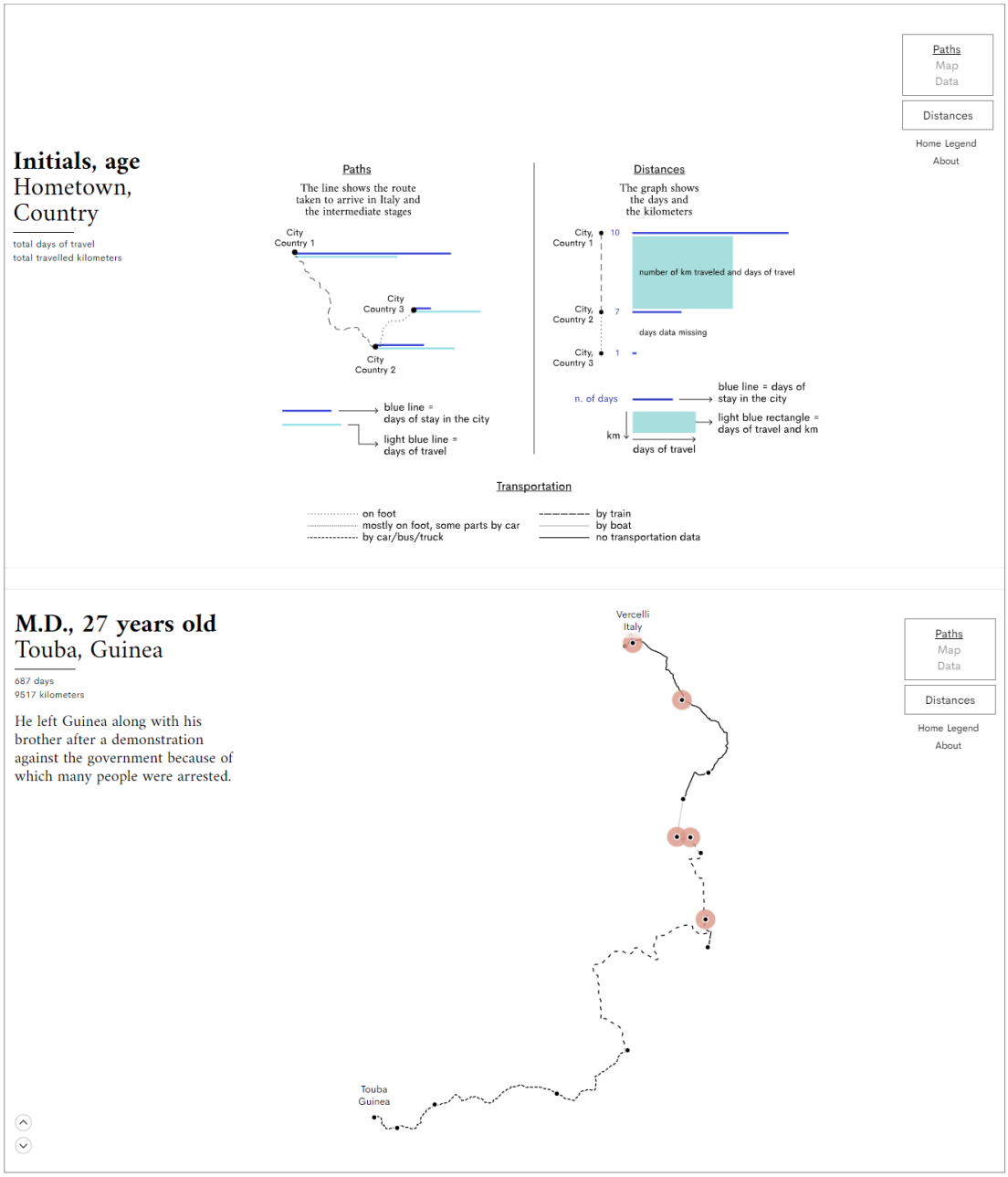
To expand further on this, there are visual references that vary between artistic but activist projects and investigative but also activist projects, all advocating for human rights and expressing resistance through their representation and/or demands, which align and correspond to the textual and visual aesthetic and ethic dimensions of this thesis. These visual references also use the act of storytelling to address the produced knowledge, which is the representation that influenced particularities of this thesis. To start, Khalili through *The mapping journey project* (2008 - 2011), began shaping a form of map-making under the theme of migration as an explorative and creative message projection. This message conveys individual sets of constellations[23] illustrating how a path made up of checkpoints expresses visual abstractness and otherness in mapping, while simultaneously conveying a migration story. The maps are anonymously translated[24] from first-hand narrations and auto-mapping by different individuals about their migrations and border crossings during a dialogue to frame an object of study methodologically, similar to geo-architecture. On a large territorial scale, the constellations also share a common language in the use of geography, with points (checkpoints), lines (traversed trajectories), and areas, simplified over a plain background, narrating migratory paths and questioning borders. Khalili's representation of points and lines respects the area that constitutes the surrounding geography, which is expressed as void. However, because the geographical area is constant, the alignment of the points and lines is variable, in a particular order and arrangement, although Khalili does not mention the essence of the area itself.

Another visually similar, but politically distinct, work by Khalili is *Foreign office* (2015) (Figure 16), a manifesto connecting what may seem like a path with the subjectivity of the headquarters of colonial and post-colonial political liberation movements as archipelagos — a continuous path of dispersed movements for freedom. Through an alternative form of map-making, Khalili introduced a remapping statement in the projection of these maps. The relation between movement in space within different territories and between places of significant events aligns with the relation of time–territory–place–space. Similarly, in theoretical terms, Massey's *For space* (2005) emphasizes the process of change in phenomena, exploring the dynamic relationship between 'trajectory' and 'story' within spatial and temporal processes. For Massey, the term 'trajectory' refers to the continuous path of change over time, highlighting the transformation of space and place through movement. In Khalili's work, this transformation is represented through the use of voids, emphasizing what is transformative, implying movement — whether through migratory routes or the placement of points where activism may emerge, be addressed, established, and fought for. Massey suggests that 'story' should not be seen as a narrative or interpretation, but rather as the

23 From *The constellation series* (2011), a work produced as the final phase of *The mapping journey project* (2008–2011), Khalili created this after dialoguing with different migrants and having them recall their paths while mapping them over geographical maps.

24 As shown in Figures 12 and 13, which depict only the hand gesture of tracing and the voice of the migrant describing his or her migration event and escape.

Figure 17:
Representation study taken from *The stories behind a line* (2016-2017) project by Fragapane and Piacentini. Information retrieved from: https://www.storiesbehindaline.com/



actual history and ongoing change of phenomena (Massey, 2005, p. 12). In this sense, migration and the stories of migratory paths and experiences become histories themselves, transforming migration into an event.

Another example of path studies applied to representation is the project by Fragapane and Piacentini, *The stories behind a line* (2016-2017), which also translates real migratory paths and experiences into visual narratives by recording and mapping individual migration itinerary. The project uses abstract lines and data points to represent the paths taken by asylum seekers, transforming the physical and emotional realities of migration into visual and diagrammatic representations that analyze and narrate their stories. Through a series of maps, the project expresses the lived experiences of displaced individuals, often highlighting the obstacles, routes, and decisions faced during their migrations. By merging personal stories with visual abstraction, the project creates a representation of the migration process, emphasizing the human experience behind the statistics — which are often reduced to simple numbers or overlooked by media platforms. Through oral history, it provides an understanding of migration that moves beyond mere geographical displacement. The approach ties into path studies by focusing on the dynamic, evolving form of migratory routes and the complex relationship between space, territory, time, and human agency.

In *The mapping journey project* (2008-2011), Khalili asked brief and focused questions to migrant participants through dialogues in order to map each migration. What is analyzed in Khalili's project is that the more detailed the range of questions, the more the research process can narrate and represent a migration, providing more locations to mark their path and making the line more irregular. This observation is later explored in path studies through the representation of student migrants' migratory paths and experiences in this thesis. Khalili (2008-2011) transforms traditional cartography into an act of resistance and self-representation for marginalized migrants by providing an alternative, personal, and often poetic map of migration. Inviting a series of migrants to share their stories, Khalili uses their narratives to create abstract visual representations that transcend conventional geographical criteria such as borders and scales, similar to Fragapane and Piacentini's *The stories behind a line* (2016 - 2017). Through a set of questions about their paths, checkpoints, and emotions, Khalili transforms individual itineraries into maps that reflect the emotional weight of displacement. These subjective maps challenge the conventional view of cartography as neutral, sharing a representation of personal history that critiques the erasure of migrant stories in the media and public discourse. Each map emphasizes the humanity behind the anonymous figures of migrants, highlighting the transformative potential of storytelling in art. Beyond the maps themselves, Khalili's project invites viewers to reconsider the meaning of space, place, and the body in migration, reframing it as a lived, ongoing experience that goes beyond numbers and geopolitical terms to account for the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of the migratory path.

These approaches re-imagine space as a site for storytelling, providing new ways of understanding human experience and challenging conventional views of geography as neutral or objective. Khalili's *The mapping journey project* and Fragapane and Piacentini's (2016 - 2017) echo the ideas presented in Turchi's *Maps of the imagination: The writer as cartographer* (2004). Turchi explores how maps are not only tools of geographical

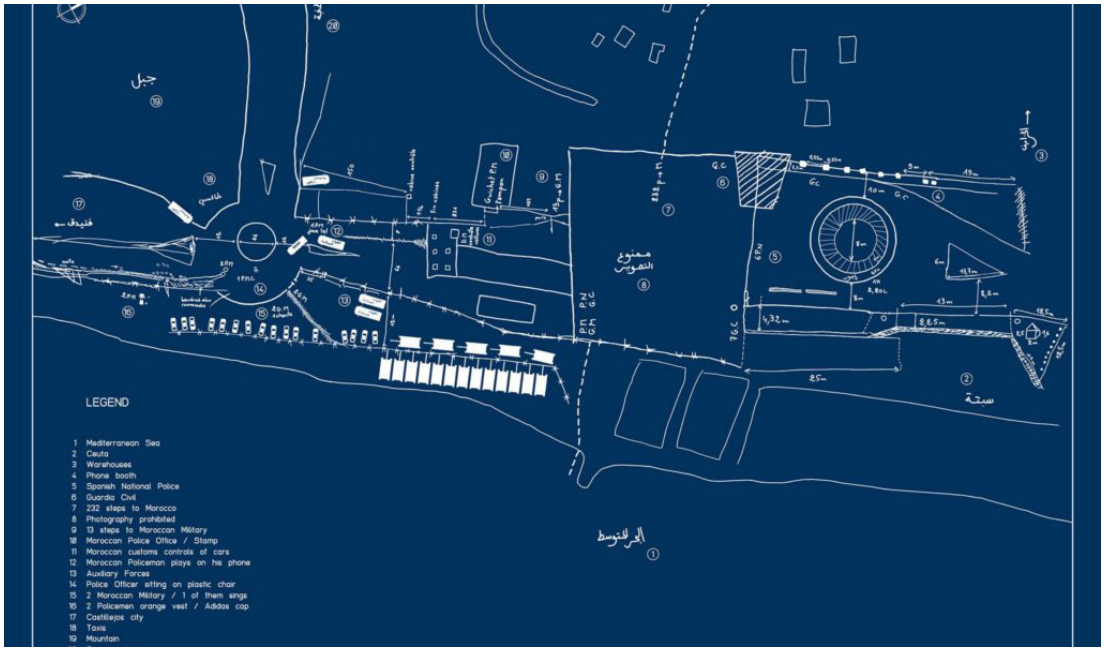


Figure 18: *Diwana: Series of cyanotype* (Maroufi, 2018–2020).

Image source: https://www.randamaroufi.com/works/diwana/



Figure 19: . Calypso 3621, 2018–2020, *Out of the blue map* exhibition poster and *On drifting* (2020) lexicon.

representation but also mediums for storytelling, identity, and the exploration of lived experiences. In a similar way, Khalili's project transforms maps from static representations of space into dynamic, subjective narratives of migration. Just as Turchi argues that writers act as cartographers, using maps to navigate and articulate the human experience, these projects reframe cartography as an act of storytelling that gives voice to marginalized individuals and challenges traditional notions of borders and spaces. By emphasizing the emotional and experiential aspects of migration, these projects align with Turchi's view of mapping as a creative process that can convey complex, personal truths beyond mere geographical details.

Calypso 3621 is a French-Moroccan, women-led group of multidisciplinary researchers whose collective work represents a critical rethinking of knowledge production about migration, particularly in relation to the liquid and solid territories of the Mediterranean. Their participatory research is reflected in *On drifting* (2020), a lexicon published as part of the *Out of the blue map* (2018–2020) curatorial research program and exhibition. One of the artistic projects featured in this program is called Customs, or Diwana (Moroccan Arabic, Darija, derived from la douane in French), by Maroufi, who contributed artistically to the lexicon. The project showcases a collection of maps drawn by smugglers in Ceuta to depict their everyday routes. These routes, initially traced on paper, are transformed into blueprints using cyanotype, revealing an informal urban system created by contraband sellers. The project emphasizes the hidden aspects of urban life and the experiences of marginalized individuals engaged in smuggling.

Calypso 3621's selected works align with broader studies on Mediterranean travel narratives, which often prioritize visual processes of accentuation over geophysical appearances, merging land and sea into a surrounding void that shapes the traced routes. In a related effort to register and search for truth, Forensic Architecture (2010–present), an interdisciplinary investigation laboratory and research agency at Goldsmiths, University of London, transforms physical spaces and territories into narrative tools that expose hidden histories and experiences in the search for truth, often ignored by mainstream media and political discourse. This work also addresses the accumulation of false information, which is further examined in publications by Eyal Weizman, research director of Forensic Architecture. The works of Weizman's *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the threshold of detectability* (2017) and Fuller and Weizman's *Investigation aesthetics: Conflicts, commons, and the politics of truth* (2021) examine the intersection of migration with violence and conflict, shedding light on how migration is often driven by violent conditions and how architecture and spatial practices can be employed to investigate and document the impact of such violence on migrant communities, among others. By investigating events through digital tools, satellite imagery, and architectural analysis, Forensic Architecture brings attention to the human cost of conflict, displacement, and violence.

Forensic Architecture's investigation into "The left-to-die boat: The deadly drift of migrants" (2011–2012) used spatial analysis and digital reconstruction to expose systemic failures in border governance (Weizman, 2017, p. 350). According to Forensic Architecture and Weizman (2017), their methodology combined survivor testimonies, satellite imagery, AIS (Automatic Identification System) data, and ocean drift analysis to reconstruct the boat's path. By mapping distress signals, wind patterns, and the locations of military and commercial vessels, they

THE LEFT-TO-DIE BOAT

DATE OF INCIDENT 27.03.2011 - 10.04.2011	LOCATION Mediterranean Sea	PUBLICATION DATE 11.04.2012
COMMISSIONED BY Self-Initiated	ADDITIONAL FUNDING HKW - Haus der Kulturen der Welt, ERC: European Research Council	COLLABORATORS SITU Research, Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrés (GISTI), Migreurop, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Coordination et initiatives pour réfugiés et étrangers (CIRÉ), Ligue des droits de l'Homme (LDH), Human Rights Watch
METHODOLOGIES Remote Sensing, Fluid Dynamics	FORUMS Legal proceedings in France, Belgium, Spain and Italy	EXHIBITIONS No Access, Liquid Violence at Short Festival, Tense Present at KIBLA, Liquid Traces at We Are Ocean, How The Light Gets In (26 more...)
PLAY VIDEO	READ FULL REPORT	MEDIA & RESOURCES

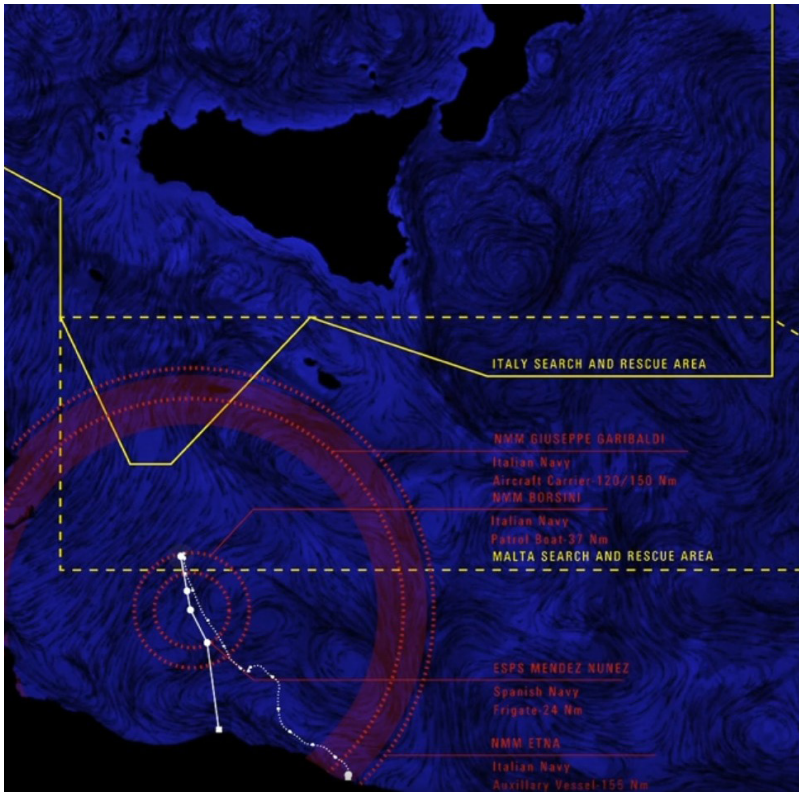


Figure 20: Forensic Architecture, "the left-to-die boat" (2011-2012). Image source: https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-left-to-die-boat

demonstrated that European and NATO forces, along with other actors, were aware of the migrants' emergency but failed and were reluctant to intervene. The boat, carrying 72 migrants from Libya, drifted for 14 days in a heavily monitored zone. When it eventually washed back to Libya, only nine people were still alive to tell their story. According to Forensic Architecture, the findings revealed how European border policies prioritize deterrence over rescue, reinforcing a "let-die" approach in the Mediterranean.[25]

Forensic Architecture's investigative work can also relate to Turchi (2004) and the mapping projects discussed, such as Khalili's *The mapping journey project* (2008 - 2011) and Fragapane and Piacentini's *The stories behind a line* (2016 - 2017), through their shared use of mapping as a tool for storytelling, advocacy, and resistance. Turchi emphasizes the role of representation, stating, "We organize information on maps in order to see our knowledge in a new way" (Turchi, 2004, p. 11). Turchi explains that maps reveal not only geographic terrains but also emotional and internal landscapes, while Forensic Architecture takes this further by using maps and visualizations to uncover suppressed narratives of political violence, human rights violations, and displacement.[26] Both practices challenge traditional forms of representation, highlighting the importance of truths and stories within territorial practices.

To relate this to architectural academia, the territory in Labastida's *El paisaje próximo: fragmentos del Vale do Ave* (2013) (*The close landscape: Fragments of vale do ave*) doctoral thesis is approached through the concept of the 'close landscape' — a process of proximity that functions as both method and tool, mediating between site and project within the diffuse territories of the Vale do Ave. This proximity-based framework activates the everyday, the unfinished, and the provisional as operative design elements. Labastida's use of the fragment as a tool to reinterpret and transform the landscape and architectural practice resonates with the ideas of migration and border-thinking, as seen in the representation works of Forensic Architecture (2010–present). Despite their different methodologies, both approaches draw on the idea that fragmentation — whether of borders or territories — holds transformative potential. By focusing on the immediate and local — specifically, the lived experiences of migrants in transitory spaces — Labastida's research aligns with critical perspectives on how borders are constructed and how the boundaries of territories can be redefined. Through 'close landscape,' the everyday becomes a site of potential transformation, much as borderlands and migratory routes are seen as zones of possibilities, resistance, and redefinition in migration and border studies.

To establish a framework relating architecture to geography, the research criteria and methodologies in this study reconstitute a way of addressing geo-architecture within the architectural field. The reading of representation in geo-architecture is not merely a visual or

25 This case became a key example of state complicity in migrant deaths and was used in legal proceedings and advocacy efforts to hold European authorities accountable. It also contributed to broader discussions on the criminalization of migration and the role of surveillance in border control. The "Left-to-Die Boat" remains a significant example of how forensic techniques can expose human rights violations, challenging dominant narratives about migration and state responsibility.

26 The work of Forensic Architecture also includes examining Mediterranean migration attempts through a rigorous combination of data from migrants, Sea-Watch, leaked reports, and other testimonies. Using methodologies such as geo-referencing and AIS tracking — commonly employed on ships like Sea-Watch vessels — they reconstruct the trajectories of migrant boats, providing a critical representation of movement across borders.

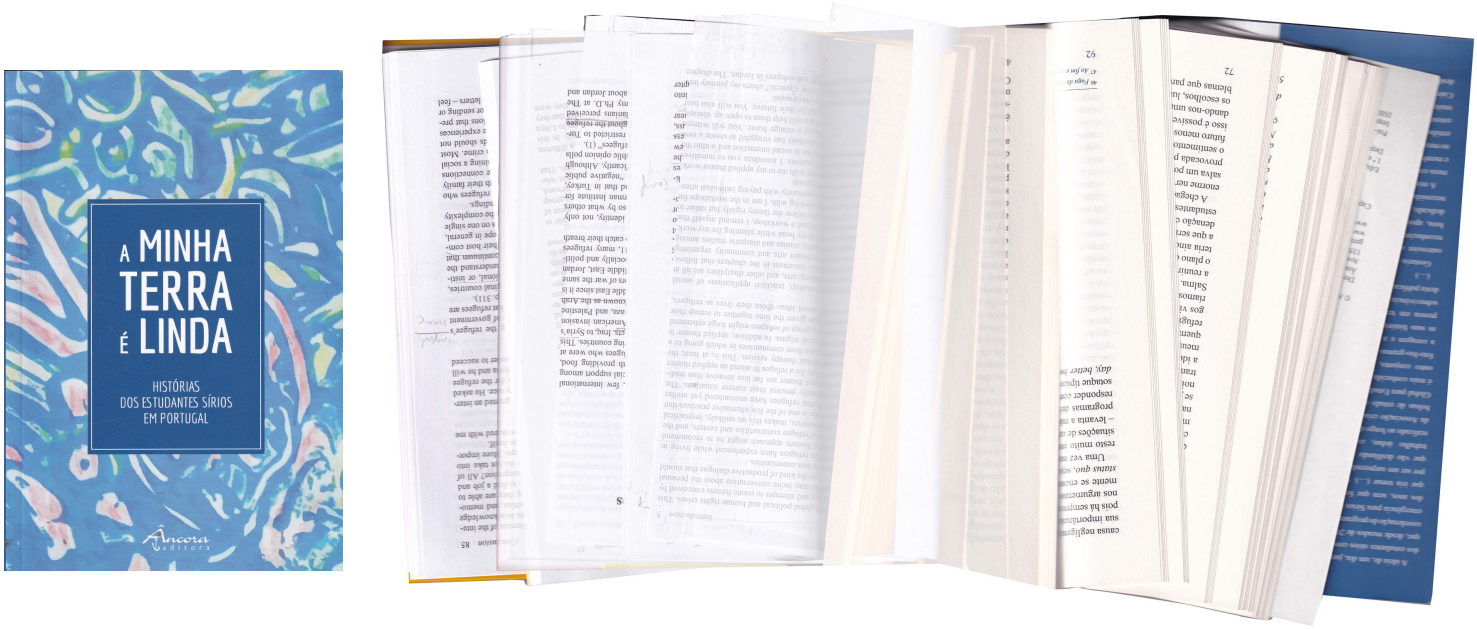


Figure 21: "*A Minha Terra é Linda*", Global Platform for Syrian Students APGES (2021)

textual act; it also involves a narrative dimension, where words and storytelling are closely associated with visual elements. In Genette's *Fiction et diction* (1991/1993) (*Fiction & diction*), the author's reconstruction of a story adopts a poetic stance by connecting narrative with creative imagination, which "makes a verbal message a work of art" (Genette, 1993, p. 2). This creative imagination shapes the author's positionality, allowing for the representation of reality as fiction. This implies that the fictional relation in projecting reality is depicted through the adaptation of an imaginary and/or individually remembered event into a literary object. This object, once represented, becomes constitutive of both the rhematic (diction) — providing new information and contexts to a theme — and the thematic (fiction) — producing a theme (Genette, 1993, p. 22).

In the creative process of this thesis, an adaptation and expansion of architectural themes toward the subject of migration are explored through theories and visual representations. To generate new forms of representation and introduce novel contexts to the theme, articulating a geo-architectural language serves as an intermediary step in reconfiguring the term geo-architecture. In Ette's *Literature on the move* (2003), registered movement is expressed as a fictional archive. Ette frames the writing of movement — his idea of a 'travelogue' (Ette, 2003, p. 17) — as an approach to understanding the recording of time and space, and how they become dimensions of the travelogue itself. This highlights the cartographic registration of a migratory path as an archival memory of itineraries. Similarly, in "The agency of mapping" (1999), Corner's concept of mapping as an agency concerns the expansive capacity of representation to reveal, recognize, and realize a context projected from eidetic imagination and memory into speculative and relational connections — abstractions of ideas, images, and text — evoked by the author's documentation of a subject's context. Mapping, as an agency and a system of "unfolding potentials" and "remaking a territory" (Corner, 1999, p. 10), enables representations of cross-scale relationships in time and space. In the context of this investigation, using the agency of mapping becomes a methodological tool that links domestic, urban–rural, and intercontinental territorial scales to visually demonstrate student migratory escapes — a collision between reality and fiction.

i.iii.b. *Ethos* and *aisthesis* in the research criteria and methodologies, within a three step formation

As for the representation of Syrian student migrants' stories and the recognition of their migration to Portugal, in 2021, APGES published *A minha terra é linda: histórias dos estudantes sírios em Portugal* (2021) (*My land is beautiful: Stories of Syrian students in Portugal*). It is a memoir featuring narratives of Syrian student migrants, briefly presenting their stories and experiences since arriving in Portugal. The memoir, published by the Global Platform for Syrian Students, compiles firsthand testimonies and composes third-person descriptive essays that recount the students' journeys — from the circumstances that forced them to flee Syria to their adaptation and integration into Portuguese society. However, these accounts are solely textual, capturing only part of the migrant experience without visual representation. While they highlight the challenges of student displacement, cultural adaptation, and the pursuit of education in a new country, the memoir relies entirely on text, omitting a crucial dimension of the migrant story: the visual aspect of their migratory paths, emotions, and lived experiences throughout migration.

Later, at the end of the same year, RTP produced a documentary titled *No chão que eles pisam* (2021) *(In the floor that they step*), featuring several Syrian migrant students who are part of APGES, along with other migrants from different nationalities, sharing their stories about life, education, and work experiences after arriving in Portugal. The documentary includes flashbacks to events related to the students' experiences during the Syrian war, providing context for their lives in Syria. However, the two episodes of the documentary primarily focus on their integration into Portuguese cities, as well as their current studies and work. Like the memoir, the documentary offers a window into their experiences, but it adds a visual dimension, capturing a blend of personal narratives through imagery and sound. Still, it centers on specific aspects of their lives in Portugal and does not engage with the broader social, political, emotional, geographical, and cultural complexities of their migratory paths — particularly the itinerary and its representation in relation to the wider Syrian student migration crisis.

In an attempt to further share the stories of the Syrian student migrants and their migration crisis, this thesis explores a representational study of successful Syrian student migrations to Portugal, focusing on time, territory, space, and place, with the involvement of humanitarian bodies and agencies that facilitated these migrations. Since time, territory, place, and space are always intertwined in a migratory path and experience, the research structure partakes in a deconstruction of the research criteria that could further explore this four-way relation with mobility. Based on this deconstruction, the criteria branch into the case-study selection criterion and the methodologies articulation criterion. Both criteria work interchangeably, as one completes the other and as both are initiated by dialoguing, mapping, representing, and archiving with the creative process. As architecture, in this regard, is a field of representation, the subject of migration becomes an experimental creative process to project Syrian student migrations to Portugal and their yet unrepresented attributes, significances, and criticalities to the interdisciplinary field of architecture. Being a subject that is uncommonly studied in architecture, migration here is sought to be a subject-study for a message manifestation and an adaptation of a visual representation to tell the story of how one's own migratory path to pursue knowledge and education is as legitimate and valid within human rights as it is



Figure 22: two-episode documentary "No chão que eles pisam" by RTP https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/no-chao-que-eles-pisamo-documentario-rtp-sobre-estudantes-sirios-apoiados-em-portugal_v1371527

for human survival, if not dependent on it — higher education as a survival factor for many individuals. Thereby, basing the representation of trial and error attempts, concluded in success, of intercontinental migrations becomes rooted in this research criterion.

The case-study selection criterion is a qualitative method of selecting specific, individual, and dissimilar cases of Syrian student migrations that are elemental and fundamental to the work structure. Initially, the suggested number of case studies ranged up to 20 Syrian student migrations of students in higher education who are part of the APGES scholarship program, including instances of irregular migration. This estimate did not anticipate the responses or realities of such a request — many student migrants did not respond, while others reacted with suspicion. The process began by contacting both familiar and unfamiliar individuals, including colleagues from the same scholarship program. These rejections, along with other factors discussed in this thesis, led to a rethinking of the case study criteria and structure. Although contact information was obtained for 10 individuals, only a few responded positively. From these, a further selection was made after brief exchanges of dialogue and interactions. The focus of this selection is on representing different student migratory paths from each of the four emergency scholarship calls between 2014 and 2018, along with at least one case of irregular migration within the same time frame. This was accomplished through narratives that varied in detail and showed both contextual similarities and differences across the cases. The five selected case studies formed the basis for structuring and developing the second part of this thesis.

As each individual case study constitutes part of the research body structure, one case study takes part in more than one sub-theme. This means that the sub-theme associated with each student migrant case study relates to where the vividness of recalling each migratory path lies. Whether it is in the association with the migrant's memory, border-related contexts, or transportation modes, the clearer the image within one or more of the aforementioned subjects is narrated to the researcher, the more detailed it can be translated and projected. Thereby, more emphasis is made on that migrant-subject context. By connecting a specific subject to a specific migrant (e.g., a border-related context to a migrant with a border-related context), the same migrant may or may not be part of other subjects as well. It is redundant to say, if their memory recalls another important event(s) during the migration, e.g., subject a - migrant a; subject b - migrant b; subject c - migrant a and c, the emphasis then shifts to one or more migrant-subject contexts for an individual migrant.

The selection criterion relies on the memory of the migrant during the dialogue and the recording of material. The memory of each migrant could be partially forgotten, and their identity protection, including not mentioning or blurring specific traversed places, may add challenges to the true representation of the traversed migratory path. This evokes an attempt of speculation and approximation, thereby fictionalizing some of the migration elements (e.g., home addresses or temporary habitations such as hotels). In other words, there are issues that take part in this configuration of representation in map-making. Due to identity protection of a migrant's case study, there happens to be an intentional obliteration of information that could facilitate alternative creative options for representation, suggesting montages within mapping as patchworks, without de-validating the path itself. Also, due to the memory dependency of the migrant while narrating the migration, other unintentional/

intentional obliterations are caused by many psychological factors — one of them is trauma (Matos, 2022) — that makes up another category of map-making as non-representational. Whether the unrecallable event in the migrant's memory is replaced by a void or other means of representation, the significance of this memory loss could either augment or minimize the presence of what is non-representational (absence) versus representational. In the case of the representation of specific places such as the plans and sections of airports or border checkpoints, especially in the Middle East, there exist many political restrictions related to the limitation of public access and availability of this architectural information, thereby limiting their true architectural representation.

During the selection process, an autonomously structured dialogue is initiated with a fixed and basic set of inquiry that may differ and expand or shrink from one case to the other, depending on the individual's gender (if it made an impact or influence the flow), recollection of events, migrant status, and itinerary. After asking the student migrant's consent to record the dialogue, the creative process initiates with what the migrant shares through the following inquiry:

| Reason to leave home — whether in Syria or in other country of residence;
| Application date to the academic scholarship of Global Platform for Syrian Students APGES/ GP4SYS or to other academic scholarships/ humanitarian agencies;
| Migration time and date, in parts and in whole;
| Time zones; AST, EET, EEST, WET, and WEST;
| Legal and/or illegal migration;
| Near home location (where they were when they left off to migrate), as a point of origin;
| Time (daylight or at night) and weather during the migratory path;
| Traversed land road(s);
| Traversed border checkpoint(s);
| Traversed airport(s);
| Place(s) of temporary habitation;
| Used transportation method(s).

If the descriptive narratives in the second part of this thesis miss or lack information regarding the above-mentioned required details, it depends on the dialogue's flow. For many of the student migrants, recalling their migration requires a lot of mental and emotional effort. To proceed with a dialogue, an ethical sensitization to their emotional state and level of responsive interaction during the dialogue has to be established. What to expect from a student migrant regarding their openness to discussing migration and sharing their experiences can vary. To make these possibilities lie within the category of practice-based research, the research is conditioned to take part in a formation prior to and during the research practice. The formation is a three-step understanding of how to individually approach this personal, life-changing subject of migration, where to position oneself onto and with-to this subject, and what to align and structure in a framework to serve this subject.

First step:
A fiction practice in the performance-based research, an emerging practice with ethnography

The performance-based research is rooted in the method of dialoguing and storytelling, explored through the words and theory of Ingold in *Lines: A brief history* (2015), where he stated, "In reading, as in storytelling and travelling, one remembers as one goes along. Thus the act of remembering was itself conceived as a performance [...]" (Ingold, 2015, p. 45). To establish this, ethical considerations are applied to the representation of Syrian student migrations, focusing on what can and cannot be represented. Upon the aforementioned inquiry, the migrant's verbal flow is expanded upon during the dialogue, naturally introducing new questions to the inquiry and adding new arguments and challenges to be represented. For the state of remembrance, the migrant's remembrance of events, patience is required to be acquired during the dialogue. The verbal flow is linked to the migrant's memory vividness of the migration event at a certain time and their current emotional status regarding specific question(s) within the inquiry. As an essential part of critical ethnography, patience signifies steadily holding an ethical responsibility to respect the other's aversion from answering or dialoguing about a certain specificity within the subject of migration. This means that the performance of the dialogue may unfold in more than one phase to do justice to the creative process and representation. Within the dialogue phases, a migrant may still experience an obliteration of migration memory due to a traumatic experience or due to a partial loss of migration event-memory, a mental construction of a specific scene in the migration event. Because of the inevitability in memory obliteration and the possible aversion from sharing some details within the itinerary, the research makes use of fiction to compose a representational language to story-tell different Syrian student migrations. The use of fiction also has to do with how the dialogue transforms into inter-subjectivity between the two sides of the performance. Inter-subjectivity here is a sharing of experience that becomes an input when a dialogist creates spaces of common ground, connection, as well as, distance during the dialogue with the interlocutor subject. Fiction, and fiction practice, with inter-subjectivity, expand the circle of communication and translation of words to images, and from textual to visual, to also be inter-subjective.

Fiction practice in representation takes shape and form within the creative process and discourse. It is the performance of fiction in research, a tool used within research methodologies to structure the framework of this study. The term and methodology are appropriated from Pestana's *Fiction practice: Prototyping the otherworldly* (2019), which emphasizes the role of fiction in practice-based research in architecture. *Fiction practice* (2019), as a collaborative work for curatorship, serves as a guideline for how fiction practice functions, based on ethos — the consideration of ethics as a form of proceeding with fiction practice. In other words, there is a fiction practice in processing work related to critical ethnography. In Pestana's Fiction Practice (2019), there is a reference to Mignolo's concept of border-thinking as a way to reflect on existing contexts and situated knowledges. Research, Boelen and Sacchetti emphasize, should not be isolated from the social, political, and ethical conditions in which it operates; it must be non-isolated, grounded in realities, and shaped by dialogue, accountability, and responsiveness (Boelen & Sacchetti, as cited in Pestana, 2019, p. 87). That is to say, fiction practice creates a structure of possibilities in interpretations. These possibilities are part of testing hypotheses and alternatives within a specific context.

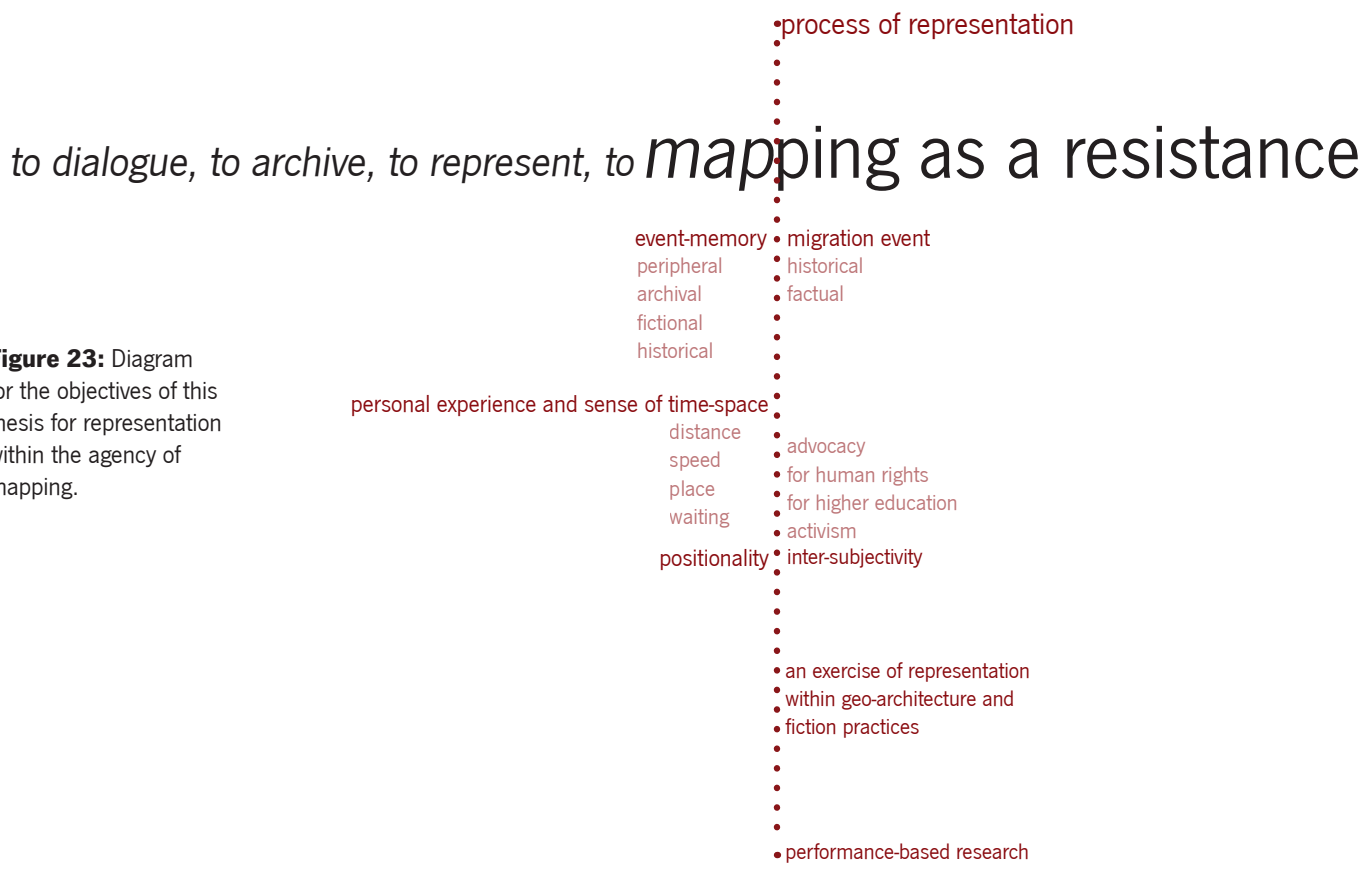


Figure 23: Diagram for the objectives of this thesis for representation within the agency of mapping.

These possibilities relate to the term 'fiction' because representation is part of making and creating. Fiction does not falsify or reduce realities; it alternates, signifies, deconstructs, and even reinterprets their perception and storytelling. The same applies to fiction in practice. Fiction as practice emerges as a response to the overlooking and under-documentation of Syrian migratory contexts and their stories, both in statistical data and in textual and visual representation. This response also addresses the falsified and dominant narrative propagated and promoted by the Al-Assad regime and its alliances — the claim that "Syria was safe, normal, and nothing was happening" — a narrative that denied the realities of enforced displacement, movement, escape, and many other forms of violence under the criminal dictatorial regime. This thesis also stands in resistance to that claim.

According to Madison (2005), critical ethnography as a method to socially construct an interpretation of the context of the subject matter (Syrian student migration), evolves from a political concern, a standpoint, and active reflection on the subject matter and its consequences. The context of Syrian student migration is a socio-political subject that impacts political agendas on an intercontinental scale and affects individual students personally. Thus, the representation of the migratory contexts — paths and experiences — of the Syrian student migrants becomes the focus of this research project. In this sense, a fiction practice is performed with four objectives regarding Syrian student migration: dialoguing with the Syrian student migrants, mapping their migrations after the selection of case studies, representing their migrations and artifacts collected during the dialogues, and archiving the created and collected material. These objectives are pursued after individually requesting the participation of Syrian student migrants in the research, through the following steps:

1. To dialogue (engage with, and narrate) with student migrants from different Syrian student migration groups (as focus groups) who arrived in Portugal either through UN refugee programs or the Global Platform for Syrian Students, but are considered students of the APGES scholarship program, either having completed their studies or still enrolled. The dialogues with the selected student migrants are conducted individually, privately, and separately. These stories and their representations are considered case studies. Due to my familiarity with the student migrants, which was a criterion for selection, there was no need to establish a friendly acquaintance beforehand, which was previously part of the initial phase before dialoguing with the participants for the purpose of data recording and collection. However, through the dialogue process — sharing, conversing, questioning, responding, reacting, and receiving answers — I got to know the student migrants more personally.[27] During the process of inquiry, which organically led to further questions and responses, I recorded the migrants' stories with their permission to use their narratives as data for visual and textual representation. The performance of the dialogue occurs in two steps, which were adapted throughout this thesis and are not fixed in order. After obtaining consent to record, the first step involves asking whether the student migrant had previously reflected on

27 There was originally a step intended to get to know the migrant and establish a friendly acquaintance, which could take more than one meeting. A second step, to proceed after familiarity had been established, was also planned. However, this step was removed, as familiarity with the selected student migrants had already been established before this thesis began. Nevertheless, the methodological process revealed that, through the dialogues, this familiarity and mutual connection became stronger and more empathetic, as we came to know more about each other's migratory paths and experiences by sharing our migration stories.

their migratory path — either before or after arriving in Portugal — or whether any traumatic experiences may have affected their memory. It is important to note that I was not initially aware of whether each participant had faced questioning about their migratory path after arrival or had experienced trauma that might have affected their memory due to events during their migration. The second step involves listening to and recording their story through a performed dialogue, which may take place across multiple sessions. The act of dialogue itself was a process that sometimes required more than one session and persistence.

Dialoguing is a performance and communication between two parties (the researcher and the migrant). It serves as part of the research practice that explores the Syrian student migration crisis from the true origin of the stories — the voices of the migrants themselves — by registering their narrated memories and descriptions, including the different reasons for embarking on a migratory path. This also includes artifacts collected during the migratory path (such as visa stamps, airline tickets, humanitarian documentation, and maps), as well as emotions and recollections captured, if the student migrant is responsive and willing, through either a handwritten testimony or a hand-drawn path overlaid on plain paper, a plan, or a map, requested and, if possible, created during the dialogue. All actions are preceded by the migrants' approval and identity protection, not only of their name, but of anything that could identify the migrant, such as place of residence or origin, visa numbers, and department enrolled in at the university, as an ethical responsibility.

2. To map (trace and document) the Syrian student migratory escapes (of the selected case studies) amidst the Mediterranean. Mapping translates a migratory path by connecting the human scale with the territorial one. Mapping these student migrations reflects the impact and significance (or lack thereof) of the Mediterranean Sea and region on the migratory path and experience. This may contribute to project awareness on how the representation of Syrian student migratory escapes could add an architectural and geographical context to the subject of Syrian migrations and act as a form of resistance — turning agency into resistance — to the structural power dynamics of border crossing, the invisibility produced by border violence and arbitrary treatment, failed escape attempts and disappearances, the systematic erasure of individual trajectories within dominant migration discourses, and the detention and deportation of those who fled war.

The learning and creative process works on three cross-scales, which evolve as the migrants are on the move: domestic scale, urban-rural scale, and intercontinental scale. The domestic scale includes the significance of one's home as part of the narrative and the sequence of events that lead to the migratory path and arrival at the destination. The urban-rural scale includes walking and waiting, as intermediate, heterotopic time scales within heterotopic places,[28] such as checkpoints, bus stops, and airports. These are heterotopic because they are real actions that occurred in real places that are "no man's lands." The urban-rural scale also includes vehicles used along the migratory path, from the origin to the in-between checkpoints, and finally to the destination. Waiting can be part of the experience within these vehicles during checkpoints between neighboring countries. The intercontinental scale is where a longer path is taken across continents within the migratory path, most likely by airplane (or boat in the case of a student refugee). The combination and connection between

28 From Foucault's idea of heterotopia, in his essay "Of other spaces" (1967/1986).

domestic, urban-rural, and intercontinental scales express the importance of mobility in representation, considering the vehicles used in mapping these scales.

3. To represent (theorize and reconfigure) chronotopes and traces of migratory escapes using various concepts that visually correlate and link architecture to geography — namely, Situationist psycho-geography, theories of drifting, *flâneur*, and walking rhetorics, as explored in Careri's *Walkscapes: Walking as an aesthetic practice* (2002). The aim behind these correlations and linkages is to define what escapes and their chronotopes are, and in this case, the escapes traversed by Syrian student migrants to reach Portugal. Because representation in the creative process involves visually projecting the migratory path and relies on the memory of the migrant during the performance of the dialogue, the loss and recollection of memory become part of this representation. Mapping and representing, here, function together in the experimental phase in a two-fold work: one that recognizes a natural, planned itinerary of the migration (the documentary), and the narrated (the fictional) that recreates and reconfigures another path that is individual in its representation, direction, and endeavor. Within the migratory path, a representation of the different vehicles used during the migration time and path is a way to view the temporary mobile objects and their relation to the migrants, where the vehicle may become a space of security that ensures arrival, or the contrary. This includes making drawings in plans and sections of these vehicles as a reenactment of the experience inside and with the transportation methods in relation to the surrounding environments.

4. To archive (analyze and reconstruct) the chronotopes of each selected successful (planned and organized) migration event and itinerary that takes part in the Syrian student migrations to Portugal, in relation to migration-related studies. To synthesize the work process, this analysis is based on the investigation time-line and is affected by the fluxes and changes of the different migratory escapes that the Syrian student migrants experienced along the duration of their migratory paths. Because the investigation suggests a historiographic question of analyzing and reconstructing an archive of the student migratory escapes, part of the fieldwork is to collect and record artifacts during the dialogue with the student migrants to be part of the archival documentation used in the representation of the case studies. Thus, archiving serves as the atlas of selected images produced during the learning and creative process.

Second step:
Analogical comparison and contrast between my positionality and that of other authors on the nearness to and the disclosure of Syrian (student) migrations

Finding architecture theses that approach migration from a border-thinking perspective, rather than focusing on refugee camp design and construction, proved difficult, especially in academic studies in Southern European Mediterranean countries. However, Giráldez López's *El dispositivo frontera: la construcción espacial desde la norma y el cuerpo migrante* (2019) (*The border device: spatial construction from the norm and the migrant body*) is a doctoral thesis in architecture that engages with the theme of migration in the time-space context, specifically within Spanish borders. The doctoral thesis centers on the relationship between the migrant's body, the territory, and the geopolitical maps. It expresses border-thinking throughout history, examining the built architectural representations of borders, border policies, and the spatial mechanisms that regulate migration. Giráldez López's (2019) focus is

not on directly engaging with migrants but on analyzing their migratory movements and flows. His thesis examines the spatial and legal mechanisms shaping the border apparatus and proposes alternatives for its construction in relation to law and the body in time and space. While the thesis engages with the lived experiences of migrants, it primarily does so through an architectural and political lens, rather than direct ethnographic fieldwork or personal interviews. The focus is on how spatial norms and dispositifs[29] regulate movement, affect bodies, and construct migration narratives, positioning migration within broader structural frameworks rather than focusing on individual migrant voices.

In other words, each individual's migration forms a singular experience, which, although shared with others, remains unique to the individual. In contrast, law and border policies often approach migration from an objective, collective, and seemingly neutral standpoint. However, as Madison (2005) argues, complete neutrality is impossible when addressing migration, a nuanced, complex, and ethically challenging issue. These actions are not only deeply personal but resonate with readers who may have a proximate relationship with the subject. In this regard, Giráldez López (2019) briefly mentions Syria and the Syrian migration crisis twice in one sentence when discussing the exponential increase of the crisis (Giráldez López, 2019, p. 47). However, Giráldez López (2019) presents the distressing image of Syrian child Aylan, found dead after drifting ashore, without specifying his nationality or addressing the consequences of being Syrian and fleeing the country (Giráldez López, 2019, p. 49). This omission removes the image's deeper emotional and geopolitical context. While the image of Aylan may resonate with readers on a surface level, it lacks critical engagement with the human experience of Syrian migration and the socio-political realities of being Syrian in a time of war.

Heller's *Liquid trajectories: Documenting illegalised migration and the violence of borders* (2015) is a doctoral dissertation in architecture that focuses on border-thinking and underscores how border enforcement shapes and constrains migrants' movements, including those of students who face both legal and social barriers — such as Syrian students navigating restrictive migration regimes. Heller's doctoral thesis theorizes the use of visual and sensory tools to document and expose the violence embedded within the European migration system, particularly in the Mediterranean context. This work is closely tied to his collaboration with Forensic Architecture, using documentary practices not only to represent but also to challenge the very structures of border control and surveillance. By framing migration as a 'liquid' and often fragmented experience, Heller's (2015) work focuses on documenting the violence of border regimes, the marginalization and exclusion of migrant experiences, and the need for alternative methodologies that counter dominant narratives and surveillance practices. Heller calls for a critical and humane reconsideration of migration policies, challenges the selective dissemination and censorship of migrant experiences in mainstream media, and advocates for the development of counter-methodologies that expose and resist the violence of borders. However, the thesis does not specifically address Syria, mentioning it only briefly in reference

29 The idea of dispositifs, a Foucauldian concept expressed in "Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison" (Foucault, 1975) (Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison), refers to a network of mechanisms that regulate and control individuals through social, political, and institutional practices. Giráldez López (2019) draws on this Foucauldian framework to analyze migration, specifically how border policies and architectural interventions serve as part of these larger systems of control, shaping and managing the movement of migrants.

to an activist who supported Syrian escapees crossing the Mediterranean Sea, and in the context of a methodology — Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE), used to estimate deaths from several countries, including Syria (Heller, 2015, p. 204). Although Giráldez López (2019) and Heller (2015) do not specifically focus on Syria, the Syrian crisis, Syrian students, or student migration, both works contribute significantly to the interdisciplinary field of architecture. They demonstrate the importance of integrating migration and border studies within architectural discourse, which is essential for critically addressing the complexities of these contexts.

Third step:
The structure of time as a method for (humane) representation and confirmation

The structure of this thesis organizes time into distinct moments, interwoven with the methodologies developed and practiced within representation. The time spent in each itinerary of the Syrian student migratory escapes to Portugal is perceived as an affirmation of these migrations and their durations. This structured approach to time contrasts with perspectives in physical science, where Barbour, in *The end of time: The next revolution in physics* (1999), denies the material existence of time, particularly chronological time, arguing that time consists of a sequence of 'nows,' stating that "The world is made of Nows" (Barbour, 1999, p. 38-39). His view aligns with Einstein's theory of relativity (1905–1915), which considers time a relative measure of change experienced by an observer — an 'experiencer' of time (Barbour, 1999, p. 32). Time serves to explain the movement and position of an object using relative points of reference to examine its velocity. The object's position becomes a point in space along a determined distance; this highlights the importance of fragmenting time within the frame of reference (from the vehicle, airplane, boat, or pedestrian steps). To articulate the fragmentation of time in space within the interdisciplinary field of architecture is to intertwine it with a fragmentation of distance in space.

The representation of Syrian student migratory escapes is articulated through points, lines, and fragmented compositions — as a formal and diagrammatic device — within the agency of mapping, producing an abstract geometrical and geographic projection. Since time fragmentation is interchangeable with distance fragmentation, mapping the fragmentation of migration becomes a process of representation and analysis. This realization emerged when I encountered the scientific theory of the paradoxical non-existence of time. I began to redefine it, aligning myself with its radical reality. Time is an agreement that provides a sense of life form from an existentialist, humane viewpoint. In other words, it does not negate science and the theories behind time but complies with them. In doing so, the existence of time becomes a human act of confirmation — a humane confirmation of our presence. Thus, the Syrian student migrations confirm their elapsed and progressed time as events that occurred along chronological time-lines. Time is always positive; there is no negative time. It is always moving forward, just as migration proceeds as a kinetic act composed of continuous fragments and segments.

Migration involves a constant performance of motion to be realized. In representing these migratory escapes, three types of migration time are recognized and emphasized: real time, as noted in documents like flight tickets; the personal sense of time for the migrant; and representation time, which is a comprehensive analysis of the migration, including its gaps, pauses, and filled-in parts. The representation of these migrations is a humane confirmation

of their existence within a specific period and duration. Time structures a creative method for arranging, appropriating, dilating, and shrinking the mappings of these migrations. By examining time as a visual and conceptual construct through representations, such as in Rosenberg and Grafton's *Cartographies of time* (2010), the reflection on how temporality is encoded in different mediums is emphasized, from historical charts and diagrams to digital interfaces and interactive storytelling. This history of the time-line suggests that rethinking the representation of time could lead to new ways of engaging with historical knowledge, making it more inclusive of diverse temporal experiences and epistemologies. The historical knowledge in the case of the migratory escapes studied in this thesis forms part of the empirical data that has been recorded, collected, re-interpreted, and represented. Within this, the emphasis on time serves as human and humane proof and confirmation that these migrations took place within the Mediterranean region, and their events are a recognition of their occurrence.

This recognition of each case study's occurrence is translated into the representation of the paths and experiences of the student migrants. One of the representations that translates time and its significance is the chronological time-line. However, alternative temporal models — such as cyclical, spiral, and fragmented — challenge the dominant linear narrative of time. Cyclical time views events as repeating in circular patterns; spiral time sees them as expanding or looping back; and fragmented time represents disjointed moments, reflecting a more complex or non-cohesive experience of temporality. Moreover, the act of mapping time carries implications for historical interpretation. Depicting events in a straight line implies a structured, almost deterministic flow of history, whereas other configurations — such as layered or networked chronologies — might emphasize simultaneity, rupture, or the coexistence of multiple temporalities. This raises critical questions about how historical narratives are represented, constructed, selected, and at times overlooked or marginalized. The three time models — such as cyclic, spiral, and fragmented — have the potential to integrate into the chronological time-line, though this may interfere with its linearity, especially in the case of the cyclic and spiral models, as they reveal patterns and recurrences that alter the linear form. The fragmented model, however, fits within the chronological time-line intended, but with events appearing disconnected or out of order, or with gaps suggesting non-linear or fragmented moments and event segments.

Therefore, considering the use of student migrant memory as empirical evidence and data — containing fragments, memory gaps, and obliterations — the fragmented model intersects with the chronological timeline, shaping its representation accordingly. That is to say, a chronological time-line can contain both linear and non-linear elements. While it conventionally follows a linear progression of events, it can incorporate non-linear aspects such as gaps, overlaps, or recurring patterns. For example, the inclusion of fragmented events disrupts the strict linearity of the time-line, making it more complex while still retaining the overall chronological structure. This blend allows for a more nuanced and textured representation of time, accommodating various forms of events and their interconnections. In contrast, the cyclic and spiral time models are articulated through some representations of the student migrants' paths and experiences, but they are not incorporated within their chronological time-lines, which is further explored in the second part of this thesis.

Time, as an ongoing and kinetic process, shapes the way time flows in migration. Migration often involves a simultaneity of experiences — living between past and present, origin and destination, memory and adaptation. Sontag, in her speech "At the same time... (The novelist and moral reasoning)" (2005),[30] reflects on storytelling and the time-line, emphasizing ethics, fiction, and the novel — concepts that can be linked to migration time and its narration. Sontag presents an approach to storytelling that leads to fiction in the novel, first through the importance of time:

> "The art of the writer is to find as much as one can in that story, in that sequence, in that time — the time-line of the story — in that space, the concrete geography of the story. 'There are so many stories to tell,' [...]" (Sontag, 2005, p. 7).
> "The dimension of time is essential for prose fiction [...]" (Sontag, 2005, p. 8).

Sontag's exploration of the role of a fiction writer and the ethical responsibility to bear witness resonates with the ways migration narratives unfold across different temporal and spatial dimensions. She discusses how the fiction writer creates a world that is unique and responds to a shared world, which she refers to as 'history.' The idea of the writer's responsibility to craft stories that engage with a world known or unknown to others directly connects to the concept of producing history. This emphasizes that storytelling — much like the act of fiction writing — becomes a form of historical production:

> "A [...] writer of fiction both *creates* a new world... through acts of imagination, through language that feels inevitable, through vivid forms... that is unique, individual and *responds* to a world, the world the writer shares with other people, but is unknown or *mis*-known by still more people, confined in *their* worlds: call *that* history, [...]" (Sontag, 2005, pp. 6-7).

Sontag's engagement with time, particularly in how events are remembered and represented, parallels the ways in which migration is not only a movement through space but also a layered experience of time. Migrants navigate histories of displacement while constructing new temporalities along their migratory paths and in their host environments.

30 Susan Sontag delivered and performed the speech "At the Same Time... (The Novelist and Moral Reasoning)" on October 12, 2003, during the Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels (Peace Prize of the German Book Trade) award ceremony in Frankfurt, Germany. Initially, my reference to the text was based on its inclusion in the posthumous collection At the *same time: Essays and speeches* (2007); however, I later identified its earlier publication as an essay in English Studies in Africa (2005).

chapter **i.iv.**

_Provisional chronotope: configurations of temporary time-space

i.iv.a. For a realization of place, territory, distance, and wait

The third chapter analyzes a body of text that explores ideas and concepts explaining the type of migratory experienced by the student migrants from the case studies. To examine this theoretically, the philosophy of the chronotope — *chrono*, derived from *khrónos*, the Greek term for ordered, sequential time — in Bakhtin's essay "Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel" (1937) provides a framework for understanding dialogism and its connection to temporal-territorial-spatial relations and configurations. These relations represent the intersections of time, territory, and space, manifesting in recognitions, recollections, and obliterations of human situations as processes of time-images in space within a narrative discourse. A narrative discourse refers to the way a story is structured and presented, including the organization, sequence, and manner of storytelling. It involves not only the content of the narrative but also how it is communicated — such as pacing and referencing — influencing the shared knowledge of the events. This narrative discourse acknowledges the Syrian student migrations to Portugal as survival migrations: first, as a response to surviving war; second, to the ongoing survival of displacement alone overseas.

The idea of survival migration was introduced by Alexander Betts in *Survival migration: Failed governance and the crisis of displacement* (2013). Betts argues that individuals fleeing conflict voluntarily should not be categorized as forced migrants but rather as survival migrants. He distinguishes between those forced to migrate due to direct persecution or violence and those whose migration is driven by the absence of alternatives in a conflict zone, where survival becomes the primary motive. The theme's narrative discourse, in this case, centers on the recent migratory flows of Syrian student migrants to Portugal. Their survival migrations and displacements fall into the gray area between voluntary and forced migration, due to the circumstances and sequential events triggered by the war-conflict in Syria and the difficulties in returning home. These migrations are to be regarded as escapes — "enforced movement[s] through space" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 105) — from difficult current realities. 'Enforced movement(s)' is both literal and circumstantial, as the student migrants had no better or alternative options to flee their situation.

For representation, the student migrant escapes become registers and records of the present. In this sense, representation acknowledges these escapes through segments of sub-events, which involve indications and references to place, territory, distance, and waiting in each migratory path. Each of these elements affects and molds the sequential and fragmented time-frame and story-line. From within these sub-events, time and space are reshaped and reformed. As a consequence of inter-subjectivity during the dialogues, representation also appropriates and adapts the narrative of the interlocutor to the visual translation of the migratory path and experience. Therefore, time and space are also affected by inter-subjectivity, consequently influencing representation within the learning and creative process. To deconstruct this interplay, it is necessary to reflect on the question: Are the forms migration takes solely temporal and spatial, or do they also include the affective?

On one hand, reading and defining time and space in migration involves literary criticism, as Bakhtin (1975/1981) suggests in theoretical terms. On the other hand, it also involves practical methods of communication and translation, such as mapping and representation, which emerge from the interactions between student migrants and their traversed

environments — including the affective dimension. 'Affective' refers to the emotional and felt dimension of migration — how it is experienced emotionally, psychologically, and subjectively by the student migrants. That is to say, migration is not just about movement across time and space (temporal and spatial), but also across internal emotional landscapes. It shapes and is shaped by how people feel, remember, and relate.

Therefore, the chronotopic bridging from literary theory and philosophy to architecture and geography facilitates an expansion of architectural perception, allowing it to encompass not only cultural and territorial fields but also the emotional and subjective dimensions of migration. This bridging helps highlight and interpret both regional occurrences and individual events in migration, which remain relevant to this day. Since dialogue is central to communication and engagement with the subject, the discursive formation of the process — alongside Bakhtin's (1975/1981) concept of the chronotope and the dialogic relation with the subject — complements the learning and creative process. Madison's (2005) approach to critical ethnographic practice provides an understanding that acknowledges the context and world of each student migrant. It draws attention to the intricacies and complexities of communication and translation throughout the dialogue within the learning and creative process of this thesis.

In relation to the segments of the migration event, mapping a migratory path shapes the representation of time and space and reveals how time influences space, and vice versa. Within this representation, a time-line can be constructed. Determining where the migratory path is represented on this time-line depends on whether the different segments of the Syrian migratory paths intersect — either partially or completely — or occur at different times. In this thesis, a migrant in representation is understood as an echo of their narrative within the dialogue. The performance within the dialogue — the emphasis on words and sub-events in the migratory path — creates a processual relationship between the migrant and the textual and visual realization of their story. These words and sub-events form the building blocks for understanding — and thus deconstructing — the complex reality of Syrian migration. Since the dialogues occurred after the migrant's planned itinerary had concluded and they had arrived in Portugal, time is segmented to perceive the migratory path as a fragmented line. In representation, these segments are either amplified or reduced in visual presence based on their relationship with what the interlocutor conveys to the dialogist.

i.iv.b. A consecutive change of time-space in migration

To represent time in a similar sense, a segmentation of time is addressed in relation to migration, drawing on Serres' concept of folded time from *Conversations on science, culture, and time: Michel Serres with Bruno Latour* (1995). Though folded time differs from linear time, it is still part of it. Serres (1995) describes linear time as a movement backward, a passage to past events. In the context of survival migration, which involves humanitarian admissions and support, folded time manifests through narrative as a sequential structure that defines its representation. This folded time, which is represented in the chronological time-lines in the second part of this thesis, functions as a hinge that connects events, shaping the migrant's lived experience. It can be understood through three interrelated aspects:

1. A facilitated, pre-organized or planned time, where events unfold within a structured framework.

2. Freedom to move across time and space, allowing migrants to establish connections amid their lived experiences.

3. A crumpled time composed of juxtaposed sub-events, where moments shrink and expand, overlapping within both their personal significance (the individual's perception of time) and their measured duration (the chronometric flow of time).

This dynamic interplay between structured and fragmented time reflects the complexities of migration, where past, present, and future continuously fold into one another. In the case of student migration, of a student refugee whose irregular migration combines survival and forced displacement, and who does not participate in an organized humanitarian academic admission and migratory flow, folded time becomes more compounded, less organized, and more autonomous, with reduced freedom of movement and limited anticipation

Depending on motion, velocity, and border policies that either facilitate or obstruct the migratory path, the proximity and distance of time in space accelerate or decelerate along a timeline. This subsequent time, in turn, creates a crucial concept known as kairos — a Greek term meaning a significant moment to take a favorable step. In this context, APGES organized and facilitated a kairos, offering special access and extending circumstantial freedom within the folded time of student migration through the Syrian migrants' humanitarian admission to Europe. Normally, according to Borasi's *Journeys: How traveling fruit, ideas, and buildings rearrange our environment* (2010), such migratory escapes involve futile attempts by political agencies, internal and external forces, and vigilante groups to regulate, control, or eradicate these migrations — often driven by ambiguous purposes and contradictory motives, such as halting their occurrences or prolonging them for economic and/or socio-political reasons. Borasi (2010) also points out how migration, due to its constant increase, is a dominant theme in the cause-and-effect domain. This is because its impacts and implications reshape environments and long-term geopolitical realities through human motion across time and space, thus contributing to the displacement of people. Here, place — where experiences are lived — is integrated into a complex, fourfold relationship between time, territory, and space, in which the consequences of migration and broader societal structures stimulate, intensify, and condition human movement within the critical realities of today's migration

crises. Through a curatorial approach, Borasi (2010) destabilizes fixed geographies by tracing how the circulation of ideas, bodies, and materials reshapes environments and reframes the understanding of place within migratory dynamics.

The restriction on movement from the Syrian migrants' home country to other places, and the sudden shift that allowed them to cross borders, raises both aesthetic and ethical questions. The migratory path becomes a transformative act, a step towards achieving freedom despite obstacles. For this change to be visualized, it must be narrated and recorded, using both aesthetic and ethical frameworks in representation, alongside co-occurrence and conjunction. In theoretical terms, to represent the migratory path of a Syrian student's escape, an ethical-aesthetic demand is expressed at both human and territorial scales within the cross-scale relationships of time and space. From here, the relationship between the research narrative process and its connection to time establishes an immediate relation with the chronotope.

The chronotopic aspect of migration is where the student migrants, in fluctuating human mobility and constant interaction with their current environments, influence social and political forces. The subject of migration leads to a concatenation and sequence of relationships that translates and conveys to the reader the 'how' and the 'what' of a migration's progression. In other words, the theme interrelates with historiographic contingencies, represented both in the timeline and narrated events, as a form of storytelling — a Bakhtinian narrative consequence stemming from a repositioned architectural enunciation act (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. xxviii). The theme thus addresses the student migrant's context within a migratory path, assimilating its current historical and artistic chronotopes — when time and space are visually represented — through narrative discourse. Through diagram representation (Figure 24), these points of convergence explore the relationship between reality and fiction, expressing the duality of memory and fact in migration. A relevant example of the interplay between time, location, displacement, and fiction is Eco's *L'isola del giorno prima* (1994/1995) (*The island of the day before*). Although set in the South Pacific Ocean near the International Date Line, rather than in the Mediterranean, its underlying ideas resonate in the perception of borders. The protagonist, della Griva, is stranded on a ship near an island he believes lies just beyond the Date Line, symbolizing an unreachable tomorrow.

Eco's exploration of displacement and exile parallels the experiences of migrants navigating unfamiliar territories and struggling with the notion of return. This connects to the concept of chrono-, as migration involves not only spatial movement but also temporal dislocation. Just as della Griva is caught between time zones, migrants experience temporal liminality, where past, present, and future become entangled in uncertainty. Eco's novel reflects how movement is tied to time, memory, and the impossibility of returning to an unchanged past. This could relate to the many sea escape attempts that many Syrians had gone through but which, rather than leading to resolution or return, deepened the disjuncture between past and present — with lives lost in between — embedding their trajectories in fractured temporalities, irreversible transformations, and unattainable wishes. According to Eco (1994/1995), time becomes a non-neutral continuum but a fragmented, unsettled, and dislocated construct, where linearity falters, thresholds blur, and place exists in a state of perpetual deferral. It is imagined through both uncrossable and crossable thresholds — aligning with the liminality of forced and survival migrations.

i.iv.c. Of a migration, a migratory context, and a migrant

An 'architectural enunciation' is repositioned by appropriating Guattari's philosophical and relational discourse, explaining how an architect can be an artist of lived experiences in *Schizoanalytic cartographies* (1989/2013) by turning architecture into an event through the process of 'eventization' (Guattari, 2013, p. 239). To reposition an architectural enunciation within the theme of migration, Guattari's ordinates of 'ethico-aesthetic' provide a structural approach to perceive the relationship between ethics and aesthetics as synchronized dimensions, generating learning and creativity in both content and expression. Because architecture becomes eventized, migration, as it is inherently an event, follows this intersection. Since ethics form the basis of axiology — the realization of value within the subject and object of study — when researching socially and politically complex subjects, the representation of this subject, from an aesthetic perspective, becomes the catalyst for architectural research and the threshold of the creative process. This recalls Emami's (2020) exploration of the border, which further underscores the importance of the threshold concept within architectural research, particularly within migration studies. In Emami's work, the threshold serves as a geo-architectural marker, identifying the point where architectural representation within the interdisciplinary field of architecture becomes an ongoing process of creative learning and transformation.

To proceed in repositioning this architectural enunciation, migration as a phenomenon becomes diachronic — an occurring and changing phenomenon through time and space — aligning with Guattari's 'ethico-aesthetic' ordinates that complement Bakhtin's analysis of time-space and dialogism. To represent the diachrony of migration, architecture enunciates an intersection of temporal-territorial-spatial configurations that take part in the eventization of architecture during a migratory path and experience, positioning migration itself as an event.

Migration can be understood as an event that disrupts and reconfigures both physical and symbolic spaces. Drawing from Guattari, migration is not merely a movement from one place to another but a process that deterritorializes and reterritorializes[31] identities, knowledge, and social structures. In the case of Syrian student migration to Portugal, this event unfolds within the humanitarian agency and framework of border processing facilitation, urgent humanitarian support, and calls for scholarships that the APGES scholarship program has developed during its active years. Due to the uniqueness of these emergency calls, the migratory flows established and organized through the APGES scholarship program are identified as migration events, which should be recognized as efforts made for the betterment of humanity.

The representation of Syrian student migration can also be examined through the lens of event architecture. Spaces of migration, whether physical or digital, shape and are shaped by the narratives, documentation, and visualization of migration. Ideas such as border-thinking,

31 The ideas of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, as developed by Guattari and Deleuze in *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (1980/1987), describe how identities, cultures, and structures are displaced and re-formed in new contexts. Deterritorialization refers to the process by which a system, identity, or culture is uprooted from its original context. In the case of migration, this happens when individuals or communities leave their home countries, losing the familiar social, political, and cultural structures that previously defined them. Reterritorialization is the subsequent process of re-establishing identity in a new space. Migrants and displaced individuals navigate new cultural, legal, and social frameworks, leading to hybrid or transformed ways of being that merge past and present experiences

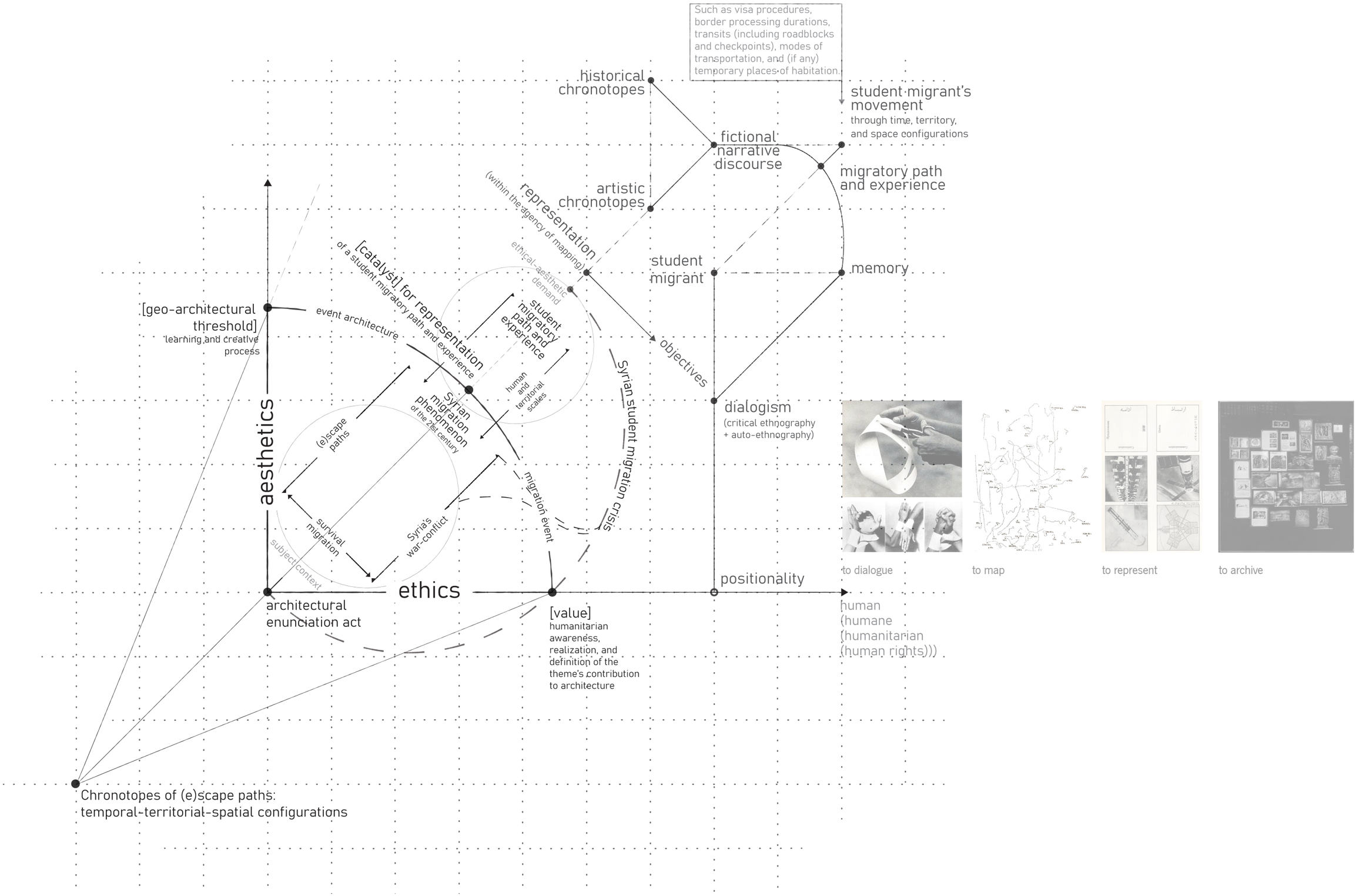
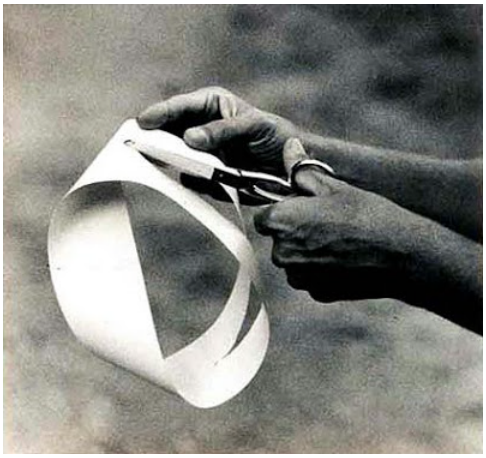


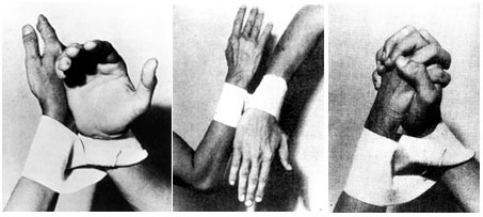
Figure 24. Diagram of the chronotopes of escape paths in relation to the student migrant's migratory path and experience. It starts by relating the survival migration of Syrian student migrants to the aesthetic-ethical demand, followed by the ethical-aesthetic demand through an architectural enunciation, and then the representation that emerges as a catalyst for the thesis objectives. (Diagram contains referenced images in Figures 25, 26, 27, and 28).

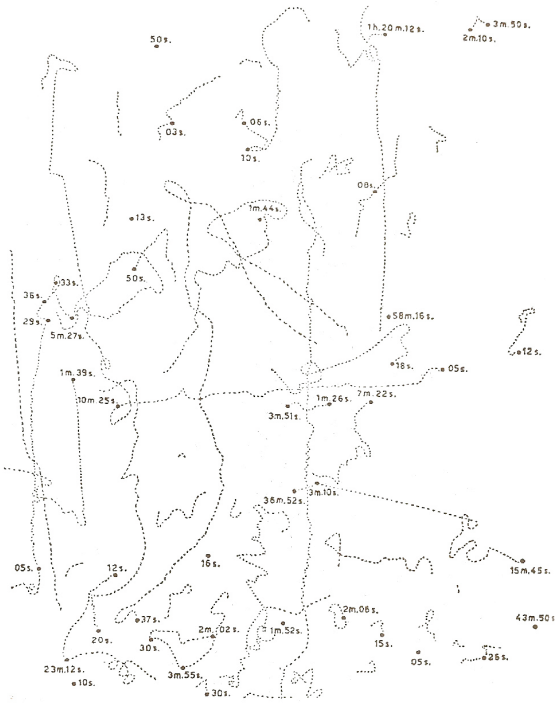
as discussed by Mignolo (2000), and Guattari's notion of existential territories (1989/2013) express how knowledge production is influenced by migration processes. Guattari's existential territories are zones of subjectivation — psychological, affective, and spatial formations — deeply shaped by context, including migration. These territories inform how individuals and collectives perceive, inhabit, and produce knowledge, especially under displacement or deterritorialisation. In practice, architectural and artistic interventions — such as cartographies of displacement, participatory installations, or digital storytelling — can serve as event architectures that materialize and reframe the experience of migration. Understanding Syrian student migration as an event provides a perspective that transcends crisis narratives, focusing instead on how space, knowledge, and representation interact in the construction of new subjectivities.

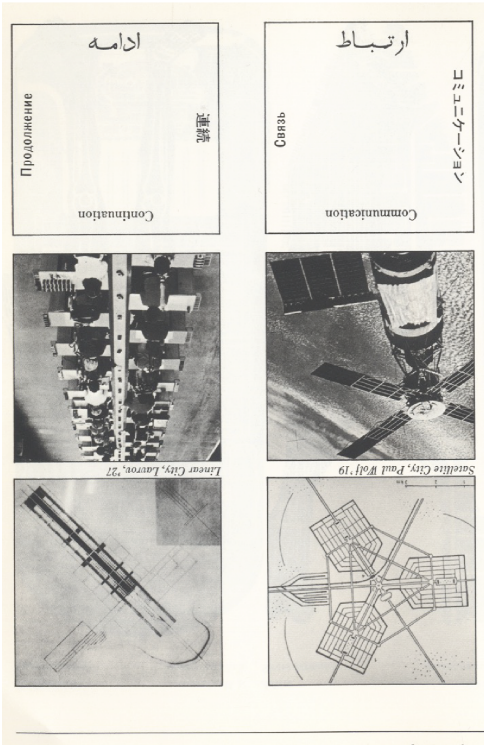
The ethics-aesthetics axes then serve as a framework for representing the migratory path, ultimately becoming an outcome of architectural enunciation. Architectural enunciation — a mode of articulation — explores colloquium events and exhibitions as platforms for addressing urgent social issues, particularly migration, struggle, and crisis. A significant example is Aravena's guide *Reporting from the Front: 15th International Architecture Exhibition* (2016), which sought to emphasize architecture's role in tackling and responding to pressing and urgent global challenges. In his curatorial statement, Aravena reflects on the complexity and variety of issues that architecture must confront, stating:

> Our curatorial proposal is twofold: on the one hand, we aim to widen the range of issues to which architecture is expected to respond, adding explicitly to its cultural and artistic dimensions those that lie on the social, political, economic, and environmental end of the spectrum. On the other hand, we seek to highlight that architecture must respond to multiple dimensions simultaneously, integrating a variety of fields rather than choosing one over another. (Aravena, 2016, p. 21)











Figures 25, 26, 27, and 28. Reference images as metaphors of actions in the theme's objectives. As projections and reciprocals of the theoretical concepts and ideas, the objectives work together in the theoretical and practice-based research. From left to right: "Diálogo de mãos" (Hands Dialogue) by Clark (1966); "Movements of a fly in a window between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. One day in may" by Merchetti (1967); City Metaphors by Ungers in Hollein's *Man Transforms* (1976, p. 107); "Panel 8: Towards the Sun Towards the Sun" in Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1928, pp. 28-29).

part ii.

Architecture for migratory contexts through representation

Architecture for migratory contexts through representation translates words into visual and textual representations of the selected Syrian students' migratory escapes. This part expresses how architecture could convey an interlocking of sub-themes, the chapters, and sub-chapters, integrating the theorized words and their conditioning put into practice. This practice in the research is divided into two readings: the first focuses on the subjects and sub-themes that provide the representation with a discourse, a foundation to build upon, and guidelines that are considered **geo-architectural moments**, including **numbers, memory, margin,** and **mobility**; the second explores the branching and intersection of these sub-themes within the **story maps**, including the migratory paths and experiences of ***Intima'a, Tatneesh, Tanmeel, Tamsaha,*** and ***Shantata***. Each story map begins with a diagram containing data gathered and aligned with the case study's migratory flow dates and its core sub-theme and message, in articulation with the Syrian student migration crisis, education crisis, and war crisis. It then transitions into a descriptive narrative of the migratory event, representing the sub-themes according to the flow of the event's memory and findings.

In these story maps, the main sources of reference are derived from the dialogues. The research process involves re-interpretation and inter-subjectivity both during and after these dialogues, forming a valuable source of oral history. The material recorded from these dialogues — voice recordings, drawings, and shared photographs — serves as a primary source of reference for understanding and re-interpreting the migratory events. Performing the dialogue acts as a storytelling tool, facilitated through first-person interviews set to collect and document data. The oral history of migration emerges as a recollection of the migrant's experiences and paths, shaped by their memory, sense of time and space, and the emotional states that conditioned how they share these migratory paths and experiences. This storytelling is not a static process; it is dynamic and layered. Words from the dialogues are adapted into images and maps, where the practice of re-interpretation introduces an element and an unavoidable presence of fiction. This fiction is not a departure from reality but rather an interpretive position that constructs representations grounded in real events. These representations incorporate dimensions of reality — dates, climates, environments, geographic physicality, places, and distances. However, these factors may be altered, distorted, or emphasized according to the student migrant's memory and emotional state during both the migratory event and the dialogue.

The interplay between reality and fiction allows bridging the gap between data and lived experience, offering a multidimensional narrative that respects both the precision of historical registrations — migrations and migratory crises as events rooted in time and history — and the impact of personal memory on how these events are shared. The five case studies from different migratory flows further question the reality of how Syrian migrations are categorized as forced due to the migrant being forcibly displaced. These case studies shed light on the emotional struggles encountered by the student migrants. Through their narratives, the emotional states of the migrants emerge as expressions of survival — survival from inevitable displacement, the rupture caused by distance, and the loss of stability that accompanies being away from one's home and soil, even when the physical home has been destroyed by war or never existed.

chapter **ii.i.**

_Geo-architectural moments

From theory to representation: activating geo-architectural moments

Before exploring the geo-architectural moments and the reason for naming this chapter, it is essential for the objectives to be activated and put into action in an activist demand to share the case studies and their untold stories. These objectives — to dialogue, to map, to represent, and to archive — serve as the foundation for the chapter's exploration of the migration experience, particularly in the context of Syrian student migration. Through these objectives, the chapter seeks to engage in conversations, document the migration of displaced Syrian student populations, explore architectural representations of their experiences within the agency of mapping, and contribute to the expansion of the architectural field in critically thinking, acting, and responding to the Syrian student migration crisis. In doing so, it aims to express the intersection of architecture, geography, and human experience, ensuring that these critical narratives are not overlooked or forgotten. Geo-architectural moments refer to key instances where architecture interacts with geopolitical and geographical conditions, particularly in relation to migration, displacement, and crisis, as experienced by the student migrants from the Global Platform for Syrian Students. These moments express how architecture is shaped by and responds to territorial, environmental, and socio-political forces through four sub-themes that emerge as foundations: **numbers**, **memory**, **margin**, and **mobility**. In this body of memory, four sub-themes emerge as foundational:

The geo-architectural moments focus on the experiential practice used to approach and generate situated knowledge, aligning with the ethical considerations, in both responsibility and reasoning, established throughout the thesis. Considering that situated knowledge is active and contextual in this thesis, tied to the migratory experiences of student migrants, there must be a process to deconstruct these knowledges in order to activate the production of knowledge focused on these moments. These moments are created from theory to practice, from textual to visual, and vice versa. 'From theory to practice' means that the bibliographical references in the body of text in this thesis are connected to the interlocked and experiential geo-architecture and fiction practices. The process of this division of the geo-architectural moments — numbers, memory, margin, and mobility — addresses this process of deconstruction and involves the learning and creative process within the migratory contexts to set a type of order for representation. The experiential practice in this approach and generation of knowledge uses the experience gathered, gained, learned, and developed, corresponding to the ethic-aesthetic demand that these migratory contexts require for representation. In this sense, the experiential practice is studied and analyzed throughout these geo-architectural moments through the following:

Numbers: Data in diagrams as a geo-architectural moment addresses the issue of registration and under-registration of data related to the Syrian migration crisis, including student migration, displacement, disappearances, destruction, and damage assessments, among others. It emphasizes the need to gather, study, analyze, archive, and share this data. At certain points, numbers can provide answers, fill gaps, and connect points, while in others, they remain unknown.

Memory: Recollections and obliterations as a geo-architectural moment explore the role of dialogue in retrieving memories stored by migrants and the erasure of migration events. This obliteration of memory is not seen as a negative aspect but as part of the personal,

fictional narrative of each migratory path and experience. The analysis of these paths — moving from point to line — examines how this representation influences the translation of migratory experiences.

Margin: Entry ports as a geo-architectural moment focus on identifying no-man's-lands relevant to the case studies. It examines how the representation of these areas is approached, especially when there are barriers to visitation and incomplete records of these places, such as missing safety schemes or plans, which hinder architectural and territorial understanding. These areas are socially and politically marginalized, reflecting the precariousness of migration.

Mobility: Transportation modes as a geo-architectural moment articulate the timeline of transportation modes used by student migrants, including walking, military cargo aircraft, taxis, and inflatable boats. This moment reflects the varied and evolving ways in which migration happens over time.

These moments emphasize the interplay between architecture and geography, framing architecture not only as a spatial practice but also as a response to the territorial, environmental, and political dynamics affecting displaced Syrian students. The expression **geo-architectural moments** refers to significant, context-specific points or elements that link geographical, architectural, and emotional aspects within the research's learning and creative process. These moments help ground the narrative in both physical territory, spanning two continents, and emotional experience. They can be considered as conceptual points where geographic data, personal memories, and socio-political factors intersect, influencing how the migration experience is studied, theorized, and represented, as well as how these elements are expressed through architecture and storytelling.

ii.i.a. Numbers: data in diagrams

While analyzing how data[32] about the Syrian migratory crisis has been constructed and archived, I have noted several issues related to this thesis, particularly concerning the challenges I faced with these data collections. These challenges emerged when representing the data numerically in the case studies. At one point, the data supposedly registered appears selective, influenced by the structural importance of certain subjects, which leads to emphasizing some aspects while disregarding others. For example, unstudied cases of family and student migrations are often overlooked; damage assessments for many regions of Syria lack depth; and demographic information excludes critical details about student migrations, such as age ranges, lumping them into generalized adult categories and including them under international migrants, thereby neglecting the various types of migrants who may or may not be part of this internationality. This aggregation does more harm than good, obscuring the presence of students and their pursuits for higher education, thereby diminishing the necessity for this significant issue to be highlighted and addressed. Furthermore, the student data found lacks reliability and is insufficient to fully represent the situation, as much of the registered information omits meaningful details depending on the source, creating gaps that fall under the category of unregistered data and incompleteness.

Registered and unregistered

According to the Migration Data Portal, data on the international migration stock of the Syrian population — referring to the total number of international Syrian migrants — begins to be recorded only in 2015, following the outbreak of the war, conflict, and revolution in early 2011. Before that, the portal provides data only for the migration stock of the Syrian population in 2010 and earlier. This creates an information gap between 2010 and 2015, as well as between 2015 and 2020. Such gaps undermine the factual representation of the migratory crisis as a whole, as significant information is missing. Notably, data on aspects of the student migratory crisis is particularly absent. Additionally, the interaction between sources and the countries involved further complicates the situation, as they influence one another in various ways. Contributing factors include Syria's secrecy during the dictatorial regime, withholding information from the public, and disruptions in data registration — such as the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics halting its recording of statistical data — all of which have compounded the insufficiency of research and foundational data.

According to the Migration Data Portal, between 2014 and 2018 — the years corresponding to Global Platform for Syrian Students (APGES) scholarship migratory flows — there was a steady and significant increase in the number of Syrian student migrants in tertiary education abroad, categorized as international students. The data indicate an estimation of 31.69 thousand students in 2014, 38.6 thousand in 2015, 46.7 thousand in 2016, 53.4 thousand in 2017, and 64.5 thousand in 2018. However, this data does not specify whether these Syrian international students were recipients of APGES scholarships, or any other humanitarian and/or academic scholarship, refugees, asylum-seeking individuals, stateless individuals, in broader terms, illegal migrants, or in which countries they were residing and pursuing their studies, opting out the number of national students with internally displaced persons' (IDPs) statuses. Additionally, the Migration Data Portal lacks information regarding Syrian students who completed secondary or university education, adding another layer to the category of

32 All statistical data sources referenced in this thesis are cited and organized in the reference list.

unregistered data, which requires further investigation. This data is crucial for comparing specific periods of time, which is from 2011 to the present and between 2014 and 2018, and for understanding the impact of how the war and migratory crises have affected education, thereby shaping the lives of countless individuals.

According to reports on the sources, data archiving, and selection processes of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) — for example, through the Migration Data Portal — the sources are categorized into statistical, administrative, and innovative data sources. These include surveys, border control records, registration data, and the Displacement Tracking Matrix. However, migration data faces significant challenges, particularly concerning data gaps, such as those related to smuggling and illegal migrations. According to the IOM, these gaps are primarily caused by insufficient information sharing between different government agencies and organizations, resulting in fragmented, hidden, or permanently unknown information. This information could otherwise be crucial for surveys and archival research, contributing to comprehensive historical registries and ensuring accountability. Such data could be used to challenge power structures, ranging from major entities like the Syrian dictatorial regime, media outlets, and journalism, to smaller ones such as war profiteers. These include smugglers who exploit and abuse migrants, as well as travel bloggers who profit from 'blood tourism.' By visiting war-torn countries and spreading misinformation about their safety, these bloggers contribute to false narratives, even while the country's own people cannot return.

In the APGES archival reports, student migrants are recorded and presented both as percentages and in numbers, though not all student groups have been specified by numbers:

> Since 2014 [until 2018 - 2019], APGES has awarded over 650 annual scholarships to students in 13 countries, namely: Argentina, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Lebanon, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America [...] 72 students graduated from Master's programs, 4 students completed their PhD programs [...] 24 refugees from different conflict-affected societies were awarded scholarships. (APGES archival reports, 2019, p. 31)

Each of the student migrants in the case studies represents one of approximately 207 Syrian students who were granted emergency scholarships in Portugal, and in 2014, one of 54 Syrian students out of an estimated 20 million Syrians. Imagine the opportunity that both they and I gained alongside these students. Had we not found this call, applied for it, accepted the challenge, traveled, studied, and graduated, many would have remained without a degree and uncertain about our futures, facing inevitable emotional turmoil, psychological distress, and adversity. For me, as for many, education is vital — it is a right for everyone. Without this right, it would feel, at least for me, as though I had lost one of my greatest reasons for living. That is to say, although the number of awarded emergency scholarships does not encompass the entirety of the Syrian student migration crisis or the broader Syrian student crisis, documenting such opportunities is crucial. These records demonstrate the life-changing impact they have on individuals, proving their significance and advocating for the continuation and expansion of similar programs. Registering these migratory flows with demographic and migrant status specifications brings a form of justice to the Syrian student crisis by demonstrating that rights are being acted upon and acknowledged.

Right to education for the Syrian students in the migration crisis

To reach a consensus on what is at stake, it is crucial to highlight what remains forgotten, unrecorded, and unstudied. Addressing the issue between fact and hypothesis is difficult to frame in analogical terms. What are currently considered facts — whether recognized as official memory, which is public and often government-approved (Abrams, 2010, p. 101), or deemed objective knowledge, often reduced to news articles and numbers — reflect a context of underregistration and a lack of documentation regarding the Syrian migration crisis and the specific experiences of students and student migrants. While some facts are unquantifiable, a few have been documented, such as the migratory experiences of Syrian students from the APGES scholarship program upon their arrival in Portugal, which made headlines in news articles and media segments. On the other hand, the devastating stories of migrants drifting ashore after drowning or surviving with lost family members further emphasize the human toll of migration, adding a layer of tragedy that numbers alone cannot capture. These instances, though difficult to measure, highlight the human side of the migration crisis, emphasizing the importance of documenting lived experiences alongside empirical data.

To better frame this, Anzaldúa, in her border-thinking methodology in *Borderlands/ la frontera* (1987), proposes an approach that centers lived experience, relying on empirical observation, participation, and performance as a form of knowledge production generated through interaction, witnessing, and participation. In this sense, the process of knowledge production, also referring to Haraway's *Situated knowledges* (1988), includes hypothesizing and speculating certain aspects of the data. These numbers are based on surveys, estimates, approximations, and cause-effect relationships to form what can be termed 'negated data.' This concept of negated data, as opposed to the represented student migratory paths discussed in this thesis, draws on Freud's notion of negation (1925), where oppositional phrases or ideas give shape to statements by emerging through contrast. In this context, the data serve as the 'negative' of the representations, which are primarily based on oral histories, while the data consist of sets of numbers reflecting cultural norms, lived realities, and statistical patterns — all written and recorded in numerical form and considered data. In other words, contrasting the represented stories with what many would describe as (registered) facts, even if these facts only partially capture the full reality. At the same time, these data encompass a broader understanding of the Syrian migration crisis and the ramifications of the Syrian war, within the sub-themes each case study argues and explores.

The negated data in this thesis includes both registered and unregistered data, adding a humane dimension to the Syrian reality and struggle. This is articulated to represent how unregistered data impacts registered data and other factors contributing to the Syrian student crisis. For each case study, there is corresponding negated data in the form of a diagram — a numerical representation of the case study that precedes the narration and storytelling of the migratory path and experience. This data is aligned with the dates of the migratory path and experience to create an intersection that highlights not coincidences, but rather the consequences of the sub-themes considered in the data-in-numbers. In other words, the sub-themes and dates in each data-in-number diagram align with the corresponding dates of each student migrant's migratory flow, emphasizing the significance of the time-frames and events that occurred within each time-interval and sub-event in the case studies.

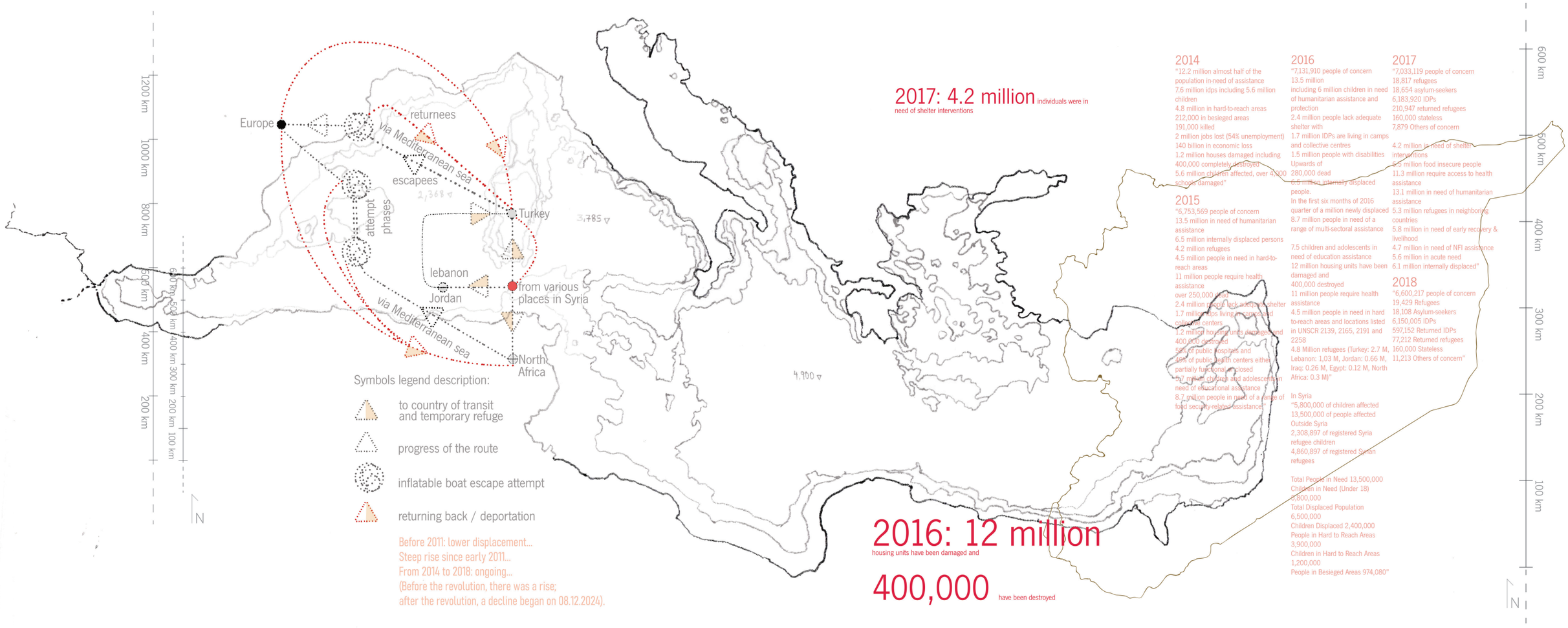


Figure 29. Diagram for the registered and reported data on the Syrian migration crisis in comparison to the scale of the Mediterranean, expressing Syria's exaggerated size and geographic dislocation, which overlaps the eastern part of the Mediterranean. Data sourced from the "End of year reports," "Mid-year reports," and "Global Focus" in the UNHCR archive data registry regarding Syria (2014–2018), overlaid on Syrian migrants routes to Europe with symbols diagram that corresponds to Refugees International "Route to Europe"(2023). The Syrian migrants routes to Europe with symbols diagram reflect upon the trajectories migrants take through transit countries to reach their destination countries, which have been ongoing and changing since the beginning of the Syrian migration crisis, and not only in 2023.

The first negated data, “for the lost homes,” represents the multifaceted loss of a home, inevitably linked to displacement both within and outside Syria. The second, “for the missing data,” expresses, through a sentence diagram, how trauma may be embedded in unregistered data. The third, “for the destroyed zones,” highlights the void created by unregistered damage assessments, overshadowing the real and tangible destruction in Syria. The fourth, “for the Mediterranean escapes,” contrasts the known and unknown numbers of missing Syrian migrants with vessel incidents in the Mediterranean. The fifth, “for the displaced,” emphasizes the number of scattered Syrian migrants abroad in comparison to those displaced within Syria. Together, these dimensions highlight the critical and far-reaching implications on the Syrian student crisis, the educational structures of student migrants, and their overall context in relation to Syria and its migratory population and struggle.

According to Refugees International, in the article “By land or by sea: Syrian refugees weigh their futures” (2023),[33] the demand for access to education has always been a priority and a primary objective in addressing the migration crisis. It is also crucial to consider the conditions in which individuals pursuing education can study safely. This underscores the extreme instability faced by migrants in irregular migration, who often rely on illegal routes after fleeing war zones. From the moment they survive migration and settle in a host country to pursue their studies, time is inevitably lost. On the other hand, many individuals, including those internally displaced — some of whom became homeless or were relocated to camps near Syria and neighboring borders — often wait, if any help is available, for NGOs or other humanitarian organizations to provide the necessary aid and support to access safe or conducive study environments. The forced and survival migrations of Syrian students remain a significant issue caused primarily by war, leading to the suspension, delay, or interruption of migrants’ education until they achieve stability. According to data gathered by UNHCR (in Figure 29), the implications of this issue are reflected in reports such as the “End of Year Reports,” “Mid-Year Reports,” and “Global Focus” on Syria.

The emphasis on the territorial scale (in Figure 29) expresses a paradox for the data in numbers. The paradox lies in the interplay between the representation of scale and the realities of the migratory crisis. Before scaling, through real contrasting scales: The Mediterranean is vast compared to the actual and real Syrian administrative borders, yet both are depicted as having a comparable impact and repercussion on the migratory crisis. This creates a paradoxical tension because the magnitude of the Mediterranean (as a physical and geopolitical barrier) and the smaller, localized scale of Syria (as a war-torn region) are intertwined as equally impactful factors. This relation results in an exaggeration of scale: The ‘scaling up’ of Syria in the representation exaggerates its importance, paradoxically drawing attention to the disproportionate burden of forced migrations it generates despite its small geographical size compared to the Mediterranean. The tragedies across scales emphasize the significance of both bodies, the Mediterranean Sea and Syria. The tragedies of forced migration and displacement are both local (linked to Syria’s conflicts) and transnational (spanning the Mediterranean), which express a paradoxical dynamic between localized causes and far-reaching consequences.

33 Reguees International: “By Land or By Sea: Syrian Refugees Weigh Their Futures Retrieved” (Marks, 2023) from: https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/by-land-or-by-sea-syrian-refugees-weigh-their-futures/

From forced migration and displacement to survival migration and displacement, common to all the case studies, the student migrants, in their dialogues, use a specific term that encompasses 'escape' when referring to leaving Syria, as in 'when I "went out" of Syria': [***Tle't*** written in Arabic as: طلعت. This term appears in both formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialect. It is a singular noun with a literal meaning of 'get out' or 'leave,' and a relative meaning connected to escape. However, it was used more frequently by the student migrants than *hrebet* هربت (which refers to escape and flee). This usage highlights a difference in the experience of survival migration along the itinerary, differentiating the struggles of a student refugee from those of a student migrant. The verb *tle't* طلعت in its first and second-person forms, and *tele'* طلع, in the third person, in the past tense, conveys the meaning 'to get out' or 'leave a place, land, or subject.' In the context of student migrants, it is often used in the form *tle't ghaseb* طلعت غصب, which translates to "I forcibly left." This term underscores the involuntary and voluntary aspects of migration, emphasizing the range of choices from none to one, and the compulsion at many times that could define the migrants' experiences. That is, to come to a point where the entire migrant population, whether from forced or survival displacement, has often and repetitively used this word to mean they left, without using the antonym of *tle't*, which is *rje't* رجعت, meaning 'I came back.']

Between data reports, humanitarian activities, and the stakes involved

After three years of the Syrian revolution, which turned into a war and prolonged conflict, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the European Commission began publishing reports about the situation in Syria. These reports detailed aid efforts, the establishment of facilities, and the registration of migration crises. These activities correspond to the years UNHCR operated in Syria, between 2014 and 2016. The reports[34] included End of Year Reports, Mid-Year Reports, and Global Focus, which presented schemes, data analyses, and photographs captured by UNHCR personnel and volunteers. The aim was to develop a response plan for the conflict, focusing on services to increase the capacity for aid and emergency preparedness. One notable service was providing shelters for vulnerable populations affected by bombing and displacement, many of which reused unfinished existing buildings and tents.

It is documented that corruption significantly undermined these humanitarian operations. Reports from the Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity (SACD) confirm that humanitarian aid provided through organizations like the UN, which operated in regime-controlled areas, was manipulated to serve the interests and benefits of the regime, including favoritism toward loyalists and the restriction of aid to opposition-held areas. This has been corroborated by outlets like Middle East Eye, which reveal that the Syrian dictatorial regime committed human rights abuses and violations through the exploitation and mismanagement of aid funds. Despite these challenges, some individuals within these organizations, operating under the constraints of the regime, "made concessions to ensure the continuity of life-saving humanitarian efforts" (Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity, 2021).[35] While these efforts did not erase systemic corruption, they reflect the complexities faced by those working—even with credibility and transparency—in such high-stakes environments.

Whether these responses were able to provide solutions for a fraction of the intertwined issues of migration and war, much remains to be addressed for the significantly larger portion, as the core of the problem has yet to be tackled. The Syrian migrant population continues to struggle to find safe places to live, preventing many from pursuing education. To highlight this struggle and demand solutions with a focus on education, humanitarian agencies must prioritize the basic needs of every student and aspiring learner. Programs such as the APGES scholarship and the Aga Khan Foundation International Scholarship Programme, along with the countries and universities involved, demonstrate a willingness to help. However, more services with similar goals and structures are urgently needed in response to socio-political and academic demands. Contributions to education help build a stronger foundation for a country emerging from war. This is why data research, accompanied by the representation of success stories, should be shared and discussed. It is important to note that these success stories from the case studies are considered among the advantaged few.

34 UNHCR: "End of Year Reports: A Year in Review." Retrieved from: https://www.unhcr.org/sy/list/publications/eoyreport

35 Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity: "Reports." Information retrieved from: https://syacd.org/publications/reports/

Statistical data collection, empirical data archival, and the process of dealing with numbers

The statistical data referenced in this thesis, sourced from various materials, was gathered through careful research. Some datasets may overlap, especially when combining local and international sources or when fieldwork and surveys are involved. During the process of engaging with data across specific categories, the overwhelming and vast volume and scale of data research becomes clear. It requires a high level of precision — not only for archiving but also for accurately representing information. This is a demanding task, not simply because it involves numbers, but because it requires establishing meaningful connections between them.

The empirical data used in this thesis is rooted in the shared lived experiences of student migrants, conveyed through recorded and documented oral histories. This thesis, grounded in a human-centered approach to migration, emphasizes oral history as a vital empirical source. It engages with the personal testimonies of student migrants to understand their migratory paths and experiences. Unlike statistical data, which may be limited or contradictory, oral histories provide first-hand accounts of emotional and psychological struggles encountered during migration. Because it fosters a process of learning, oral history is used as an evidential tool (Abrams, 2010, p. 2) that helps shape decisions about what to represent. As Abrams explains, oral history is more than just dialogue or interviews: "But in the process of eliciting and analysing the material, one is confronted by the oral history interview as an event of communication which demands that we find ways of comprehending not just what is said, but also how it is said, why it is said and what it means" (Abrams, 2010, p. 1).

These testimonies not only address questions about student migrants' migratory paths but also fill gaps left by official reports or surveys. Bridging statistical and empirical data helps contextualize broader migration patterns while ensuring that the voices of those directly affected are represented. This contributes to the expansion of the overall picture of Syrian student migration and the wider Syrian migration crisis. By integrating personal experiences, there is an access to a variety of perspectives that shed the light on the complexities and challenges faced by individual migrants — experiences that often go beyond what can be captured by statistical data. Testimonies can reveal the emotional and psychological impacts of displacement, shedding light on the human cost of migration that is frequently overlooked in numbers alone. Moreover, they highlight the factors driving migration in the context of war, such as socio-economic pressures, educational aspirations, and the quest for safety, providing insight into the diverse motivations behind the migration of Syrian students. These personal narratives also challenge the homogenizing tendencies of broader migration statistics, emphasizing the diversity of experiences within the migrant population. In doing so, they provide a more multifaceted understanding of migration as both a personal and collective experience. By documenting and preserving these testimonies, the stories and histories of these individuals are not erased or forgotten, but instead contribute to a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of the Syrian migration crisis and the broader realities of Syria — one that recognizes the importance of human agency in the face of political and social upheaval.

However, questions remain about the legitimacy and truthfulness of collected data — both statistical and empirical — including the potential for false testimonies. Statistical data analysis is challenging because legitimate findings are often contradicted by other data or show discrepancies, even in small percentages. At times, entire categories challenge the validity of certain subcategories, which then require further collection and study. This is why data research must draw on multiple sources. Another challenge is the underreporting of data, which must be monitored, verified, and investigated to assess its reporting status. New data constantly emerges[36] and overlaps with previously archived information — some of it hidden from the public or rendered inaccessible over time. This was the case with much information that was initially found but later became 'unfound,' with messages notifying the reader such as "Sorry, no results found" or "Page not found." These links, often titled with the names of data reports, disappeared during the course of this thesis and the process of digital navigation and browsing — particularly on websites that archived content related to Syria, whether concerning the war-conflict, Syrian migrants, or the broader Syrian migration crisis.

The lack of access to complete or reliable data — whether through filtration or disappearance — compromises the understanding of these migrations. It also risks reducing individuals to mere statistics, especially when such erasure involves materials that could otherwise reveal and enrich the broader and more complex picture of Syria's crises, including the migration crisis. That is to emphasize that it is also important to take into consideration — and to remember — to approach these student migrant case studies and the individuals involved as more than just numbers. This aligns with the ethical commitments of this thesis. In "Making home in limbo: Belgian refugees in Britain during the First World War" (2020), Declercq underscores the risks of reducing migrants to statistics, writing in the subheading "More than just numbers and figures":

> By providing clear estimates of the numbers of people involved in forced displacement, one reduces a humanitarian situation to sheer numbers (also see Maqusi, this volume). Attempting to grasp the scale of a refugee movement in this way anonymizes the trauma of displacement and the significance of individual refugee stories. (Declercq, 2020, p. 78)

This perspective calls for moving beyond numerical representation to focus instead on lived experiences, individual expressions of migration, and the complex realities faced by student migrants. Migration is not merely a quantifiable movement — it is a deeply human process, shaped by emotion, aspiration, and struggle. By centering personal narratives, this research acknowledges the agency of student migrants and challenges dominant frameworks that depersonalize forced or survival migrations. In the context of Syrian student migration, this approach is particularly relevant. Programs such as the APGES scholarship are not just logistical solutions — they are spaces where displaced students forge new academic and social

36 Some of the main agencies and platforms that provide migration-related data include: the IOM's Migration Data Portal (with interactive dashboards), the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, the World Bank's migration statistics, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the OECD Migration Statistics, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), the UNDP Human Development Reports, and ReliefWeb. These sources offer a range of indicators, subcategories, and country-level data — from resettlement destinations to migration patterns in host countries — and the list continues.

identities. Their trajectories are shaped not only by policies and statistics but also by personal choices, cultural negotiations, and the socio-political landscapes they navigate. Recognizing migration as a multifaceted process — rather than merely a demographic pattern — allows us to acknowledge how survivors of displacement carry stories of value to share. At the same time, these migrants are human beings with the right to keep those stories private, even when their identities are protected and ethical guidelines are observed.

While the objective of the numbers presented in this thesis is to show how migration became a crisis, it also highlights the impact of war on these individuals and the effects of underreporting and non-reporting of the Syrian war and migration crises on Syrians and their lived experiences, as well as the normalization of certain images of war and migration. However, it is not intended to reduce individuals to mere numbers or categories. Rather, it seeks to highlight the under-documentation and underreporting of these realities, leading to an incomplete or biased understanding of migration patterns in the Mediterranean. Quoting Braudel's description of the Mediterranean in *La Méditerranée*, "the longue durée of history is what matters most" (Braudel, 1985). Braudel's concept of long-term historical structures helps frame the Syrian refugee crisis as more than a response to the immediate war: it is shaped by enduring political, social, and economic patterns, making the crisis part of a broader historical continuum. As Braudel observes:

> "البحر الأبيض المتوسط ليس بحراً، لكنه تسلسل سهول سائلة متصله بأبواب واسعة تقريبا."
>
> "The Mediterranean is not a sea, but a succession of liquid plains communicating with each other through more or less wide gates." (Braudel, as cited in Calypso°3621, 2020, p. 27)

This metaphor emphasizes the region's interconnected flows and movements across time and space, linking geographical and historical perspectives. In this context, Syria's history of structural injustices — from the French mandate (1920–1946) and colonial control to the authoritarian rule of the Assad family — exemplifies how these political, social, and economic patterns have conditioned contemporary displacement and its uncertain long-term consequences.

ii.i.b. Memory: recollections and obliterations

The representation of time in the student migrants' migratory paths and experiences refers to the depiction of time-intervals within each sub-event. These time-intervals are fragmented in order to explore the layered characteristic of each migration process. Just as migration time fragments the migrant's path and experience, memory likewise plays a crucial role, contributing as an evocative core sub-theme of migration. The fragmented model of time, as described by Serres in *Conversations on science, culture, and time* (1995), in dialogue (in discourse and collaboration) with Latour, finds a parallel in the structure of memory, shedding light on the subjective dimension of personal and individual recollections of migrants.

To address these experiences, this thesis relies on the oral history method as a means of generating primary source material. This material serves as empirical evidence and a reference for the data collected on the narrated migration events of the student migrants, engaging with their first-hand testimonies to reinterpret their migratory paths and experiences. These oral accounts reveal that memory does not function as a singular or linear recollection but rather as fragmented, layered, and at times contradictory.

In addition, Abrams, in *Oral history theory* (2010), explores the types of memory produced through oral history, including official memory (a public and often government-approved narrative), historical memory (a remembered version of the past shaped by interpretation and passed through generations), collective memory (shared memories held by a group or community), individual memory (the memory of a single person shaped by personal context), and personal memory (emotionally charged recollections rooted in lived experience). These distinctions help differentiate types of information sources depending on context — whether tied to personal experience, collective remembrance, official narratives, or historical interpretation.

The narratives of the student migrants, shaped by their moments of remembering and forgetting, reflect both individual and shared experiences. They show how each migratory path extends beyond its physical trajectory into a lived and recalled experience. Memory is not static; it is fluid, selective, and shaped by both personal and collective influences, as well as internal and external factors. It retains and omits, with certain events becoming focal points while others fade or shift over time. By recognizing memory as an active process, this research acknowledges that the 'path' is not only a record of physical movement or a chronological sequence of events and sub-events, but also a dynamic construct influenced by emotional, psychological, and socio-political factors, among others. Memory enables the reconfiguration of experiences, where each act of retelling and storytelling adds new layers of meaning, interpretation, and knowledge production.

Path

To explain the choice of using 'path' as a key term, it is essential to clarify its meaning within the context of this thesis and its representation in discourse. The term 'path' simplifies the description of traversed locations and the measurements of distances covered between them, encompassing both planned migratory itineraries — documented through flight tickets and/or visa stamps — and unplanned events, which introduce fluctuations into the migratory experience. Both planned and unplanned itineraries shape the migratory experience. They can

exist simultaneously, as the sequence of events in a migratory path often includes unforeseen, unanticipated occurrences and emotions.

Portugal is presented as part of the planned itinerary, while the cities to which the student migrants have been relocated may or may not mark the conclusion of their migratory paths and experiences within the country, as expressed through the five case studies. In this thesis, what is recognized from the representations is that a 'path' refers to a journey undertaken by a someone without a clear or predetermined origin and destination — with no defined start or end. This contrasts with a route, course, or direction, which typically have distinct departure and arrival points. Here, 'to Portugal' is the known direction, while the course encompasses the transportation modes used by the student migrants. A path can encompass various routes, courses, and directions and also consists of time-lines, dates, and layers of complexity. The path is related to and associated with migration because of the distance and time traversed by a migrant. A 'migratory path' is a set of routes (regular and irregular, legal and unauthorized) taken by a migrant, regardless of their legal status or designation, such as internally displaced person, stateless individual, asylum seeker, refugee, or immigrant (the latter suggesting a more settled state compared to the transient state of the others). A migrant is someone who temporarily resides in a place that is not their home or is far from their home, either with the intent to return or to integrate into this new location and become a citizen of that location.

Each migratory path begins and ends — not in literal terms, but rather by reaching a point of closure or a threshold — under different circumstances, in different places, and across varying time-intervals. Crucially, the migratory path is determined by the migrant. It is not halted by pauses in time, such as waiting for another event or transition to occur. Instead, it includes isolated or intermittent moments, which collectively form the itinerary up to a particular point, even if the path continues later in the migrant's life or they take another direction. The migrants' lives, along with the meaning of the term path, and the migratory paths, encompass the people involved in both the irregular and regular migration crises, all those in the four humanitarian and education emergency calls, those who joined the APGES scholarship program, the broader student migration crisis, and the families of these individuals. It reflects the hopes and aspirations of parents who wished for their children to pursue education despite the circumstances of war and the scarce, or entirely absent, opportunities available to those who have lost so much and have little left to hold onto.

According to Google Cloud,[37] Syria is one of the prohibited territories for the Google Maps platform. Due to Syria's dictatorial regime, which lasted more than 54 years, the use of this application was not permitted within its borders. As a result, Syria is one of the countries where people worldwide cannot access Google Street View. Additionally, people in Syria are restricted from using live navigation on Google Maps and other mapping platforms due to infrastructure damage caused by war, government-imposed cartographic censorship under the Syrian regime, and U.S. sanctions.[38] These restrictions are also linked to security concerns and have been in place since before the Syrian revolution and the subsequent conflict that

37 Google Cloud: "Google Maps Platform Prohibited Territories." Report retrieved from: https://cloud.google.com/maps-platform/terms/maps-prohibited-territories

38 "Google Sanction over Syria." Article retrieved from: https://support.google.com/websearch/thread/315824797/google-sanction-over-

began in 2011. This is further complicated by the fact that the Google car has not been allowed (and it remains uncertain if it ever will be) to roam the streets of Syria, as it has in other parts of the world,[39] to map roads, traffic patterns, transit routes, and infrastructure data.

Additionally, the locations and areas of places, cities, suburbs, and rural regions may be inaccurately represented and miscalculated, and their coordinates may be misplaced due to the absence of an official agency responsible for visualizing, accurately placing, and factually representing this information. Needless to say, getting lost in Syria is a significant concern, as it is in many other parts of the world with security risks and life-threatening dangers. However, it is particularly notable because some of the stories told by the Syrian student migrants mention incidents of getting lost and taking wrong turns, which made the migratory paths more complicated, complex, and unpredictable.

From reality to fiction and back again

The first path that began to frame the structure of how to represent a migratory experience is that of the first case study of the Syrian female student migration, part of the first migratory flow of Syrian students organized by APGES. After the dialogues were conducted with the student migrant, I started manually tracing and measuring the path distance using the Google Earth Pro (desktop software) by selecting the 'add path' option and subsequently exporting and saving the corresponding aerial/satellite imagery of the path as a whole. However, the path appeared distorted and, in a way, incomplete due to the blurring of the curves and edges that make up the irregularity of the path. The vehicle and walking paths become trajectorial, curved, and tend to follow a non-linear line, as Google Earth Pro perceives the planet as a spheroidal globe, not a flat one, regardless of the scale (Figure 30). The more zoomed out the image is, the larger the scale that covers a considerable region of the area, the more distorted, stretched, and shrunk at either side, and erroneous it appears in relation to its true scale.

Thus, the measurement of distance was the only element that complied with the path as narrated and the true itinerary. To minimize this distortion and to flatten the trajectorial or seemingly parabolic characteristics of the traced path subjected to distortion, I began working with fragments on smaller territorial scales. This involved saving multiple images while tracing, which in turn created path fragments (Figures 32 and 33). During this process, trial and error in zooming in and out was conducted to test distortion. The more zoomed in the image is, the more accurate and regular the path becomes, with less distortion appearing. Also, the more zoomed in the path is, the more segmented it becomes, creating more path fragments and resulting in more images being captured. When the images are zoomed in, consideration is given to the path span, ensuring overlaps of even a few centimeters to create a continuous montage without loss of information.

To understand the root cause of these distortions, an emphasis on map projections should be

39 Though Google's Streetview is expanding in different regions around the world, the Google cars are restricted in several countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, and North Korea, due to concerns over national security, privacy laws, and political control, while conflict zones and parts of Africa remain unmapped due to safety risks and logistical challenges; in the United States, some cities and regions limit Street View coverage due to privacy laws, and private properties or sensitive areas like military bases may also be excluded and remain unmapped.
. Navel Postgraduate School: "Google." Retrieved from: https://nps.edu/web/base-police/google-restrictions
. Geometas: "Geoguessr country coverage." Retrieved from: https://www.geometas.com/learn/geoguessr_country_coverage?

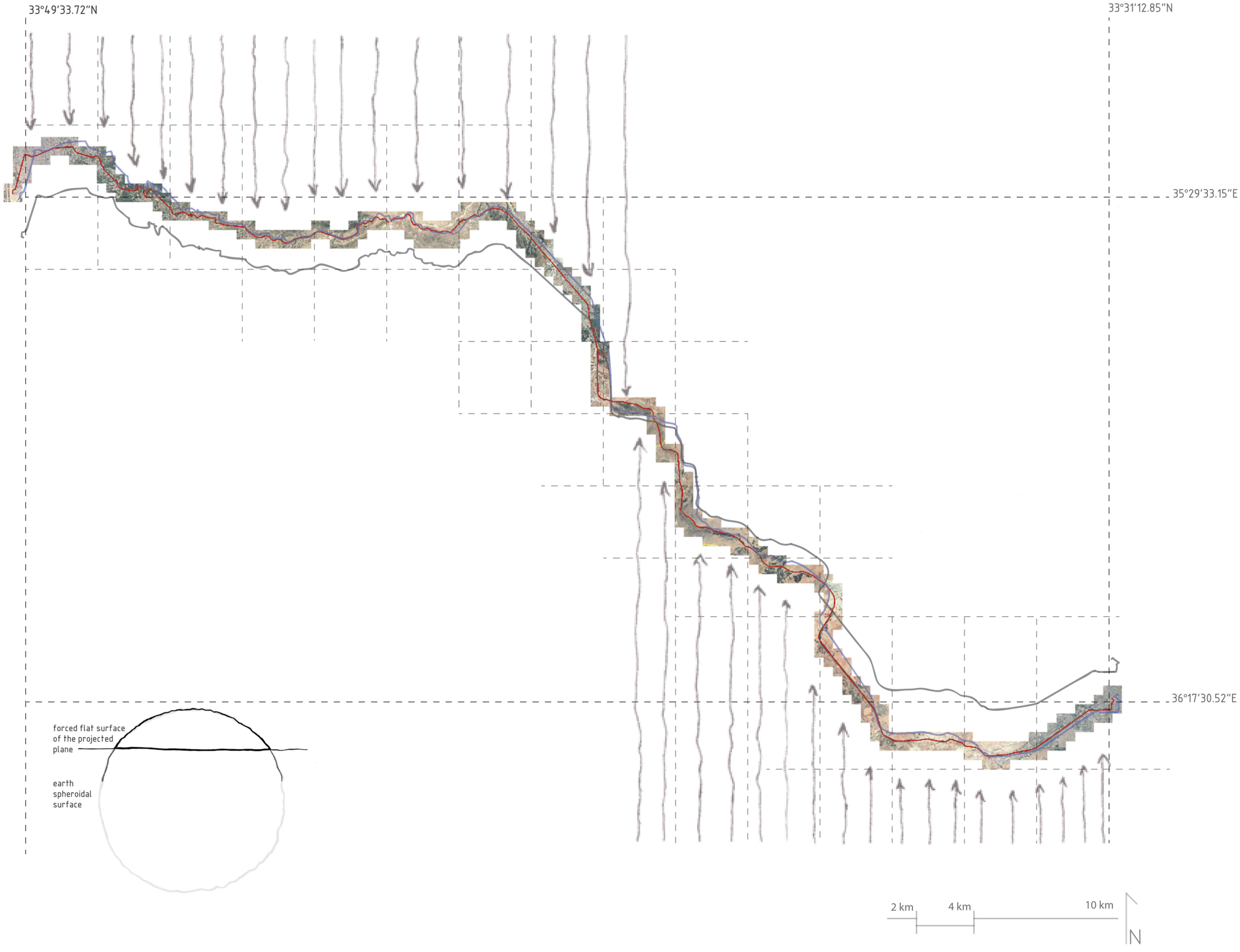


Figure 30. Diagram of map projection and distortion leading to path distortion. The represented path is from Damascus to Beirut captured from Google Earth Pro and overlapped with the stretched, adjusted traced path and the regular traced path. The earth's curves vs. their representation as straight lines at the same fixed scale. Some lines become shortened and others lengthened.

made. According to Google Earth Engine, Google Earth Pro uses the Mercator map projection as a base for cartographic visualization and navigation.[40] The Mercator map projection, as noted by Monmonier's *How to lie with maps* (1996) and Snyder's *Flattening the earth: two thousand years of map projections* (1993), like other map projections, distorts the surface. The Earth's spheroidal surface cannot be represented on a plane without distortion. That is why the study of map projections focuses on characterizing these distortions within map properties: shape, area, distance, and direction, making distortion an unavoidable characteristic of all map projections, since no projection can preserve and maintain all four properties. However, the objective of this thesis is not to diverge from the main focus of the path studies within the Mediterranean, where surface distortion (depending on the map projection) differs from that of other regions.

Despite this, I have not encountered a method that completely eliminates this distortion. However, through these path fragments, drawing exercises, and findings, I have only been able to reduce and, in a way, manage the distortion to some extent. The longer the path and the larger the region it occupies, the more segments it requires to be drawn, increasing its susceptibility to distortion in various and different aspects. This is because working with flat maps, such as two-dimensional plans instead of three-dimensional curved surfaces, results in representations where distortion becomes an unavoidable error. Before realizing this, there were prior findings. The distortion arises from fluctuations in the percentages of shape, area, distance, and direction, which increase or decrease when zooming in, zooming out, or hovering over the map without any scaling adjustments. What was discovered after capturing multiple images while hovering over and panning across the path in Google Earth Pro is that the scale tends to change and is displayed differently with each pan, even though panning should, in theory, maintain the same scale. This variation occurs because of the trajectorial presence, with the path curving, shifting, and bending, even without any attempt to zoom in or out. As a result, this variation in scale is ultimately inevitable, making distortion — considered an error — a constant factor. This variation in scale becomes a constant, unavoidable error, reinforcing the idea that distortion is an inherent aspect of the two-dimensional mapping process. Even if steps are taken to minimize its impact, it remains an unavoidable issue when working with certain types of spatial data, particularly when dealing with dynamic or complex paths like migratory paths with large traversed distances, seas, lands, and continents that shift and may not contain or follow a straight, linear itinerary and trajectory. Migratory paths are constantly shifting over time, with some airports closing while others open, and social and political changes simultaneously, directly, and indirectly determining these paths.

Even so, the emphasis on achieving an attainable lower level of distortion through trial-and-error attempts gave this seemingly endless, demanding, and prolonged exercise its purpose and meaning. The exercise of experiential mapping — of path finding, reading, and drawing — continued, while hand fragments (Figure 31) as path studies and analyses began to take shape. This process started with measuring and drawing the path, evolving into the search for a language of fragments. The exercise included fragmenting the path using dissimilar cutting measurements to generate more regular lines or polylines, aiming to dissect, formulate, and manifest path events within the shrinkage and dilation of time-space. The first hand fragments were not to scale, but later ones were scaled to explore variations in line divisions.

40 Google Earth Engine: "Guides: Projections." Information retrieved from: https://developers.google.com/earth-engine/guides/projections

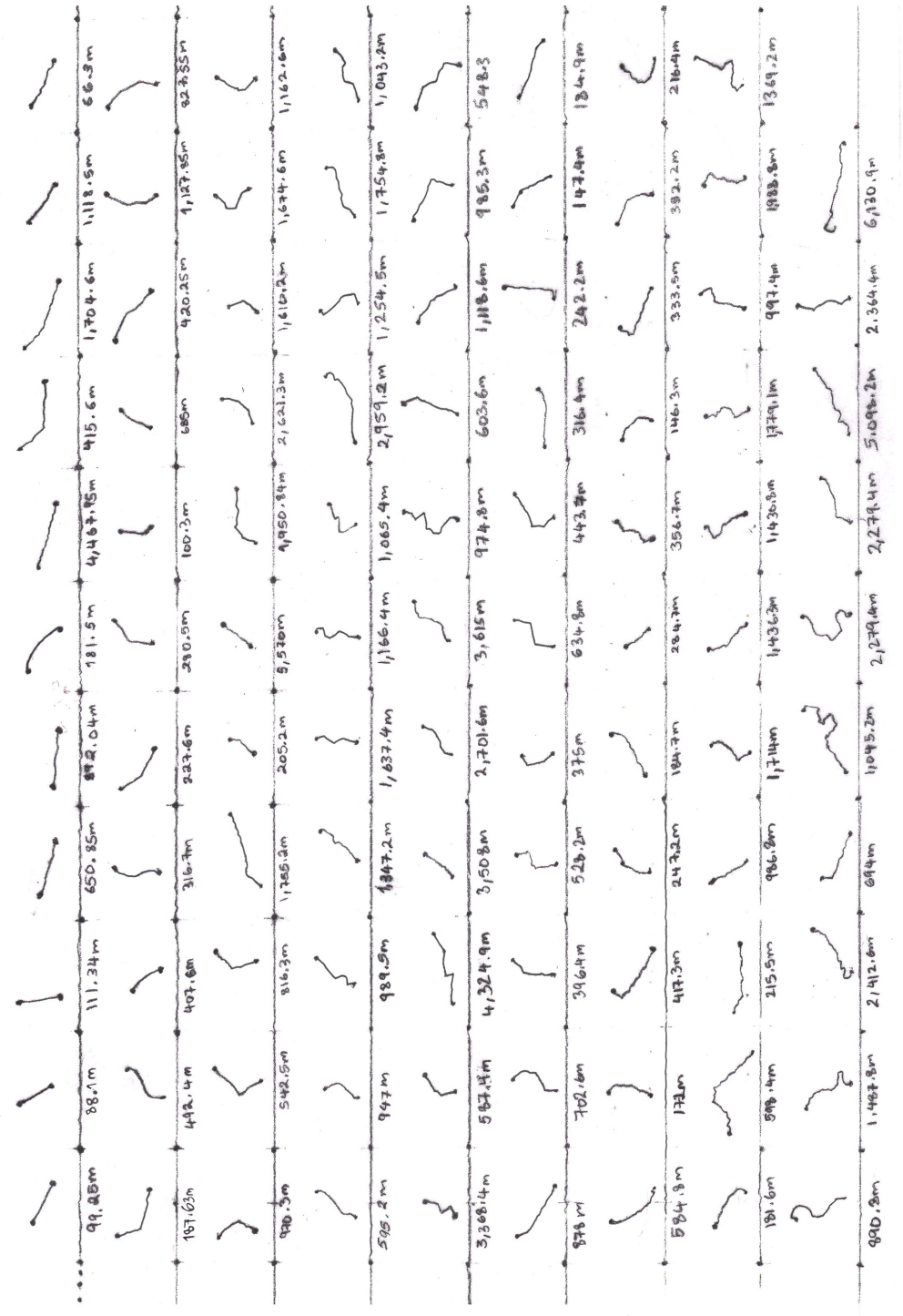


Figure 31: Hand fragments as path studies. The fragmented path demonstrates the distance from a home in Damascus, Syria to Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut, Lebanon.

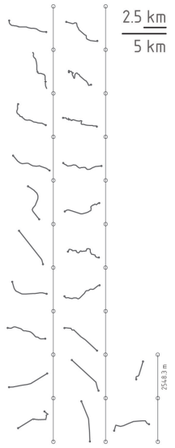
Measurements were selected based on specific distances to split the fragments, either beginning from the start point or by dividing the entire path as a whole.

Then further findings (Figures 32 and 33) emerged when the fragments were joined with fluctuating rotations relative to north. The longer the fragment distance, the fewer the number of path fragments; the shorter the distance, the more fragments were produced. Conversely, the longer the distance between fragments, the less regular the line of the path became; the shorter the fragments, the more regular the path line appeared. The more regular the line (typically more zoomed-in and less curved), the less distortion it exhibits, and the more fragments are required. The path then becomes more accurate in relation to the measured distance of each fragment, with an effort to retain its physical detail. The most regular line — the straight, linear, point-to-point line — is the one with the least distortion. However, representing an entire irregular path polyline (a set of regular lines and curves joined together) as a straight line this regularity, introduces its own distortion and imposes a false sense of regularity, as it cannot accurately reflect the full curvature of the path. While a straight line may minimize distortion in certain contexts (such as small segments), it loses detail and context when applied to the entire path — particularly in relation to roads, highways, and airports, whether paved or unpaved — that make up the physical infrastructure traversed by the student migrants through different modes of transportation.

Still, the migratory path can never be entirely free from errors, as cardinal direction and positional references are always relative and approximate. This depends on where one hovers over and marks a point on the screen in Google Earth Pro — or even physically, when attempting to determine directions. As a result, cardinal points are prone to distortion and approximation rather than absolute precision. Even on-site, precise coordinate determination requires specialized tools. However, technologies such as certain professional photography cameras and other geo-referencing techniques, which include embedded GPS systems, can register real-time location and orientation with higher accuracy. These are commonly used by Forensic Architecture (2010–present)[41] in site investigations — both on land and at sea — to document spatial evidence, reconstruct events, and analyze geospatial data with precision in the search for truth.

It was only after drawing and tracing the path that I encountered Ingold's study of the line and line-making, with its emphasis on connection and correspondence with the world. In a way, understanding how a line came to be straight (Ingold, 2015, p. 152) and how it could be read aligns with Ingold's process of fragmenting the line — but in an inverse action, countering the direction of his questioning by arriving at it from the opposite end. In *Lines: A brief history* (2007), Ingold describes human involvement with the world through the act of line-making, relating it back to experience. This line-based methodology expands in *The life of lines* (2015) into a field of 'lineology,' where life corresponds to lines and their traces. Ingold links paths with storytelling, as both generate movement, create lines, and "[...] paths are lines of a sort. It is along paths, too, that people grow into a knowledge of the world around them, and describe this world in the stories they tell" (Ingold, 2007, p. 2). Lines, then, are constantly drawn to explain not just a relation but a junction of events—mirroring this exercise, which is

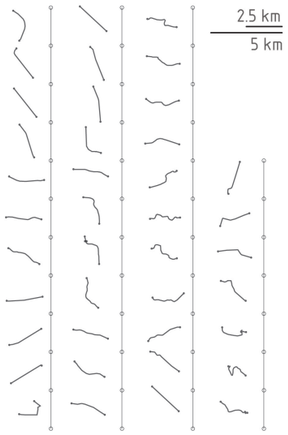
41 Forensic Architecture was founded in 2010 and continues its investigations and studies to this day. Its first investigation, published in 2010, was titled 'The Killing of Bassem Abu Rahma.' The report can be accessed at: https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-killing-of-bassem-abu-rahma. Information about the agency is available at: https://forensic-architecture.org/about/agency.



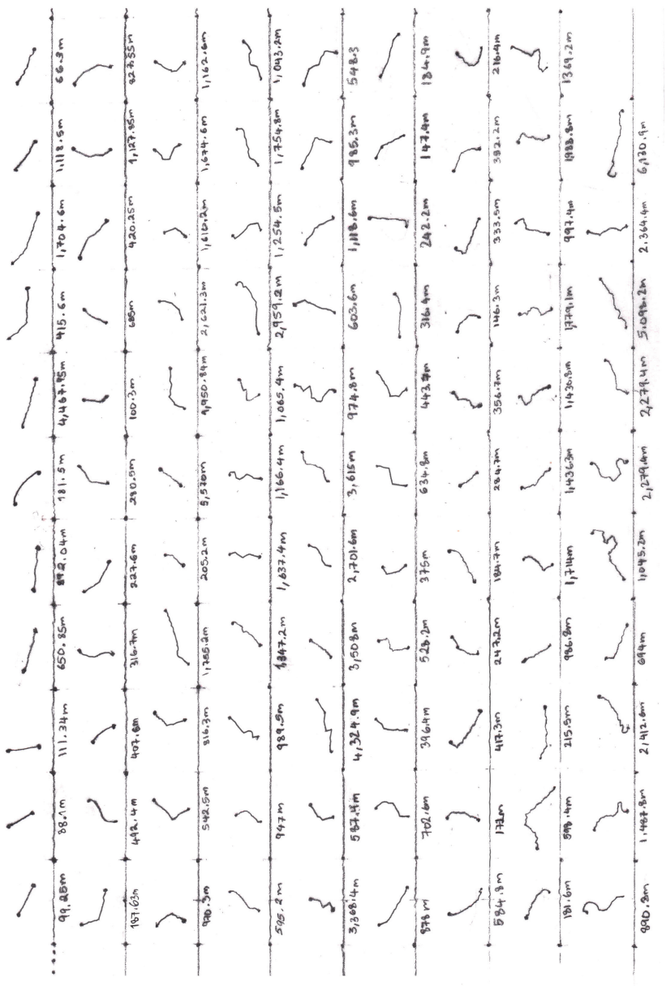
5 km per fragment;
path split from start point



10 km per fragment
path split from start point



2688.70 m per fragment
path divided as whole



fragments are
dissimilar in
distance
path cut by line
regularity from
Damascus to Beirut

stretched path
regular straight, no
division, splitting, or
cutting for around 111
km of total
distance

fragments are
dissimilar in
distance
path cut by line
regularity

2688.70 m
per fragment
path divided as
whole

5 km
per fragment
path split from
start point

10 km
per fragment
path split from
start point

path unfragmented
106,192.8 m

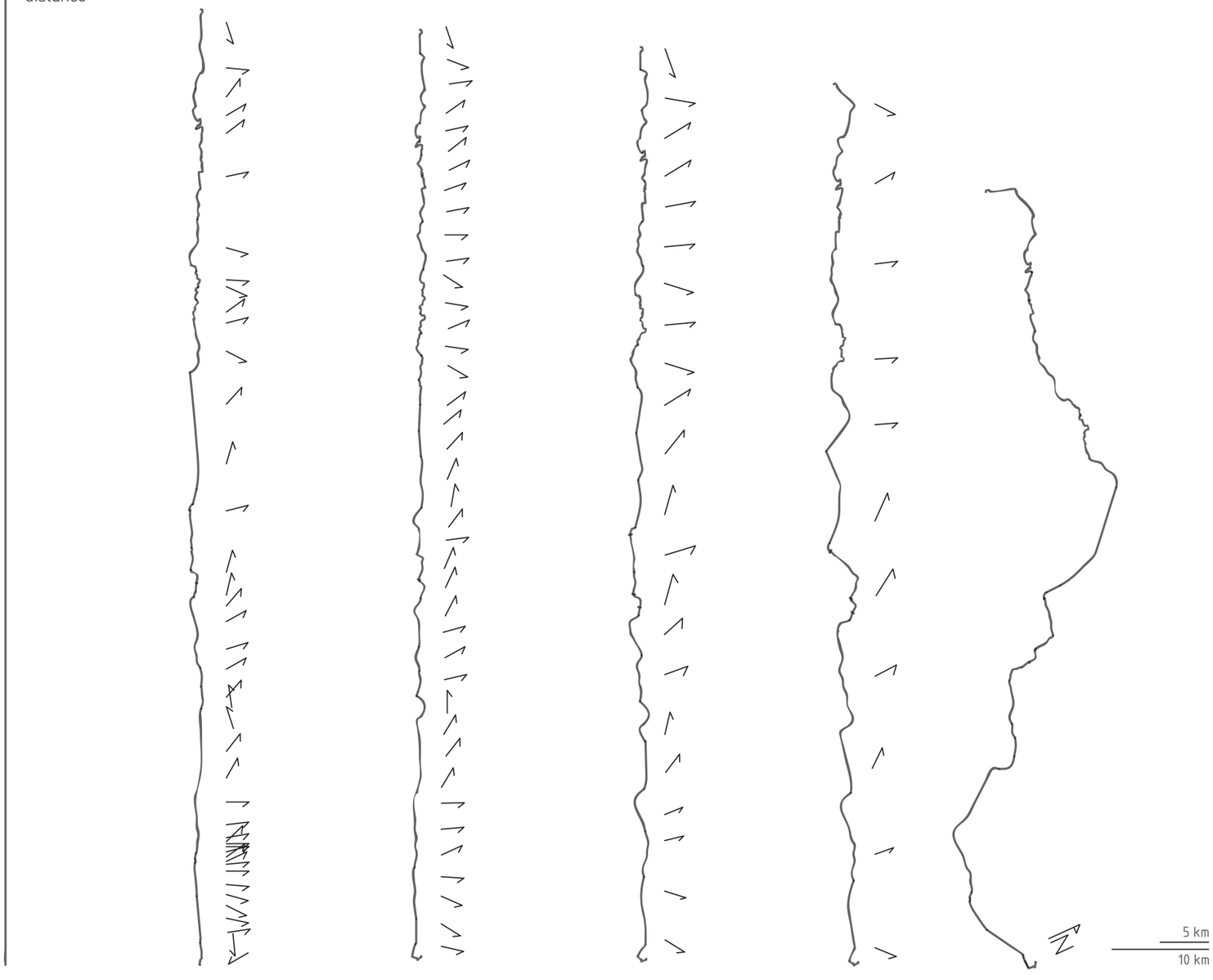
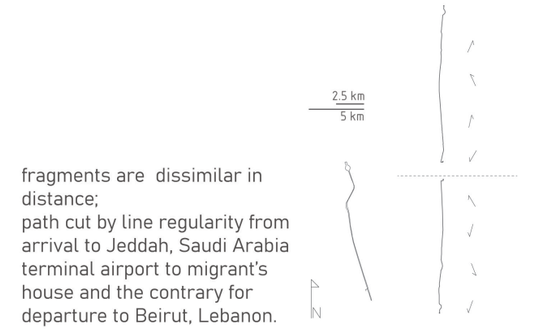


Figure 32: Diagram of a path study from Damascus, Syria to Beirut, Lebanon that combines path fragments captured from Google Earth Pro saved images and overlapped with the stretched and adjusted traced path and the regular traced path.

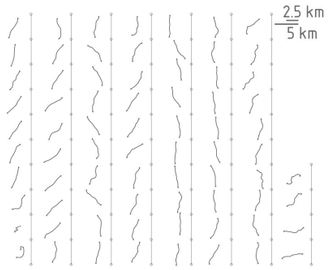
part of the creative and learning process of line-path making.

After establishing this method of geo-architecture and mapping with time, each case study was represented, and additional findings were considered and analyzed. The trajectories of flight distances were shortened and manipulated, along with the surface connecting the events and traversed paths, reducing the visual distance between one point and another. This was done without altering the stated real distance but by emphasizing the shape and size of the other paths made on land and sea. Regardless of this, the trajectorial distance between countries and continents remains enormous compared to those traversed on land and sea. If this were not done, the imbalance in scales would diminish the significance of the entire path, which is not the intention. The meaning provoked by the narratives must be taken into account. Downscaling the flight trajectories does not reduce their occurrence, importance, or negate their events. For this reason, the experiential process of mapping and the representation of these lines produce distorted maps — not only due to the inevitable errors of distortion in tracing the paths but also in the flight trajectories. These distorted maps, as a whole, reflect the unavoidable presence and outcome of fictional elements found in narration and representation.

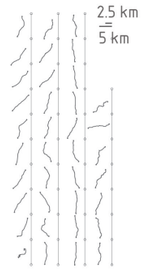
Another visually altered aspect is the surface. The path, as a line, is an outcome of a surface constitution. The places and territorial masses along a certain distance that join the path make up the surface and become surfaced. The relationship between the surface and the line, as the line breaks and fragments, creates other knots of intersections, events, and processes of thought, where lines remain open-ended. This dynamic is contrasted with the blurred-out surface, which is not contained within the representation of the paths. It also serves to emphasize the represented sequence of events and simplify the complex narratives. Therefore, in this case, the blurring — the erasure of geophysical information from many non-involved surroundings, transformed into white — helps bring the countries, places, and continents closer together, even though coordinate points are indicated in the representations during the narratives. This relation between places, time zones, and geography, while not literal, challenges the concept and existence of borders. It presents an activist perspective that manifests representations connecting parts of the world that, within the current structural geopolitics and realities we are witnessing today, are distant, unconnected, and unequal. This sheds light on how distance and time-intervals are not only mere numbers given for a course that is measured but also serve to show that the path and its representation transform what is considered to be the reality of an occurred event. It is through representation that reality becomes part of fiction, and vice versa. Fiction is a byproduct of line distortion, oral history, unregistered information and data, speculation, and much more, which is discovered and explored in this thesis. The cycle from reality to fiction and back again to reality is what makes understanding the findings — derived from the challenges and problems faced during the exercises — valuable to the theme of student migrations and their representations.



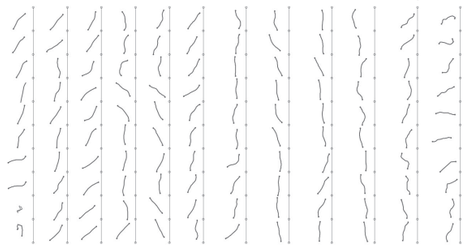
fragments are dissimilar in distance;
path cut by line regularity from arrival to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia terminal airport to migrant's house and the contrary for departure to Beirut, Lebanon.



5 km per fragment
path split from start point



10 km per fragment
path split from start point



3 km per fragment path divided as whole



fragments are dissimilar in distance; path cut by line regularity from Figo Maduro, Lisbon to residency in Guimarães

stretched path
regular straight, no division, splitting, or cutting for around 367.5 km of total distance



fragments are dissimilar in distance path cut by line regularity



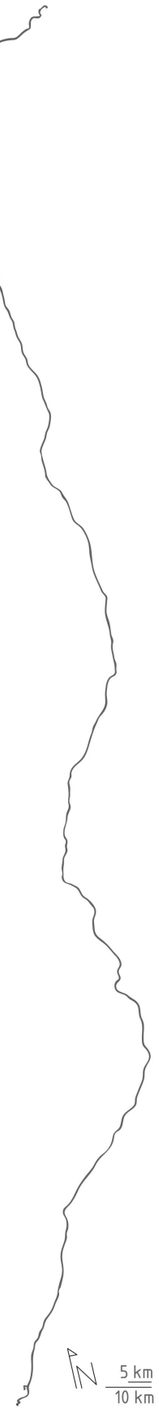
3 km per fragment path divided as whole



5 km per fragment path split from start point



10 km per fragment path split from start point



path unfragmented
367,505.2 m

Figure 33: Diagram of a path study from Lisbon, Portugal to Guimarães, Portugal that combines path fragments captured from Google Earth Pro saved images and overlapped with the stretched and adjusted traced path and the regular traced path.

The five case studies follow the migratory path-line-emphasis approach in mapping (Figure 34), highlighting the relationship between space, time, place, and distance. The first case study traces a path of 7,294.216 km, representing a student migrant's path starting in early 2012, when she left Syria. Her path was interrupted and delayed until early 2014, when she received a scholarship, booked flight tickets, and obtained an invitation letter, eventually traveling to Portugal. The second case study covers a path of 6,096 km, charting the student migrant's path from late 2014, beginning with her documented flight tickets provided by the scholarship, through her arrival in Portugal, and her subsequent adaptation and integration into Portuguese society. The third case study details a path of 4,654.3 km, focusing on the student migrant's path in late 2015, from his arrival in Portugal to his establishment in his place of residence. The fourth case study represents a path of more than 6,065.6 km, reflecting the irregular migration of a student migrant and differing from the other case studies in terms of itinerary complexity, lived experience, distance covered, and time consumed. This path began in early 2015 and continued until early 2017, after his arrival in Portugal and subsequent entry into the APGES scholarship program. The fifth case study spans a path of 5,965.516 km, depicting the student migrant's path starting in mid-2018 with her arrival in Portugal through a scholarship, continuing to late 2018 as she resided in Portugal. This approach emphasizes the interplay of geographical distance, time-frames, and the unique lived experiences of each student migrant's migratory path.

The five case studies in this thesis reflect paths that are not defined by specific, fixed, or predetermined routes — they resist such definitions to an extent. This extent implies that certain segments of the paths are considered planned itineraries — such as flight trajectories, bus trips, and ferry routes — including exceptional routes organized by the APGES scholarship program. These routes were sometimes followed by other individuals who may or may not be student migrants, linking places to points and points to lines to form the broader path. This distinction also helps differentiate between two types of migration represented here. Significant differences emerge between regular and irregular migrations — particularly in the distance covered and time consumed during the migratory path from Syria to Portugal. Irregular migration, often triggered by forced displacement, represents a human effort to traverse countries and places through prolonged and uncertain periods. At a key moment, however, there is a brief but pivotal shift to regular migration, transforming forced displacement into a form of survival displacement. The regular migrations of the four student migrants involved aspects organized by the APGES scholarship — such as guaranteed visa, pre-booked flights, facilitated border crossings, and coordinated meeting points — making parts of their migration predetermined, though not the entire migratory path. The migratory path of each of the five case studies began before and extended beyond the APGES scholarship program. As such, the entire migratory path for each does not align solely with the planned itineraries or the 2014 - 2018 time-frame of the student migrants' migratory flows, reinforcing the idea of their individuality and story-lines without a fixed beginning or end. Instead, these migratory paths evolve, shift, and extend as migration time and movement progress, along with changing perceptions of them. Altogether, these five paths are shaped and reshaped over time — often through memory, oral history, and documentation — responding to the unfolding of migratory experiences within shifting contexts and temporalities (Figures 34 and 35).

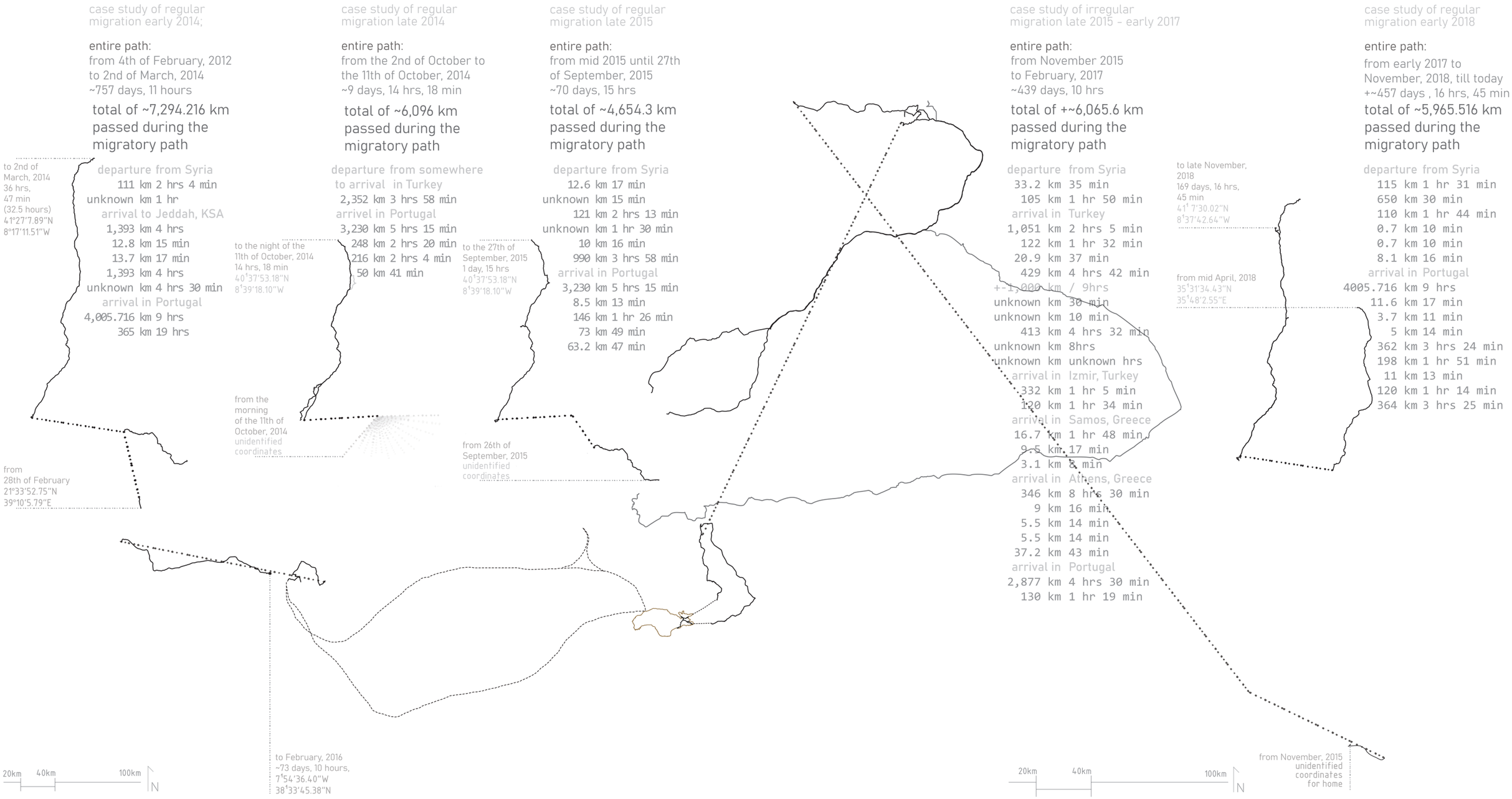


Figure 34. Diagram of the five migratory paths that translates the method of fragmenting the path to reduce distortion and bring the entire path closer to the actual, traversed one, as applied throughout the five case studies. It includes the registered departure and arrival dates, as well as the calculated time and distance covered between stop points — for instance, from leaving one's home to reaching a border. Place names are intentionally substituted with distances and times to emphasize duration, distance, and potential gaps (e.g., unknown kilometers); only the departure and arrival points are identified. The order of time and distance covered is organized sequentially, according to the events. This approach is applied across the migratory paths of each case study, from the first narrated moment of migration to the last.

Building on Ingold (2007), lines of travel and movement intersect to produce a "meshwork of entangled lines" (Ingold, 2007, p. 82). Ingold also states, "The lines that link successive destinations, like those that join the dots, are not traces of movement but point-to-point connectors. These are the lines of transport" (Ingold, 2007, p. 79). To explain this in terms of representation (Figure 35), when the migratory paths of student migrants overlap, they create a sense of togetherness. The points where these paths intersect correspond to their land and airborne contexts. In this latter context, specifically, they converge more through the flight trajectories, where their migratory experiences are expressed through adjacent words. These intersecting lines are represented by dotted paths. The trajectories that led them to fly over the Mediterranean, traveling from the Middle East and Eastern Europe, took them across many countries they had never seen before. Many of them had never boarded airplanes nor had they experienced air travel prior to these migration events, as most had never left Syria before embarking on these migrations. Ingold's statement, "What we see is no longer the trace of a gesture but an assembly of point-to-point connectors" (2007, p. 74), emphasizes the shift in human connections. These points of encounter, as Ingold suggests, are not just physical markers but serve as connectors of lived experiences, stories, and individuals. Once linked by places (Syria, Portugal, and transit countries in-between), these points may no longer serve that purpose, especially due to many factors, but namely displacement, which disrupts established connections.

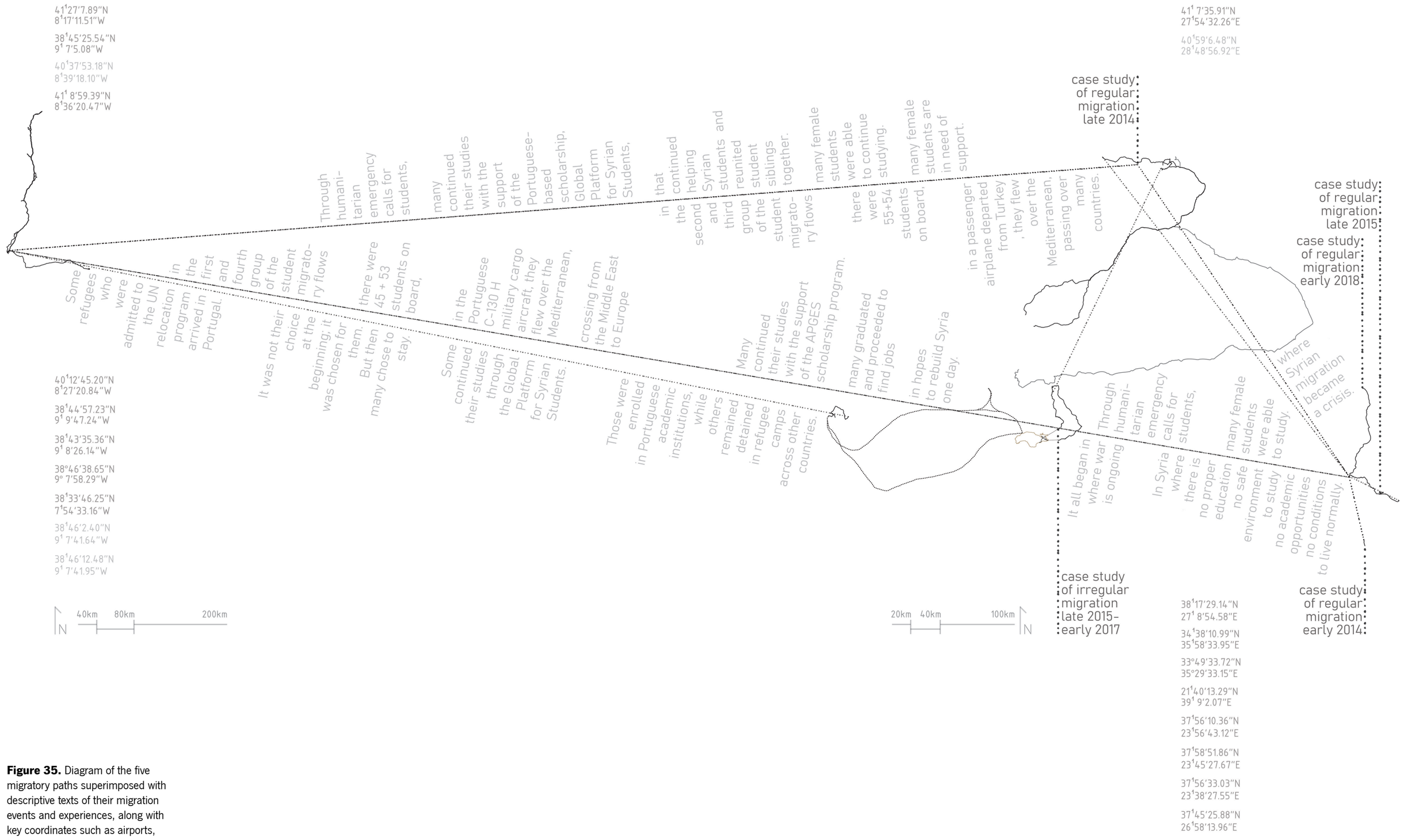


Figure 35. Diagram of the five migratory paths superimposed with descriptive texts of their migration events and experiences, along with key coordinates such as airports, ferry terminals, and temporary accommodations, organized from south to north and east to west.

ii.i.c. Margin: entry ports

Border, as a traversing core sub-theme, also finds its place within the memory and time framework. The repetition of the word 'border' in both the theoretical, representational, and performative parts underscores its polysemy and importance to migration. The connotation of 'border' is both positive and negative, represented in the narration and mapping of the Syrian student migrants in sub-themes. Most of these case studies crossed the Mediterranean through border crossings facilitated by the APGES scholarship program. Therefore, the borders described in this thesis are specified according to the actual events that took place within the migratory flows of this academic scholarship program. This stands in contrast to the case study that did not have this border-crossing facilitation, among other factors that differentiate the migratory path, experiences, and outcomes. The choice of specific borders, rather than others that the student migrants from the case studies have also crossed, such as the airports in Türkiye, is based on the fact that these borders can be more easily traversed by Syrians at this moment. This contrasts with borders that cannot be easily crossed, such as the military terminal in Portugal, the international airport in Lebanon, and the border crossings between Lebanon and Syria.

Achieving a level of representation with the fictional interpretation that aligns with the non-fictional narrated stories, their realities, and the existence and function of places has been challenging on multiple aspects. On one hand, there are the complicated security and political concerns in the Levant, including regional tensions and the internal politics of Syria and its neighbors, restrictions on the use of geo-referencing and image-to-map correlation for precise coordinates and localization of places, not to mention my own limitations in not being able to travel there to better understand the organization of checkpoints and borders. In all five case studies (Figure 36), the emphasis on certain elements surrounding the question of borders always resulted in the simplification of the narrated progress during the migratory paths. Not that they were simple in terms of logistics, bureaucracies, and/or time consumption during the crossing-over and traversing, but because of the fear they impose on each of the student migrants. In that sense, there are spaces, moments, and points where the velocity of the dialogue exceeded a point, resulting in the omission of information that could help in the visualization of these spaces and places. These omissions resulted in 'spacings' that compressed the information, and hence, compressed the true scale of places, distances, organization, and transition between spaces within each place. These spacings are represented textually and visually within the storytelling of the case studies.

Spacings, distance, and waiting through fiction

According to Rabil's *The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon: The double tragedy of refugees and impacted host communities*, there are five border crossings and no-man's-lands between Syria and Lebanon, within the administrative borders set out under the French mandate, which have alternated between periods of activity and inactivity throughout the Syrian conflict (Rabil, 2016, p. 47). Two of these border crossings were used by the student migrants in the case studies to travel to Rafic Hariri International Airport: Jdeitet Yabous, Syria, to Al-Masnaa, Lebanon, and Tartus, Syria, to Al-Arida, Lebanon. Jdeitet Yabous, Syria, to Al-Masnaa is a barren and sparsely populated but heavily militarized border crossing. The border posts between Syria and Lebanon function and serve as passport and security control stations but also significant barriers to movement. Years of war have led to increased surveillance and restrictions on

1º student migration | 2º student migration | 3º student migration | irregular student migration | 4º student migration

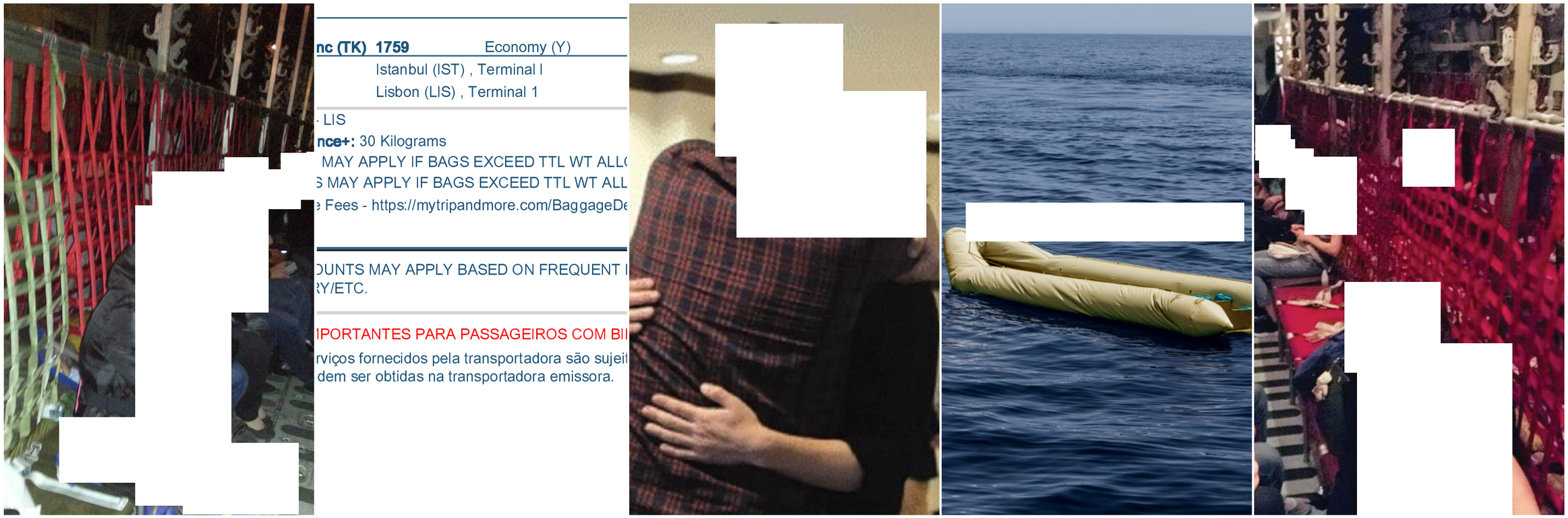


Figure 36. The five images reference events connected to different student migration flows from five individual case studies. They may or may not directly relate to the student migrants from these flows or the sub-themes of the case studies but are linked to the occurrences of the migration flows in a broader context that could encompass shared moments with the student migration population from APGES. (From left to right) The first image shows the initial contact with a Portuguese military C-130 cargo aircraft. The second image displays the flight reservation details of the student migrant, the only shared information about the itinerary. The third image captures two family members meeting for the first time after years apart, both part of APGES — one from the third migration flow and the other from an earlier migration flow. The fourth image is a color-edited photo of an inflatable boat (Credit: MOAS/Jason Florio; retrieved from Libya Herald: https://libyaherald.com/2016/09/recent-migrant-surge-from-libya-has-numerous-influencing-factors-beyond-weather-conditions-analysis/), referencing sea escapes that ended with an empty boat adrift. The fifth image, forming a visual fold with the first, shows the second and final contact of the Syrian student migrants from APGES with the Portuguese C-130 cargo aircraft.

both the Syrian and Lebanese sides, interrupting numerous migration and escape attempts and forcing people to return to the grim reality in Syria. These border complications should be questioned, particularly in the context of historical events and past European occupations, such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which led to the French Mandate over Syria and Lebanon from 1920 to 1946, and the British Mandate over Palestine and Transjordan (modern-day Jordan) from 1920 to 1948. The administrative borders that now separate these two countries did not exist before the French mandate (Khoury, 2016, pp. 33-35). The Levant was a single region, principally connecting Palestine and the occupied Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria as one political and administrative region, known as *Bilad Al-Sham* (Arabic for بلاد الشام, the countries of *Al-Sham* — the Arabic equivalent of Damascus, Syria's capital). The introduction of administrative borders divided the Levant and led to the imposition of enforcement measures, further separating the countries and imposing border restrictions. As Khoury (1987) discusses, these colonial actions and power structures dismantled the historical unity of the Levant. This fragmentation created separate political entities, such as Syria and Lebanon, with long-term implications for the region, including social and political disadvantages between these neighboring countries.

The issue of modern-day Syrian nationality also arises, as being Syrian often constitutes a structural disadvantage in the social and political context of the border. Holding a Syrian passport has the detrimental consequence of being identified as Syrian, resulting in restricted mobility, as the borders of most countries remain closed, visas are not issued, and applications are rejected. Holding a Syrian identity document places a Syrian individual in this disadvantaged category because their nationality is associated with a crisis, which limits their opportunities in various fields and parts of the world. This situation challenges the notion of advantage, as discussed in the preface on positionality. The passport, except in the case of the financially fortunate — a subset of the Syrian population — determines an individual's label, access to rights, and societal perception. This subset can circumvent barriers by affording the necessary documentation, visas, or legal representation to access foreign countries. At the same time, in a paradoxical turn of events, this nationality has enabled some Syrians to become student migrants, receive academic scholarships, traverse continents with facilitated border procedures, and find and attain safety.

No-man's-land

The student migrants' memories of the no-man's-lands they passed through were brief, though they conveyed a sense of fear and dislocation in their narratives. However, since the shared online images of the Syrian borders lack the level of detail required for this thesis — such as showing the sequence of passage, identifying the zones of each unit, and depicting both the interior and entirety of the space — alternative sources were necessary. It is also important to emphasize that, due to my limited geographical knowledge of the Levantine borders, and without the shared information from migrants' narratives and recollections of places and border environments, it would have been nearly impossible to understand the functioning of checkpoints between Syria and Lebanon. The spatial organization of passport control units and security screening zones — typically located outside along the vehicle passage lane — is essential. However, the recollection of the aforementioned spaces cannot be represented on a scale as large as the borders between Syria and Lebanon, because the information concerns the time-frame used to finalize each migrant's paperwork and pass through the border, not

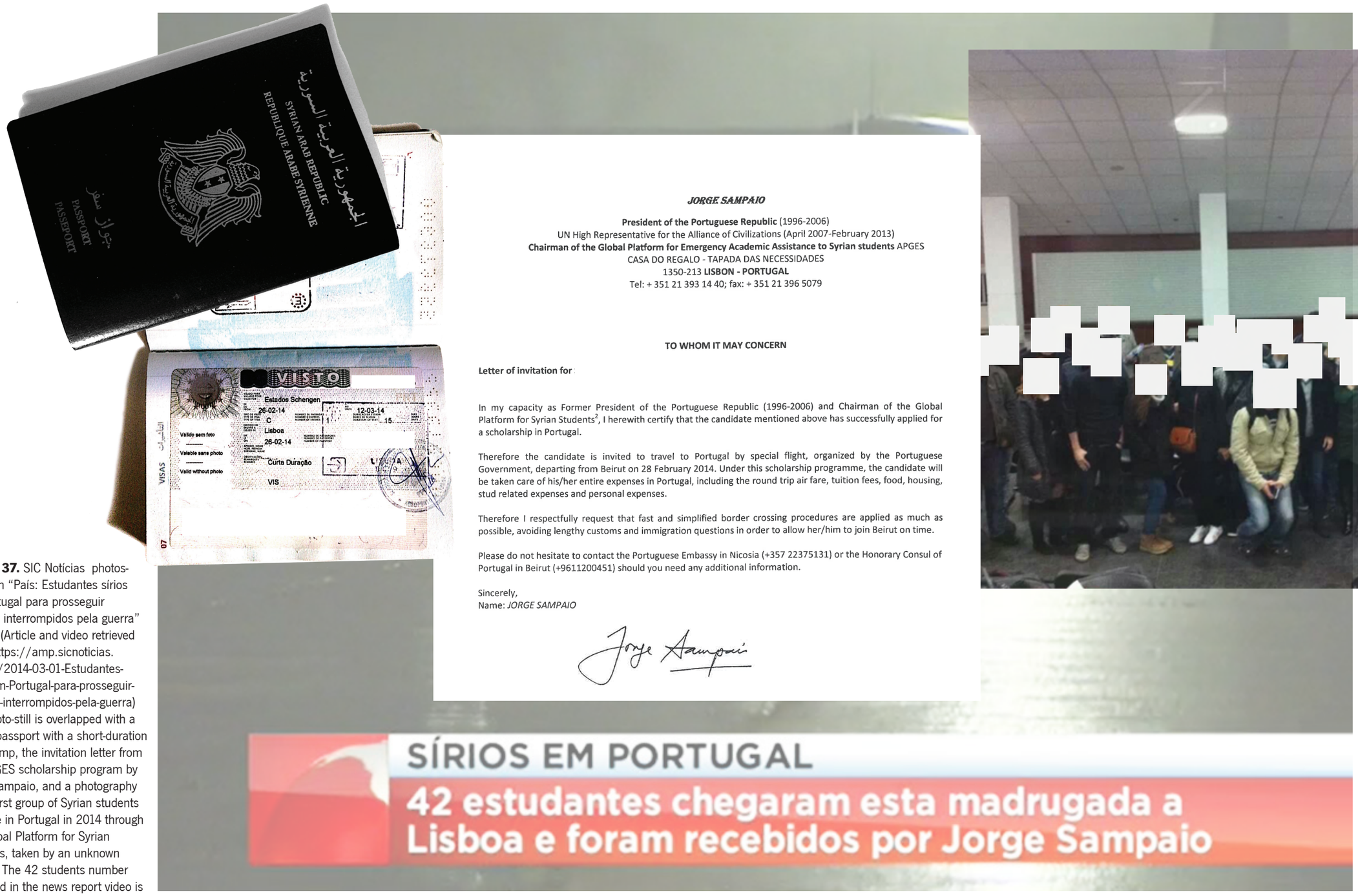


Figure 37. SIC Notícias photos-still from "País: Estudantes sírios em Portugal para prosseguir estudos interrompidos pela guerra" (2014). (Article and video retrieved from: https://amp.sicnoticias.pt/pais/2014-03-01-Estudantes-sirios-em-Portugal-para-prosseguir-estudos-interrompidos-pela-guerra) The photo-still is overlapped with a Syrian passport with a short-duration visa stamp, the invitation letter from the APGES scholarship program by Jorge Sampaio, and a photography of the first group of Syrian students to arrive in Portugal in 2014 through the Global Platform for Syrian Students, taken by an unknown person. The 42 students number indicated in the news report video is not accurate, and it does not match what APGES scholarship program reports archive mention.

the distance or the description of the places and their spaces. The 'no-man's-land' area here represents both the start and endpoint of the Syrian and Lebanese border checkpoints, as indicated on Google Maps Pro.

Both case studies that emphasize the memory recollection of border checkpoints — militarized, vigilant entry ports between Syria and Lebanon — describe successful, though not uncomplicated, crossings. The time consumed to cross was not immediate and consisted of different phases in order to legally enter the neighboring country. However, this is not the case for everyone who crosses these borders, as they require considerable time to finalize luggage security scanning, passport verification, and explaining the reason for crossing. Not everyone who passes through these borders has an easy finalization of these procedures. For instance, many male students and new male graduates have faced difficulties due to political restrictions, involvement, and other financial problems. For instance, a male with male siblings who has already graduated or is no longer studying, who did not pay for temporary military exemption (also known as the delay of the military service), who has not served and may have evaded or deserted compulsory military service in Syria,[42] and who has been reported for political involvement in protests or activism, may be detained at any checkpoint inside Syria or at the borders between Syria and its neighboring countries. This emphasizes that many parts of Syria, according to the student migrants, have multiple military roadblocks within each city, between cities, and in the peripheries, suburban, and rural areas. These roadblocks within the residential and infrastructural fabrics of the country became more evident after 2011, and their persistence to this day is unknown. However, the student migrants report that, according to information shared by their families in Syria, many of these roadblocks have been dismantled in recent years. The military roadblocks, which also function as checkpoints, control and restrict the movement of people within these areas and filter and detain those who do not abide by the rules set by the government.

However, the case study of the two student migrants, one male and one female, revealed no issues concerning borders, whether within Syria or at its border crossings, though these borders determined their movements. Upon reaching the border crossings, both highlighted the automated checkpoint procedures and bureaucratic processes, despite neither having left Syria before. This structured, step-by-step movement through the land border checkpoints between the administrative borders, combined with the uninterrupted procedures, was primarily facilitated by the APGES academic scholarship. An invitation letter was granted to each accepted candidate (Figure 37), specifying that the transit through Lebanon was solely to catch a flight abroad. As a result, the movement did not result in a self-directed or unplanned sequence of events. This was the case for the four case studies from four migratory flows, one of which involved irregular migration. Additionally, one of the five case studies did not cross any administrative land borders but only airport borders, meaning the path did not involve a migratory experience with roadblocks or border crossings. In fact, there is no recollection of such events, effectively rendering this aspect of the experience non-existent in the storytelling of this case study.

42 Following Syria's Independence Day on December 8th, 2024, many political decisions have been made, such as ending compulsory military service and making it voluntary. When referring to this military service in this thesis, it pertains to the challenges that male student migrants faced in the past due to it during the dictatorial regime

In any case, it is important to note that the invitation letter provided to the students by APGES was written and signed by former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio, which added significant weight to the declaration and further facilitated the border processing procedures. However, in one of the airports,[43] instances in another case study show where the progression of the path was interrupted before resuming, which are revealed later in the storytelling. This happened primarily because the scholarship was the first of its kind, and these were the first groups of student migratory flows. Both the Syrian and Lebanese authorities, at land border checkpoints and airport checkpoints, were unfamiliar with these procedures and scholarship grants. However, this does not negate the possibility that many, if not all, of these hindrances could have been intentional. A person in a position of power at border control posts could cause disturbances not only out of caution but also as a demonstration of the power structure they are allowed to exert, without being questioned. A number of Syrian migrants traveling through and crossing Lebanon, whether for a connecting flight, to go to Syria, or to go to other countries, have been detained in a room at the airport in Beirut for no reason whatsoever. This has been happening since the start of the war in Syria in 2011 and continues to this day, even after the revolution overthrew the dictatorial government. During the connecting flights or transits, in conflicting cases,[44] when individuals were not deported to Syria, they were either ordered to return to the country they had come from after a period of waiting — which prevented them from traveling to Syria — or they were entirely restricted from returning to the places where they had resettled outside of Syria. These illegal, corrupt actions are acknowledged by human rights advocates as violations of international law and human rights, as they subject migrants to arbitrary detention and deny their right to travel freely.

What defines a temporary place of fear and control?

Within each space that student migrants passed through to cross borders, these spaces became transitional points. The student migrants traversed three critical zones, considered no-man's-lands. These zones existed between and within countries, where arrivals and departures were processed, organized, and filtered. They are called no-man's-lands because they are multinational areas that did not belong solely to the country in which they are situated, facilitating the convergence of people from around the world who passed through

43 Some airports are mentioned in this thesis but are not used in the representations, namely King Abdulaziz International Airport Southern Terminal, which has been closed and replaced by the larger one Terminal 1, and Atatürk Airport, which has been replaced by Istanbul Airport. Atatürk now operates only domestic and limited cargo flights, According to A News' article, "Big switch to Istanbul Airport begins tomorrow." (2019) . Information retrieved from: https://www.anews.com.tr/economy/2019/04/04/big-switch-to-istanbul-airport-begins-tomorrow.

44 There have been documented and reported incidents of Syrian citizens passing through Rafic Hariri International Airport being detained for hours without any clear reason, often due to arbitrary discrimination and mistreatment, before being deported. These detentions sometimes occur without legal justification, with individuals facing summary deportations without the opportunity to challenge the decision or consult with legal representatives or the UNHCR. Such practices reflect broader patterns of discriminatory treatment against Syrian citizens, including forced returns to Syria that occurred before the downfall of Syria's dictatorial regime, despite the risks of persecution or torture. Local news outlets have mostly documented these incidents, emphasizing that such deportations violate international law, including the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning individuals to countries where they face serious threats to their safety. Many of these human rights violations do not reach Western media.
. Syria TV [discussed in Arabic] segment: "One of the detained Syrians at Beirut Airport speaks about the conditions there." (2025) Retrieved from: https://youtu.be/9Xr5d2vofAk?si=FYzrvSc92MfTSymq

common checkpoints, often managed under international agreements. However, these zones also imposed restrictions, reinforcing racial prejudices, hierarchical power structures, and institutional authority, which could instill fear in individuals passing through them. This discretionary authority may result in unfair profiling or mistreatment of migrants. To reveal this truth, I describe the differential treatment of individuals — whether or not they are part of the military — who occupy positions of power at border checkpoints, roadblocks, and airports, complicating and undermining the migration process. No-man's-land becomes an institution within the context of surveillance, control, and the establishment of societal norms, in line with Foucault's concept of 'panopticism' in *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (1977). These places of power are designed to elevate the role of these institutions in establishing authority, emphasizing their function to observe, control, and, in many ways, define the status of the 'other,' subjecting them to anxiety, fear, danger, and the inevitable traumatic experience of migration and border crossing.

Because an airport is considered a no-man's-land, it exists between all these power structures, making it, as Augé (1995) expresses, a 'non-place.' He states, "The installations needed for the accelerated circulation of passengers and goods (high-speed roads and railways, interchanges, airports) are just as much non-places as the means of transport themselves" (Augé, 1995, p. 34). This observation emphasizes how airports, though vital to 21st-century life, serve as transitional zones, often experienced as a series of impersonal movements from one point to another. Augé further describes, "But non-places are the real measure of our time; one that could be quantified — with the aid of a few conversions between area, volume, and distance — by totalling all the air, rail, and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called 'means of transport' (aircraft, trains, and road vehicles), the airports and railway stations, hotel chains" (Augé, 1995, p. 79). In this context, non-places represent the ubiquity of globalized infrastructure, connecting vast spaces across continents but leaving behind a sense of anonymity. While airports, trains, and highways connect people across borders, they do so in a way that reduces human presence to mere functions within a system.

The fear of discrimination and arbitrary treatment in specific airports is often heightened. The heightened fear of discrimination in such spaces stems from the fact that these environments prioritize efficiency and security over human interaction. As a result, individuals often feel more like objects within a system. For example, the excessive restrictions, similar to the land border checkpoints and roadblocks, in airports such as Damascus International Airport and Rafic Hariri Airport, which take part in the 'checking' procedures — be it security scans or passport control — reduce individuals to the roles of 'passenger' and 'suspect,' leaving little room for context or nuance. This often leads to feelings of injustice or arbitrary treatment, particularly for those who are already marginalized — even in their own country, meaning Syrians in Syria — and singled out for additional scrutiny or any other arbitrary injustices.

The power practiced in no-man's-lands is considered an arbitrary division, which refers to boundaries or separations that are not based on natural, logical, or fair principles, but are instead created based on subjective or discriminative choices. These divisions may not necessarily have a clear or justifiable reason behind them, and they often reflect human decisions or systems that are imposed without regard for the inherent connections or commonalities between people, places, or ideas. For example, some of the no-man's-lands

referred to in this research are considered arbitrary divisions, which are political borders that provoke separation between countries or regions without consideration for cultural, ethnic, or historical ties between the people living on either side. In the context of migratory experiences, arbitrary divisions might be seen in the way the student migrants were categorized or labeled based on nationality, status, or legal documentation, without regard for their actual experiences or identities. The International Organization for Migration *International migration law* (2019), states: "civil and political rights: Rights and freedoms protecting individuals' physical and mental integrity and civic and political participation against any arbitrary interference" (IOM, 2019, p. 30). IOM also states and emphasizes, "deprivation of liberty: Any form of detention or imprisonment or the placement of a person in a public or private custodial setting, which that person is not permitted to leave at will, by order of any judicial, administrative or other authority" (IOM, 2019, p. 46).

Following humanitarian and international law, the margin as a liminal space encompasses places considered no-man's-land, which exist at the intersection of territorial boundaries and function as conterminous contexts. However, these spaces are also unclaimed or disputed zones, falling under overlapping or contested international jurisdictions. These areas, especially those between Syria and Lebanon, such as border crossings and certain transit spaces like airports, often operate under militarized, overlapping jurisdictions or exceptional legal conditions, where governance may be fragmented or subject to arbitrary enforcement. This duality makes them not only sites of passage but also zones of uncertainty, where legal rights, mobility, and safety can become unstable and dangerous. In this sense, the control and fear implanted in the transitional spaces of the margin that contains border crossing are divided into different territorial contexts, each influenced by varying degrees of political and social tensions. The no-man's-lands that evoked vivid memories of temporary fear — whether due to being overwhelmed, surveilled, or at risk of being denied passage — were those commonly encountered by all student migrants across different migratory flows. All of the selected case studies involved crossing two to three primary borders: national, neighboring, and foreign. These borders are defined as follows: 1. National border context refers to the various Syrian borders, specifically focusing on roadblocks and land border crossing checkpoints. The in-between area of the border crossing is a shared territory, where territorial disputes and shifting boundaries occur frequently; 2. Neighboring border context is located within a neighboring country that shares administrative borders with Syria but is situated farther from those borders. This means that these border contexts can include those accessible through and adjacent to Syria, specifically the international airport in Lebanon. However, these spaces are governed by a separate legal and political framework under international agreements; 3. Foreign border context is located entirely within a foreign country that does not share an administrative border with Syria. The foreign border is the Portuguese military airport, which marks the first defining border for the arrival of two groups of Syrian students to Portugal. In all these places, fear is heightened by the complete disconnection from both familiar and unfamiliar legal, social, and political systems, whether in Syria, a neighboring country, or a foreign country. These distinctions underline how fear is embedded within the margin, manifesting differently across these varied territorial boundaries and contributing to the complex and often traumatic migratory experience. They are also borders that either cannot be traversed or pose a risk to traverse.

ii.i.d. Mobility: transportation modes

Considering these migrations as a struggle — and, in a broader sense, the migration crisis, more specifically, student migration — migrants grapple with time: its relentless passage, the act of counting it down, interruptions, extensions, and the prolonged waiting to arrive at a place where time ideally flows without threatening their existence or quality of life, free from war and its dangers. In *Conversations on science, culture, and time* (1995), Serres discusses Latour how time becomes fractured when disrupted by historical tragedies. The migration crisis represents one such profound tragedy, as do conflicts worldwide, including the ongoing war in Syria under the dictatorial regime, which has lasted for almost 14 years. The aftermath of this instability requires time to rebuild, reestablish, and reinforce a foundation. Serres and Latour also emphasize the movement from one place to another as a folding of time, with events folding and unfolding to mark their occurrence.

The modes of transportation in migration are integral to understanding both the physical and symbolic aspects of the migratory path. They represent fragmented time and memory, as each mode — whether car, cargo aircraft, passenger airplane, inflatable boat, or on foot — marks different segments of the migrant's experience. Fast modes like airplanes condense time and distance, creating swift transitions between borders, while slower ones like inflatable boats or taxis reflect prolonged uncertainty and instability. Each border crossed often necessitates a change in transportation, linking the geographical movement with the student migrant's evolving relationship with time. Thus, each mode of transportation not only facilitates or hinders the crossing of political and geographical boundaries but also shapes the migrant's perception of time and memory, intertwining the act of migration with both physical and emotional transitions.

Reaching places, making pauses, and shifting in-between routes and modal systems

This perspective underscores why a migratory path is not defined by a single origin and destination, nor solely by these two points. Instead, it is shaped by all the folds and events that occur along the migratory path. Even if migration time and the identification of being a migrant are ongoing processes, student migrants are the ones who determine where their shared migration event begins and where it reaches closure or threshold (not an end) within their chronological time-lines. In essence, the migratory experience is composed of multiple times, layers, and transitions. Chronological time-lines — chronological succession — for the order of events in each case study are represented to address the emotional states intertwined with the significant and shifting events that define the migratory experience and path of each student migrant. It is important to emphasize that each case is unique and individual. During the conversations, each student migrant's story-map involves segments of time. Each of these segments is considered a time-interval that is measured and follows different forms of encapsulation: chronological time, which is linear, sequential, fragmented, and historical — referring to hours as clock time, days as calendar time, weeks as weekly time, months as monthly time, and years as annual time — and, in contrast, time that is forgotten, unmentioned, but speculated. Some student migrants from the case studies mention a few of these chronological time categories alongside speculated time, while others combine several within their chronological time-lines. Each chronological time-line consists of phases shaped by the migratory path and experience. It starts in a distinct time-frame and concludes in

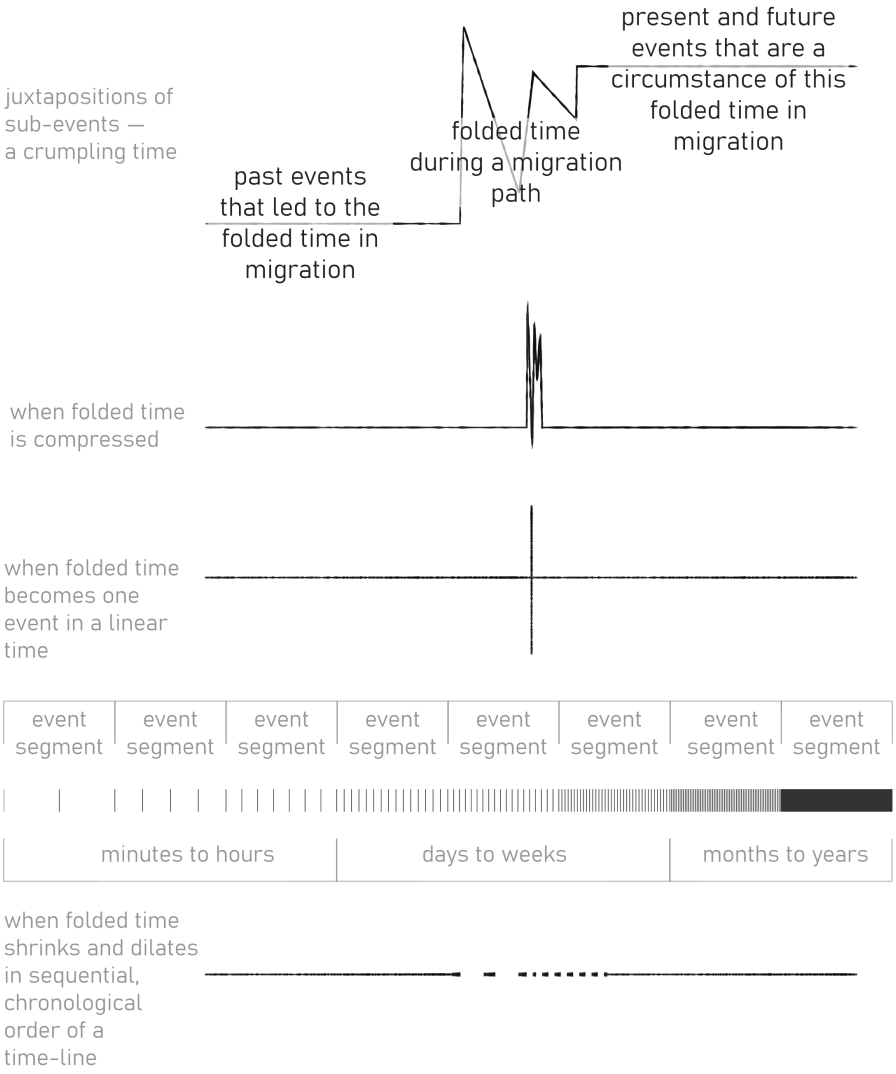


Figure 38. Diagram of the transformation of a folded time across a chronological time-line in linear time.

another, folding events that may or may not intersect. Collectively, they converge on 2014, the year of the first migratory flow event, which marked the continuation of the subsequent three flows and others that intersected between 2014 and 2018 when other student migrants joined the APGES scholarship, whether they were refugees or in any other migrant status.

Another element to consider is the shrinkage (compression and acceleration) and dilation (expansion and deceleration) of time and space represented in each of these chronological timelines within time-intervals and segments of events (Figure 38 and 39). The representation of time is crucial for projecting the migratory path and experience. Within the story-maps, each case study includes an individual chronological timeline divided into three parts for clearer visualization of events. The chronological time-line serves as a language that distinguishes and individualizes the narrative and the migratory experience. In this thesis, it represents a type of discourse — a position taken to manifest a solution through an academic and humanitarian scholarship addressing the Syrian student migration crisis, while also serving as a reminder that this crisis has profoundly affected many student lives and remains ongoing. Therefore, these time representations become chronotopes of migration. The chronotopes of migration are understood as configurations of how space and time shape the time-line structures of individual processes, encounters, and experiences along the different migration itineraries undertaken by the student migrants within their specific migration contexts and time-frames. To further express this historiographical relation of structuring time, Rosenberg and Grafton's *Cartographies of time: A history of the timeline* (2010) discusses the visualization of this structure of time and questions the concept of time maps and the perception of time in the form of lines. Rosenberg and Grafton (2010) are an approach to time representation that emphasizes how the visual representation of time is not merely a neutral or objective practice but one tied to cultural, philosophical, and historiographical frameworks. The timeline, as a linear construct, reflects a chronological framework for understanding history — one that emphasizes continuity, progression, and causality, even if there are pauses within the time-frame of the time-line. In Figure 39, the chronological time-lines also follow the fragmented time model (as described in the third chapter [i.iii] in 'Part i'), so that the linear form of the chronological time-line bends to articulate fragments and segments of events that contain gaps in time and space and that permits a coexistence of linear and non-linear time.

Rosenberg and Grafton (2010) also define narrative as a representation of temporality and a recorded discourse projected through the dilation and contraction of time — a timescale along the chronological time-line. In representational terms, when time shrinks and becomes denser within the segmented division of each event — indicated by more vertical lines within a horizontal line segment — it signifies that more time has passed in that specific event segment compared to one with fewer vertical lines. However, a segment with fewer vertical lines, representing more dilated time, may encompass an event whose importance is equal to the others. Thus, the denser the time segment, the more time was spent on that specific event, whereas the more dilated it is, the less time was spent. For example, in a case with a sequence of events occurring at high velocity within a short time span, there would be several segments with dilated, fewer vertical lines. This highlights the importance of the event rather than solely the duration of time required for it to take place. In this regard, the perception of time becomes inseparable from spatial experience. Regarding the measurement of time, Bakhtin (1975/1981) states, "human movement through space is precisely what provides the

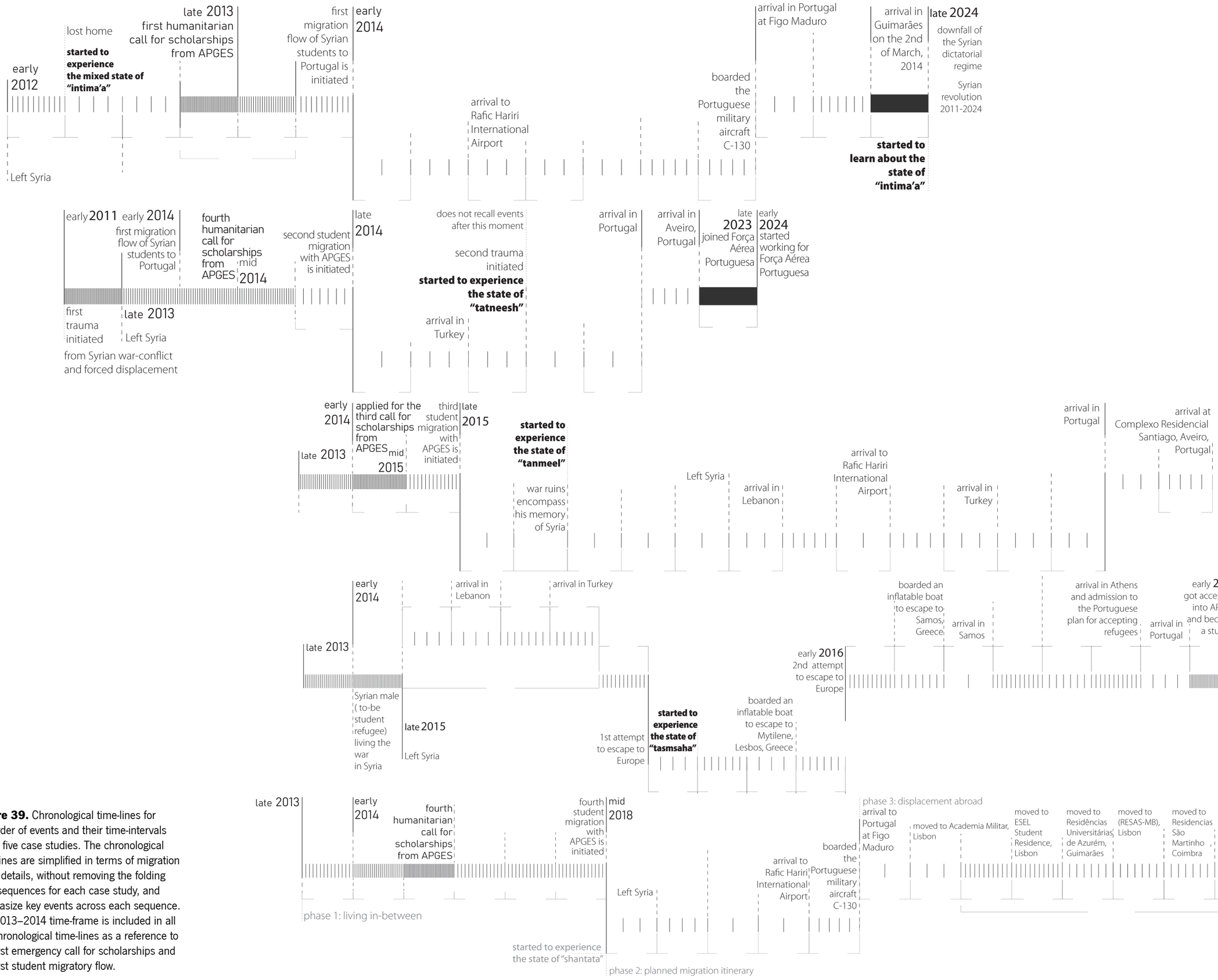


Figure 39. Chronological time-lines for the order of events and their time-intervals in the five case studies. The chronological time-lines are simplified in terms of migration event details, without removing the folding time sequences for each case study, and emphasize key events across each sequence. The 2013–2014 time-frame is included in all five chronological time-lines as a reference to the first emergency call for scholarships and the first student migratory flow.

basic indices for measuring space and time" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 105).
In this thesis, human movement is explored through the experiences of student migrants, refugees, and the overlaps between the two. In the context of transportation, modal systems refer to the various methods used to move people or goods, including land transportation context (such as road), sea transportation context (boat vessel), and airborne transportation context (aircraft). This term encompasses the overall structure and organization of these modes, as well as how they interact and integrate to form a complete and functional transportation network. Within this framework, multi-modal transportation describes the use of multiple transport modes within a single migration — for example, a migrant may travel by bus to a port, continue by ferry across the sea, and reach her/his final destination via another bus.

In the case studies examined in this thesis, the migrations of five Syrian student migrants reveal contrasting experiences within this framework. Four of the migrations were regular, legally facilitated through an academic scholarship program, enabling relatively stable and continuous modal transitions — by passenger airplane and/or military aircraft, taxis, and coordinated transfers. The last case, although chronologically the fourth, involved an irregular refugee migration marked by multiple escape attempts. While it initially followed a sequence of continuous modal transitions, it later shifted to a forced reliance on improvised and precarious modes of transport — shaped less by efficiency and more by urgency, availability, and restricted access. These included informal land routes, such as smuggling routes, using vehicles and modes which led to inflatable boats for sea crossing. While not part of conventional transportation networks, these modes nonetheless form their own adaptive — albeit precarious — multi-modal system, reflecting the layered complexity of irregular migration shaped by displacement, legality, and logistical improvisation. This irregular migration introduced fragmented and uncertain temporalities — long periods of waiting, abrupt movements, and temporal disruptions caused by border enforcement and risk. Thus, while the physical modalities differ, it is the temporal dimension — shaped by legality, access, and risk — that most significantly distinguishes the regular and irregular migratory paths. In this context, temporality becomes not only a marker of pace and sequence but also of vulnerability, control, and the experience of irregular migration.

This thesis acknowledges and recognizes the role of these transportation modes through representation, aiming to deconstruct these temporalities through textual and visual readings. In this context, the representations of these transportation modes cross-reference the way Smithson depicted the vehicle used to traverse the industrial landscape — from images of the vehicle to architectural drawings such as sections and elevations in Smithson and Sumi (1983). This thesis also emphasizes the depiction of various transportation modes in similar forms to highlight how each functioned not only as a carrier along the student migrants' migratory paths but also as an activator and elicitor of sub-events. At certain moments, the modes of transportation became sub-events — distinct episodes that oscillated between providing a protected mobile space and, in other instances, evoking and conveying a sense of danger, at times even becoming the danger itself. In certain sub-events during the dialogues, the term *kharbatah* [خربطة (noun), meaning disorder or mix-up] was specifically used to describe instances, such as taking wrong routes or turns. These modes, therefore, are not merely logistical elements but temporal and spatial agents that shape the perception, rhythm, and memory of a migration event.

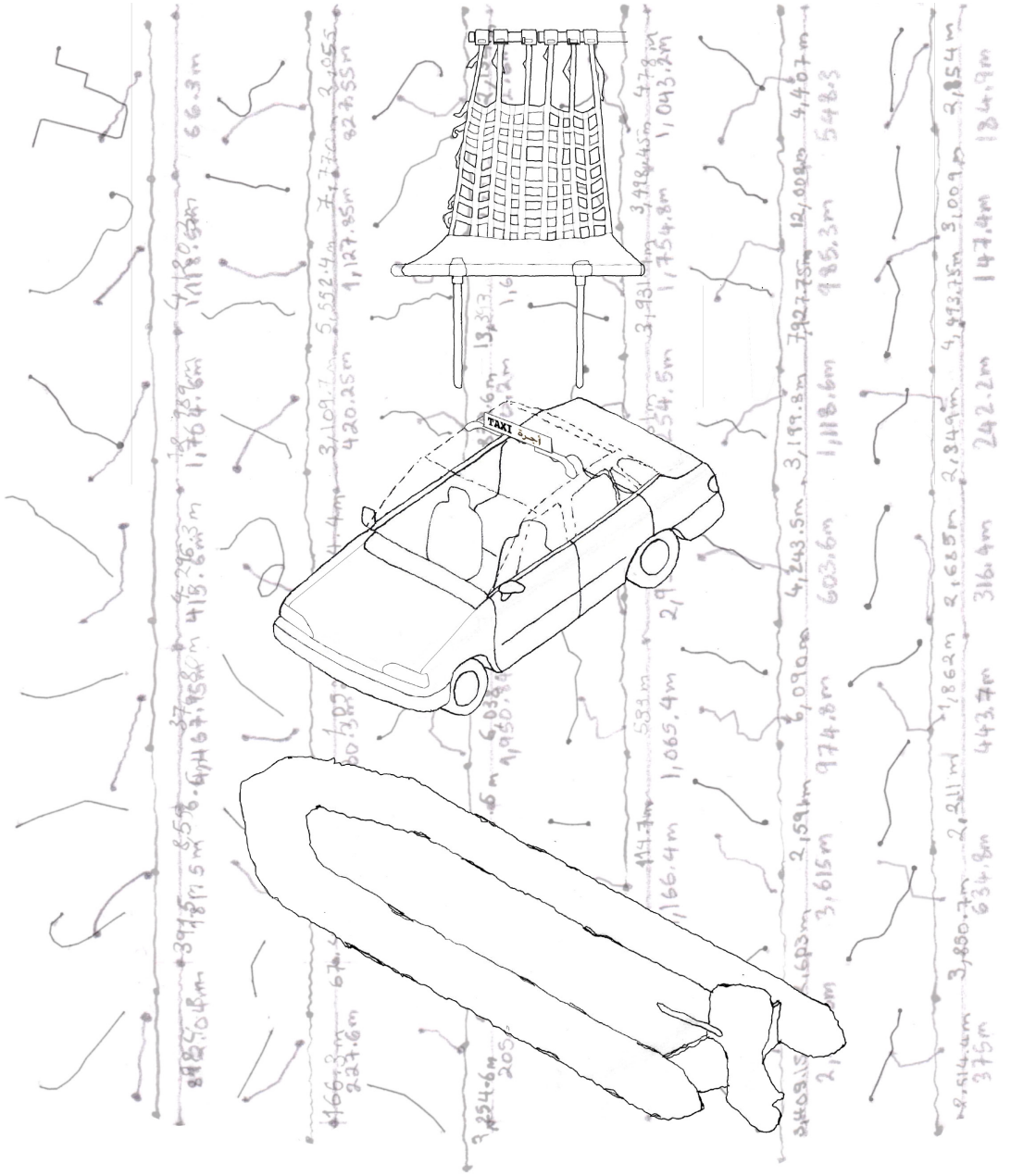


Figure 40.
Three methods of transportation within path fragments used by Syrian student migrants on their way to Portugal.

Walking

Mobility considers the transportation modes taken by the Syrian student migrants from the five case studies during their paths as essential components of migration (Figure 40). Because they are ways of transitioning from one place to another, these methods hold an elemental role in altering and shifting each of the Syrian student migrants' experiences. The four transportation modes — automobile, military cargo aircraft, inflatable boat, and walking — depict actively mobile events that, to some extent, ensure progression in migration through dimensions of time, space, distance, and waiting. The narrative discourse and structure of the case studies are organized chronologically to follow the order of the chronological time-lines. This order begins with an experience involving the military cargo aircraft and ends with another, complementing the first and fourth migratory flows. The transition from land to airborne contexts forms a motion-related, but also temporal and spatial, augmentation and shrinkage of a large-scale visual sequence of events during the itinerary. Meanwhile, sea and pedestrian contexts are more vulnerable and personal moments, mapped through smaller-scale sequences of events that either succeed or precede the large-scale ones. Mobility thereby becomes a theme of the body traveling through a more personal perception and sense of time and space. While the transportation modes could secure and provide safety for the Syrian student migrants, they may also serve as a kind of domestic resemblance — a temporary mobile home. These quasi-domestic mobilities may reflect or negate weather and surrounding environments and their effects on the migratory paths and experiences.

For the five case studies, the migratory paths involve constant motion — whether forward or backward — along a trajectory that each student migrant is set to pursue. To be set in motion in migration means that a migrant progresses in their itinerary, affecting both time and space. Even though migration involves fluctuations, its provisional state brings forth different realizations of what is unfolding and shifting along the path, and how the significance of each event segment may affect its overall flow. For migration to be provisional means that it is temporary in duration, but in memory, oral history, and representation, it is not temporary — it is enduring. Temporary in the sense that it may not be brief: it may take more time than calculated or anticipated, and may require several attempts to proceed, as it is conditioned to change over time. And because the provisional is also present, migration becomes an ongoing event when mapped and represented. Thus, migration is also present in textual and visual representations, as it its even story is reanimated.

In the exploration of mapping and representing Syrian student migrations — two of the key objectives of this research — the study considers the relevance (or not) of the Mediterranean, both region and sea, in time and space configurations. By disentangling these migratory itineraries, the human motion in relation to and interaction with both built and natural environments is confronted and potentially altered by the migrants and their memory within provisional times and spaces. This human (migrant) motion drives the mapping and representation of this provisional dimension and its expression through transportation modes. Among these, walking — a transportation mode shared across all five case studies, though not always emphasized for its spatial configuration — often served as a means of evoking and speculating spatial identification and the visual formation of space and place. It is, therefore, a method of approximate and estimated measurement through pacing.

Notably, in airports and terminals, walking along the dotted trails left by the student migrants — accompanied by time-intervals — marked the paths on a smaller, human scale, representing places that perhaps none of the migrants might ever visit again. This corresponds to Ingold's idea of the trail, as he writes: "[...] walking is something he sets out to do. He is the subject, and his walking the predicate. But once on the trail, he and his walking become one and the same" (Ingold, 2015, p. 133).

For color reference, each map consists of modes of transportation that emphasize the connections between places, countries, and continents. These modes became significant in the narratives, with color identification applied to represent each path. The colors correspond to the trails left in the migratory paths and experiences in each case study: *Intima'a* uses greenish khaki, referencing the greenish khaki netted seat. *Tatneesh* does not use any color reference due to a larger gap in memory, indicating a lack of descriptive recollection of the transportation modes used in the path. *Shantata* uses red for the red netted seat. *Tanmeel* is represented by yellow, referencing the yellow taxi. *Tamsaha* also uses yellow, but with a different hue, corresponding to the yellow inflatable boat. This color-coding not only serves as a visual aid for the visual data but also reflects the lasting impact of these transportation modes on the student migrants.

The dotted traces, used to express the trails, dilate and shrink with the progress, speed, and waiting moments that fluctuate along the walking path. Walking — the literal act of moving from one point to another by alternating footsteps — cannot metaphorically resemble any other act in migration. As Careri describes in *Walkscapes: Walking as an aesthetic practice* (2002), walking is a generator of architecture and landscape (Careri, 2002, p. 20), and through it, limits are incurred (Careri, 2002, p. 22). Furthermore, as a pedestrian context prone to fluctuations in pace and irregular footsteps, walking can be interrupted by visual stimuli, obstacles, and hindrances that alter the path — moments of hurried movement, abrupt pauses, and unanticipated detours that become an integral part of the migratory experience. Each step, whether intentional or disrupted, contributes to a spatial event where the environment, regardless of whether the student migrant is familiar with it, serves both as a backdrop and as an active participant in shaping the migration. Because the student migrants in the case studies interact with their surrounding environments, they shape them and are shaped by them, reflecting on the tensions, hopes, and challenges inherent in their migratory paths. These places are transformed from being transitory points or no-man's-lands into places of adaptation, memory, and progression and/or recession of the paths.

chapter **ii.ii.**

_Story-maps

Between the story maps, the glossary, and the case studies

Each of the case studies refers to an emotional state, expressed and intensified in the dialogues performed by the student migrants about their migratory experience, whether felt before, during, and/or after their itineraries. These emotional states could be shared interchangeably among the student migrants. However, each is divided to represent the flow of a specific migratory path — how the itinerary, with its starting point and transitions, became a "story map." A story map is a representation of an artistic approach to migration, using non-conventional cartographies to narrate a story through the presence of visual elements.

These visual elements, complemented by textual ones, are part of the representation process, which aims to be ethically responsible and protect the identity of the student migrants behind these stories. To be ethically responsible in the context of this thesis means ensuring that what is presented within the narrative of each story does not endanger the lives of any of the student migrants. This is especially important given the unstable political situation in war-torn Syria, characterized by military surveillance and handwritten reports, reminiscent of the fascist era under António de Oliveira Salazar during Portugal's dictatorship period. In this environment, anyone could be suspected of being part of the Syrian dictatorial intelligence, which is generally feared by the ordinary Syrian citizen. That is to say, I would never want anyone to be put in this position, especially if they were to return to Syria one day, regardless of their political views and beliefs.

To that end, there are the textual elements that translate the story-maps through writing, and I pose the question: How can I relate the use and significance of language and translation to narrate Syrian student migratory stories? The glossary presented in border-thinking replaces identity and represents these migrants, their migratory experiences, paths, and stories. The case studies are organized chronologically by the starting year of each migration — not by the type of migration. The following case studies were chosen based on a principal criterion: from the student migrants whom I have spoken to, who accepted to share their experience, and made a commitment to the dialogues, even when they took longer than planned, and whom I have familiarity with — with whom I had already built a foundation of trust, in a specific and not short period of time after getting to know them. This is because, when I tried to contact those whom I barely knew or had never met, I was faced with rejection and/or ignored. This was probably not mainly due to the fact that they did not know me at all or well enough, but rather because there was no trust built between us, and I was seen as an outsider, a stranger, in the position of an interviewer questioning them about their migratory experience — a personal and delicate subject, especially in the case of irregular escapes and migrations. The dialogues were conducted separately, meaning each student migrant was interviewed individually, and none of them knew who the other participants were. The settings of the dialogues varied: some were conducted via Zoom due to distance and COVID-19, some in person, and others through phone calls and text messaging. I observed a pattern within these dialogues, where the recollection of these lived experiences manifested strong emotions and words, mostly adjectives, that described these conditions.

When they reflected on how they recalled their migratory experiences, it seemed that they were describing their individual paths through these emotions. The emphasis on emotions plays a crucial role in understanding the migratory experience and integrating them into a

multi-layered migratory path. For each case study, an emotional state describes the experience and captures what the migrant felt before, during, and after the migratory experience and dialogues. Consequently, the paths are named after these emotional states. This approach underscores that the case studies reflect the paths and experiences of the student migrants, rather than the individuals themselves. The emotional states, therefore, become the representation that each student migrant emphasized, serving as the identification of the migrant's migratory path and experience.

Initially, the naming system was based on the identified and associated gender of the student migrant and the chronological order of their migratory flow in an abbreviated form, such as FSS01 (Female Syrian Student, first case study) and MSS03 (Male Syrian Student, third case study), which lacked inter-subjectivity, as the representation includes more than just the demographic identity of the migrant and the order of the migratory flow. This was later simplified to case studies a, b, c, and d while I was developing the representation of the chronological time-lines, which then influenced an emotional association with the student migrants' story-maps. These narratives, shaped by inter-subjectivity during and after the dialogues, are represented as story-maps, which are further detailed in sub-chapter five, part two. To follow this notion, in *Atlas of emotion: Journeys in art, architecture, and film* (2002), Bruno explores how emotions are deeply intertwined with movement and spatial experiences, suggesting that migrating through spaces not only shapes emotional states but also serves as a medium through which individuals connect with their environments.

> [...] Arguing that this form of "transport" includes psychogeographic journeys as well, I investigate the genealogy of emotion pictures, mapping a geography of intimate space itself—a history of movement, affect, and tact. I will set forth as a major premise of the atlas that morion, indeed, produces emotion and that, correlatively, emotion contains a movement. It is this reciprocal principle chat moves the entire book, shaping the haptic path it takes through its various cultural journeys. The Latin root of the word emotion speaks clearly about a "moving" force, stemming as it does from *emovere*, an active verb composed of *movere*, "to move," and e, "out." The meaning of emotion, then, is historically associated with "a moving out, migration, transference from one place to another." Extending this etymology, the book creates its own (e)morion, enhancing the fundamentally migratory sense of the term as it employs, in practice, the haptic affect of "transport" that underwrites the formation of cultural travel. It is here, in this very emotion, that the moving image was implanted, with its own psychogeographic version of transport. (Bruno, 2002, pp. 6-7)

This perspective aligns with Corner's (1999) idea of the agency of mapping and this thesis' approach to mapping as a form of resistance, in the demand for the expansion of representation. This approach is applied to the case studies, where the migratory paths are described and identified through emotional states. By integrating emotions into the narratives, the migratory experiences of the student migrants are mapped as personal and spatially grounded migrations, reinforcing the idea that the emotional dimension is essential in understanding and representing their paths. By making the connection between actions, responses, and lived experiences, the story-map becomes a tool to trace and visualize the

shifting, layered migratory paths and experiences. The idea of a story-map is also explored by Ingold, who writes:

> "Thus the story-line goes along, as does the line on the map. [...] Lying at the confluence of actions and responses, every topic is identified by its relations to the things that paved the way for it, that presently concur with it and that follow it into the world. Here the meaning of the 'relation' has to be understood quite literally, not as a connection between pre-located entities but as a path traced through the terrain of lived experience. Far from connecting points in a network, every relation is one line in a meshwork of interwoven trails. To" (Ingold, 2007, p. 90).

To add to this layer of movement, emotion, and storytelling, which superimposes the fictional characteristics of the representations, the architectural context within the traversed places and spaces is explored through the depiction of these case studies. They are expressed using drawings of (spatial, territorial, placial, and temporal) plans, sections, perspectives, and/or mappings, reflecting the complexity of spatial narratives and the interplay between memory and broader spatial configurations. The representations aim to bridge the tangible and intangible dimensions of these configurations, encapsulating not only their physical attributes but also the emotional, cultural, political, and social layers in the migration event, which are tied to them. Through this, the relationship between personal and individual experiences and their re-interpretation through inter-subjectivity within architectural elements shapes the temporal-spatial understandings and extensions of these migrations.

The story-maps consist of storytelling whose narratives originate from the individual and personal memories of the student migrants in the case studies, recounting a sequence of events for each migratory path and experience. Individual memory is part of the oral history method that is produced and refers to the way groups or individuals remember, interpret, and pass down experiences of past events — especially those that are socially or politically significant, like wars, migrations, or revolutions. It is not just a record of what happened, but rather how those events are remembered, narrated, and given meaning over time. As Abrams (2010) notes, "[...] individual memory stories are shaped (not determined) by the inter-subjective relationships present in the interview, and what we as researchers hear are narrative constructions of memories of experiences actively created for an audience" (Abrams, 2010, p. 59). This process highlights how individual memory, connected to personal memory, gives these stories an emotional and subjective dimension. This allows the migratory experiences of student migrants and their case studies to be framed within each story-map.

In relation to that, the emphasis on these words from the glossary underscores the significance of language in storytelling and the necessity of specific words to convey particular emotions. Anzaldúa (1987) highlights the importance of language by expressing, "But for a language to remain alive, it must be used" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 59). This statement reflects how language is not only a tool for communication during the dialogues but also a living aspect of cultural identity that requires continuous engagement and expression to maintain its relevance, vitality, and representation in both personal and collective narratives. That is why the following case studies use words in Arabic to emphasize that these lived experiences and emotions during these Syrian migrations can only be fully expressed and felt in this language.

early 2014

Intima'a
انتماء

(noun), used in formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialect: verb form in informal Syrian Arabic dialect *bentimi* (بنتمي); meaning a positive and personal sensation of belonging to a place, person, group, or any relevant subject that gives one a sense of pertinence. It is often accompanied by the nostalgia of home and the search to find home in another place, person, or community. Within Syria, the term is most likely to be used in a patriotic sense, but outside it represents an ongoing action to fill the loss of home. In this case, it might involve any or all of the following: literal, physical distance, or sentimental loss. Thus, the state of *intima'a* follows a person who migrates and may guide this migrant toward finding and learning about belonging elsewhere.

The first case study, *intima'a* (the state of belonging), comes from the first migratory group, for which the APGES scholarship program opened the emergency humanitarian calls. The story-map expresses the search for a place to call home, not by spatial resemblance, but by the essence of the place — one that is accepting, forgiving, and stable, symbolizing home.

late 2014

Tatneesh
تطنيش

(noun), used in informal Syrian Arabic dialect: from the noun *tanash* (طناش), which means choosing to ignore in totality; verb form *tanashet* (طنشت), meaning to ignore — from the state of ignoring and forgetting at once, either selectively, randomly, or entirely, with the consideration that it might be intentional or non-intentional. Non-intentional forgetting and disregard of the surrounding events, in the case of migrants, are often followed by experiencing uneasiness and distress. *Tatneesh* works to protect one's memory from recollecting events that may or may not disturb one's emotional state. Therefore, through the forceful leaving of one's home, trauma becomes present in a migrant's itinerary experience.

The second case study, *tatneesh* (state of forgetfulness), comes from the second migratory group within the APGES scholarship program, part of the emergency humanitarian calls. The story-map expresses the experience of overlapping traumas that affect the student migrant's recollection of the migration event. She then overcomes these obstacles on her path towards serving Portugal in her profession.

late 2015

Tanmeel
تنميل

(noun), used in both formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialect, literally refers to the sensation of ants crawling on the body and technically describes the temporary tingling or numbness in a part of the body due to an unusual physical position. Metaphorically, tanmeel refers to total emotional numbness or a state of dormancy. The verb form namalet (نملت, singular first person) is used to express a person's feelings toward a specific scene, situation, or memory. *Namalet* is a first-person verb-expression that conveys the experience of emotional numbness and developed detachment toward something often as a response to an accumulation of past events and hardships. It is also related to the informal Syrian Arabic third person verb form تبلدت (*taballadet*) and تبلد (*tabalad*) and noun form التبلد (*al-tabalud*), which generally mean "to become dull," "to become numb," or "to become emotionally detached."

The third case study, *tanmeel* (state of numbness), comes from the third migratory group within the APGES scholarship program, part of the emergency humanitarian calls. The story-map expresses the experience of closely encountering an inactive zone with war ruins, resulting from taking the wrong route to avoid passing by militarized roadblocks.

late 2015 until early 2017

Tamsaha
تمسحة

(noun), used in informal Syrian Arabic dialect; derived from the first-person verb form تمسحت (*tamsahet*), first-person plural form تمسحنا (*tamsah'na*), third-person singular masculine form تمسح (*tasmsah*), and third-person singular feminine form تمسحت (*tamsaheet*). This term is used repeatedly by the student migrants during the dialogues and is also used to describe the civilian status of a Syrian individual both inside and outside the homeland. It is an untranslatable word into English, originating as a first-person singular past tense verb. The metaphoric meaning of this term is used to transform the noun "crocodile" (تمساح, *temsah*) into a verb, signifying the toughness of a crocodile. It represents a combination of desensitization, normalization, and familiarity with struggle — a coping mechanism that a person develops in response to a particular situation or life in general.

The fourth case study, *tamsaha* (state of desensitization), does not come from any migratory group within the APGES scholarship program and its emergency humanitarian calls. The story-map reflects the only irregular migration among the other case studies. In this migration, the escapee makes two attempts to reach Europe before entering the APGES scholarship program.

mid 2018

Shantata
شنططة

(noun), used in informal Syrian Arabic dialect, derived from the first-person verb form in past tense تشنططت (*t'shantatet)*, meaning: to struggle in moving from one place to another away from home while being displaced; this could occur within a city, within a country, or between countries. It is often said with the feeling of being tired from this action. The term describes both an experience and a state of feeling tired of being away from home for an unspecified duration or distance. It is also used as a venting expression — a form of displacement catharsis — frequently and alternatively used in dialogues with student migrants, often phrased as a rhetorical question, such as: شو هالشنططة؟ (What is this shantata?).

The fifth case study, *shantata* (state of displacement), comes from the fourth and last migratory group within the APGES scholarship program, part of the emergency humanitarian calls. The story-map expresses the struggle of being displaced from the moment of departure to the migratory experience of moving between temporary places of habitation.

ii.ii.a. *Intima'a* انتماء

In Syria, the housing crisis has existed long before the conflict began in 2011. Many cities feature neighborhoods entirely covered by informal housing, slums, and illegal housing units constructed from substandard concrete blocks, crowded together like cans both vertically and horizontally, and inhabited primarily by poor and lower-middle-class citizens. The housing crisis worsened tremendously after many internally displaced people left behind the ruins and dust of their homes, many of which had been built by themselves and were their only places of refuge. Other homes were abandoned and later reused by squatters, the homeless, or displaced individuals, or even shut down by their owners.

ii.ii.a.i. For the lost homes

In 2014,[45] the year the student migrant left for Portugal, there were an estimated 3,738,763 registered Syrian refugees according to UNHCR, and 3.9 million according to the Migration Data Portal, with 7.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), the highest number of IDPs since 2011. Of course, these figures reflect only registered refugees and IDPs; however, many remain unregistered, including those with irregular refugee status, stateless persons, the disappeared, those with lost legal documents, and children born in places of displacement or asylum (Al-Terkawi, 2023). Additionally, statistics from the "Central Bureau of Statistics in Syria" state that, according to Al-Terkawi in Jusoor for Studies, the Syrian population in 2014 was estimated at 28.1 million, both inside and outside Syria. After this, the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics ceased issuing demographic data.

In *The battle for home: The vision of a young architect in Syria* (2016), Al-Sabouni questions the meaning of home and the value associated with place for each individual. She emphasizes that her understanding of what constitutes home only became clear after the onset of the war in Syria. She witnessed the bloodshed intertwined with nationalism and other forms of human behavior that led — and continue to lead — to the loss of home, whether through participation in or victimization by such events. For every family that fled their home and became displaced, either within Syria or abroad, there is a loss of home. For every individual

45 As there is no Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Syria in 2014, only a general overview is available through that year's Global Humanitarian Overview. This research draws on data from IOM and Jusoor—an NGO supporting Syrian youth through education and entrepreneurship. Due to a 'Page Not Found' error for the 2014 SHARP report and the lack of accessible data analysis, the focus shifts to the most recent HNO, which better aligns with the student migrant's experience. ('not found' report: link retrieved from: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/2014-syria-humanitarian-assistance-response-plan-sharp-sector). Following the large influx of internally displaced people, the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Syria reports 7.2 million internally displaced persons in 2024, while UNHCR estimates 7.4 million. According to the World Migration Report by IOM, there are around 6.6 million refugees in 2024, with Türkiye hosting the highest number at 3,792,505 refugees. However, Jusoor Centre for Studies estimates a decline in Syria's population in 2023 to around 26.7 million, with 9.1 million Syrians living outside Syria. This leads to the conclusion that 6.6 million (from IOM data) of the 9.1 million are refugees, while the remaining 2.5 million are other types of migrants, without refugee status.
. Humanitarian Needs Overview on Syria. Information retrieved from: https://www.unocha.org/results?q=Syria+Humanitarian+Needs+Overview#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=Syria%20Humanitarian%20Needs%20Overview&gsc.page=1
. IOM: "World Migration Report 2024." Information retrieved from: https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024
. Jusoor: "Map of the distribution of Syrians inside and outside Syria." (Al-Terkawi 2023) Informationn retrieved from: https://jusoor.co/en/details/map-of-the-distribution-of-syrians-inside-and-outside-syria

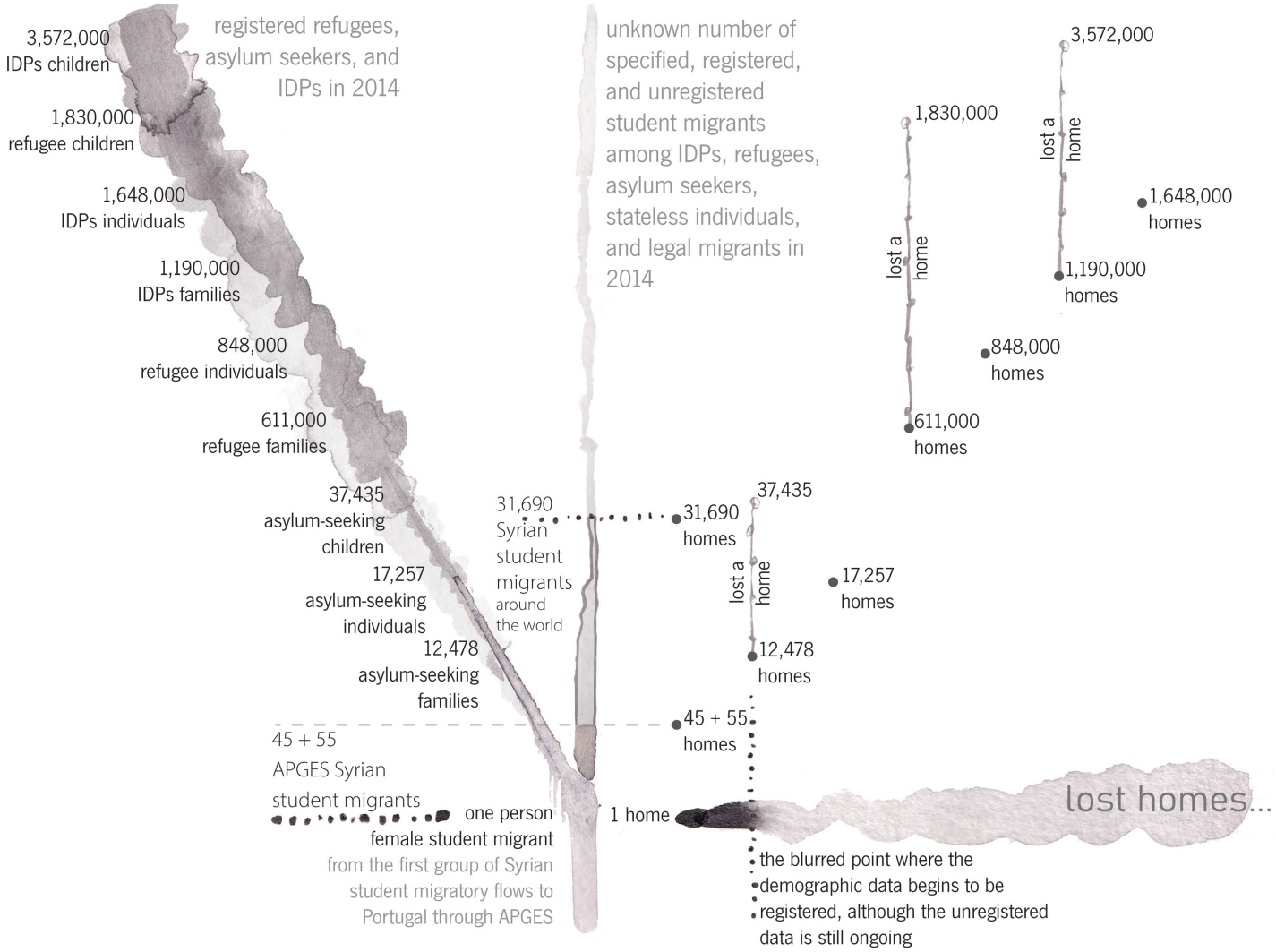


Figure 41. Diagram for the lost homes in 2014, including registered Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and Syrian students. For every child migrant there is a lost home within each family. Data retrieved from: APGES archival reports, UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, and IOM World Migration Reports.

who escaped the war to seek refuge in another place that is not their home, there has been a loss of home. What has been left behind, whether partially or fully damaged or still intact, is considered a loss. When home is distant, it is not visible, not lived in, and not shared with anyone; it becomes lost, even if only temporarily, due to the uncertainty of return. This is the case for many Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and escapees, all of whom were forced to leave their homes due to various war-related circumstances. In the loss of home, there is an intersection between home, family, and the question of belonging.

To address this question, I considered the typical ages when students begin university, college, technical school, or similar institutions. According to Data Base Earth, between 2014 and 2015, the median age of the Syrian population ranged between 18 and 19 years, aligning with the usual age for students who have finished high school and are pursuing tertiary education in various forms. However, according to the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, individuals aged 17 and under are classified as children, while those aged 18 and above, including 19-year-

olds, are categorized as adults and grouped together with individuals up to 59 years old. This grouping combines distinct age demographics into a single category, ignoring the critical differences between 17, 18, and 19-year-olds, who are at pivotal stages in their lives. Recognizing 17-year-olds as children should also involve distinguishing 18 and 19-year-olds as a separate group, particularly in the Syrian context, where these ages are often still associated with childhood and adolescence. Addressing this issue is crucial, as it obscures the understanding of these formative years, which are critical for higher education.

According to Statista, in 2014, the average Syrian family had 3.1 children, without a specified age range. Many Syrian stateless individuals, asylum seekers,[46] refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are part of families. As of 2024, according to the UNHCR, 47% of Syrian refugees are children under 18 years of age. Since each family has a different number of children, and there may be many single-parent households within these groups — a data point that is not yet available — the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder reports that female adult migrants are 5.39% higher than male adult migrants. This contradicts cultural factors that often hinder adult women from fleeing alone without family accompaniment. Given the lack of data on the number of Syrian families within the refugee population, I began to calculate a rough estimate. Assuming an average of three children per family, based on data from the Migration Data Portal, UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, and Statista, and considering that 47% of the Syrian refugee population consists of children — though this percentage may vary across different migration flows and attempts.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that individual adults, whether related or unrelated, each belong to a home. Even in cases where two adult brothers travel together, each likely harbored dreams of establishing a home of their own if they did not already possess one. Consequently, the estimated graph and data consider 'home' not only as the dream of a physical home lost or unattained within one's country and homeland but also as a physical structure rendered unused, stolen, abandoned, or destroyed. Additionally, 'home' embodies the family left behind, including those who were lost, disappeared, or deceased. In 2014,[47] according to the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, of the 3.9 million Syrian refugees, around 33.7% were children. However, in late 2013, UNHCR emphasized in an article that half of the refugee population were children. Following the Refugee Data Finder in 2014, there were 1.3 million children. Assuming each family has an average of 3 children, this would mean there are approximately 433,000 refugee families. The remaining 1.73 million refugees are adults, which includes the parents of the children. As for the asylum seekers and IDPs in 2014, only the total number is provided in the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder. To estimate, using the 47% figure, for the 7.6 million Syrian IDPs, there were approximately 3.572 million children, 1.19 million families, and 1.648 million adult refugees. Regarding asylum seekers, the total number was 79,649, with 37,435 being children, 12,478 being families, and 17,257 being individual

46 There is data I could not calculate due to its complexity, such as the case of asylum seekers. According to the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, there are 79,649 asylum seekers; however, this figure represents the total number and lacks a demographic breakdown.

47 In 2024, there were approximately 3.1 million Syrian child refugees and 3.5 million Syrian adult refugees, with these numbers increasing daily, with each new attempt and wave of displacement. This suggests there were roughly one million families, with an average of three children per family and two parents, within the 6.6 million Syrian refugees. The remaining 1.5 million were likely individual adult refugees. Similarly, for the internally displaced population, based on UNHCR data for 7.4 million Syrian IDPs, there were approximately 3.5 million children, 1.16 million families, and 1.58 million adult individuals.

adults. These figures are subject to change depending on migratory flows, seasonal variations, and yearly conflicts and fluctuations, making it difficult to establish a fixed percentage or number.

Both families and individual adults within these groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and student migrants, have experienced the loss of their homes (Figure 41), a profound disruption that deeply affects their sense of security and identity. For many, especially the younger generation, the dream of accessing higher education remains a key aspiration, even if their homes in their homeland are no longer available. It is assumed that most, if not all, of the children displaced by war and conflict would wish to pursue higher education, striving to build a future despite the trauma and displacement they have endured. Higher education becomes not only a means of personal growth but also a way to reclaim a sense of agency and hope in an otherwise uncertain future. However, returning to the formative years for higher education (17, 18, and 19 years old) and the developmental years for early professional growth, one critical gap in the available data is the lack of specific information on individuals aged between 17 and 25 (or up to 30 for those pursuing education later). This demographic is crucial when evaluating educational opportunities and the long-term impacts of displacement. The absence of data on this age group hinders a comprehensive understanding of the needs and potential of young displaced individuals, who are in the transitional phase from adolescence to adulthood, a period in which educational opportunities could play a transformative role in shaping their futures.

ii.ii.a.ii. Home

Home, which holds an intangible presence in a migrant's migratory path and experience, is one of the key elements shaping the narrative of belonging and displacement. The word 'home,' as a place, carries individual and personal meaning. It becomes associated with a form of normative and repetitive temporal and spatial occupation, although the experience of this occupation may differ from one individual to another. Therefore, 'home' is a malleable term in relation to the migrant experience, changing according to how the migrant's migratory path and experience shift within the notions of security, displacement, and belonging. As the displacement unfolds, the idea of home often transforms into a symbol of loss, hope, or longing, shaped by the passage of time and the shifting occurrences of a migrant's life. This transformation can carry emotional weight, influencing how migrants navigate new spaces and relate to their past, even when they are unable to return to their original homes.

After attempting to understand these statistics and the unreported numbers, the concept of losing home, and what 'home' means for those outside Syria and for those internally displaced within Syria, began to intersect with the student migrant's experience of home in the *Intima'a* case study. [*Intima'a* (written in Arabic as: انتماء) is a noun used in both formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialect, with a verb form in the latter: *bentimi* (بنتمي). It refers to a positive and personal sensation of belonging to a place, person, group, or any relevant subject that evokes a sense of pertinence. This feeling is often accompanied by nostalgia for home and the search to find home in another place, person, or community. Within Syria, the term is most often used in a patriotic sense, but outside the country, it becomes an ongoing process to fill the loss of home. This might involve literal, physical distance or sentimental loss. Thus, the state of *Intima'a* follows a person who migrates and may guide them toward finding belonging elsewhere.]

For the student migrant, like many other Syrian migrants, *Intima'a* represents a sense of belonging — a feeling lost due to the war and detached from the migrant's life experience. The migrant's connection to home was and is disrupted by the conflict, and it was only after the overthrow of the dictatorial regime that the possibility of returning and reclaiming that sense of belonging could be restored. This return signifies not only a physical return but also a reconnection to the emotional and family ties that were severed during the conflict. To explain this complex, subjective detachment from belonging, from *Intima'a*, I must narrate the migrant's understanding of what home means, not only because she lives abroad and the path began to be represented abroad, but because this sense of detachment began when she left Syria in 2012. When this student migrant left Syria, she emphasized that she left home, though she also remarked, "I have never had a home in Syria," referring to a physical dwelling. So, when she said she lost her home, she was referring to the family she left behind and the country to which she would never return — especially after she witnessed a group of Russian military soldiers with their backpacks entering Damascus as she was heading toward the Damascus-Beirut Highway for departure.

The value of home carries both of its homonymic meanings: value as capital and value as meaning — especially in Syria and among the Syrian population. Al-Sabouni (2016) notes that for Syrian families and youth, home is a dream — a lifelong aspiration, whether it is the search for one, the dream of owning one, or simply reaching one. She then explains the insurmountable housing system that began when "the government formed partnerships between the public, private, and cooperative sectors to sell pieces of land to contractors" (Al-Sabouni, 2016, p. 95). To explain the broader dilemma of housing in Syria and how it had already become a crisis before the war, I must refer to the obscure and dubious system known as the General Housing Establishment, which provides low-cost housing on the Syrian market. A large percentage of the Syrian population was already situated between the lower-middle and middle class even before the war began, but conditions worsened as the conflict continued. Many rent, while others — particularly from the working middle class, who could spare a portion of their salary — try to register for homes through one of two pathways: directly through the establishment's systems, or through professional orders or syndicates dedicated to individuals with higher education, such as engineers, doctors, and teachers.

These syndicates purchase projects — starting with a piece of land — from private-sector architectural companies associated with the establishment, and then open participation and registration to their members, who are supposedly eligible. Payments are typically divided into installments, beginning when a participant reserves an under-construction apartment and continuing until the construction is complete. However, as the establishment pays for the housing units in advance, the participant becomes indebted and is obliged to make payments until the project is finalized. Under the name of the establishment, many architectural and residential companies manage these projects to support those who cannot afford to pay the full amount upfront. This system is a common method Syrians use to buy and own apartments — often not for their own future, but for their children's. Ideally, this system finalizes the sale once the residential building is complete, with no additional benefits involved. However, these projects may take years to be completed due to the low installment payments made by participants — most of whom are public service employees with very low salaries and no property ownership, which is a requirement for participation. Corruption is often a major factor behind delays, interruptions, repeated requests for unjustified payments,

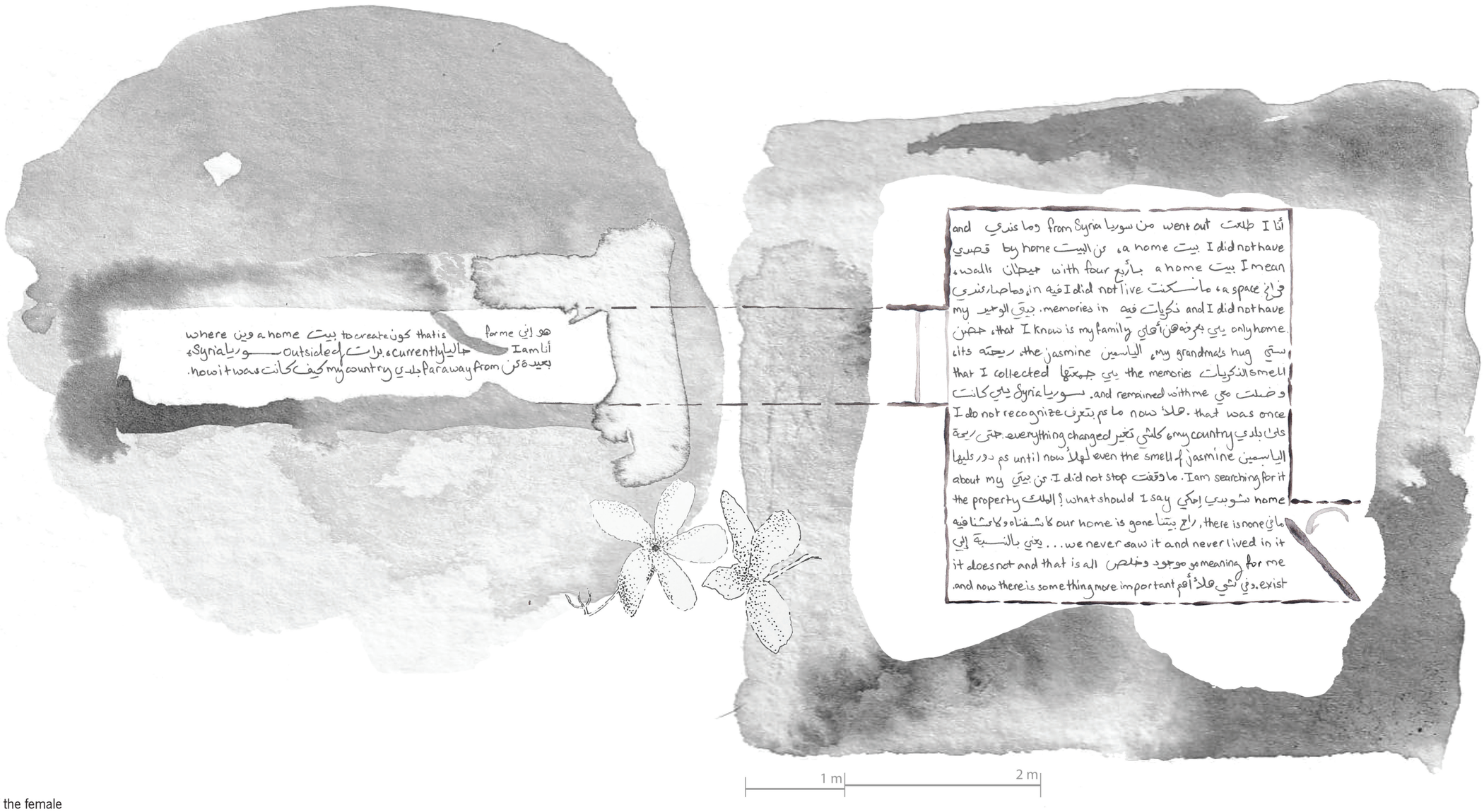


Figure 42. Diagram of the female student migrant search for home. From the loss of home to searching for one, her path of *Intima'a* is the search for a home where she is now. This search for home uses the Arabic form of writing, in right-to-left order.

defective construction, and, in some cases, the collapse of association-led residential projects. Furthermore, these developments are often built on city peripheries — remote, vacant, and arid areas without infrastructure or vegetation — as they are not yet officially inhabited zones. During the student migrant's late teenage years, her parents participated in an association and registered for an apartment. She had always dreamed of living in it. When she started university in Syria, she stayed at her grandparents' place, planning to move to her parents' house once the construction was completed. Then the war started. She remained in Syria until early 2021, but eventually had to leave, never to return. She left Syria — and with it, her dream of belonging to a physical place where she could have created memories with her family, a place she could call home. To this day, the apartment they bought through the association remains unfinished. They are unsure whether it has been damaged by the war, but they know they will not be living there any time soon. A home that was never meant to be one and never truly was — recognized only by authorities and in legal terms of ownership. The thought of how many people have gone through, and are still going through, similar experiences raises the question: what does home really mean?

This female migrant described the meaning of home as unbounded and open-ended. It has no fixed place or location; therefore, she never felt a sense of belonging to a particular place. Home becomes an ongoing search. From this, the challenge arises: how can one translate an ongoing act of searching for home and convey this message of contrast and the negation of physical home? This calls for a holistic yet deconstructive approach. Home, in this context, is bifurcated between what is experienced and what is sought. As Skeiker writes in "Syrian refugees, applied theater, workshop facilitation, and stories: While they were waiting" (2021), the life of a migrant is a simultaneous existence in different places (Skeiker, 2021, p. 85), shaped by what the migrant may consider to be home. To represent home through the words of the migrant, the opposite ends of the migrant's path in search of home become connected through the act of mapping. In the process of realizing and recognizing the path and the migrant's voice in the search for home, the experience of the military cargo aircraft and the military airport terminal marks the first spatial contact with Portugal — where geo-architectural moments begin to take form. Therefore, the path aligns with the moment she (unwillingly) began her search for home and higher education, away from her home and homeland. The path starts at the time, date, and place of departure. It continues to the places where she paused, buffered her status, and put her studies and dreams on hold. And it extends into the recent past and the present, where she is continuing her studies. The path spans four different countries: Damascus, Syria, as the place of departure; Beirut, Lebanon, as a transit point — twice; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as a buffer zone for two consecutive years; and Portugal, as the place of arrival, where the ongoing search for home continues. Here, the path itself becomes the search for home.

Photography as a recording tool

Translating the migrant's words into images — or transforming what is textual into what could become visual — involves relating the migrant's emotional experience to the visual projection in process. A fundamental step in this translation is the study of the student migrant's archived photos, which constitute a unique and facilitated material in this case study. Although other case studies also shared images as fragments of their migratory paths, these fragments do not display the same continuity as those shared by the student migrant in this case. Because she photographed a continuous sequence of moments during her migration, the

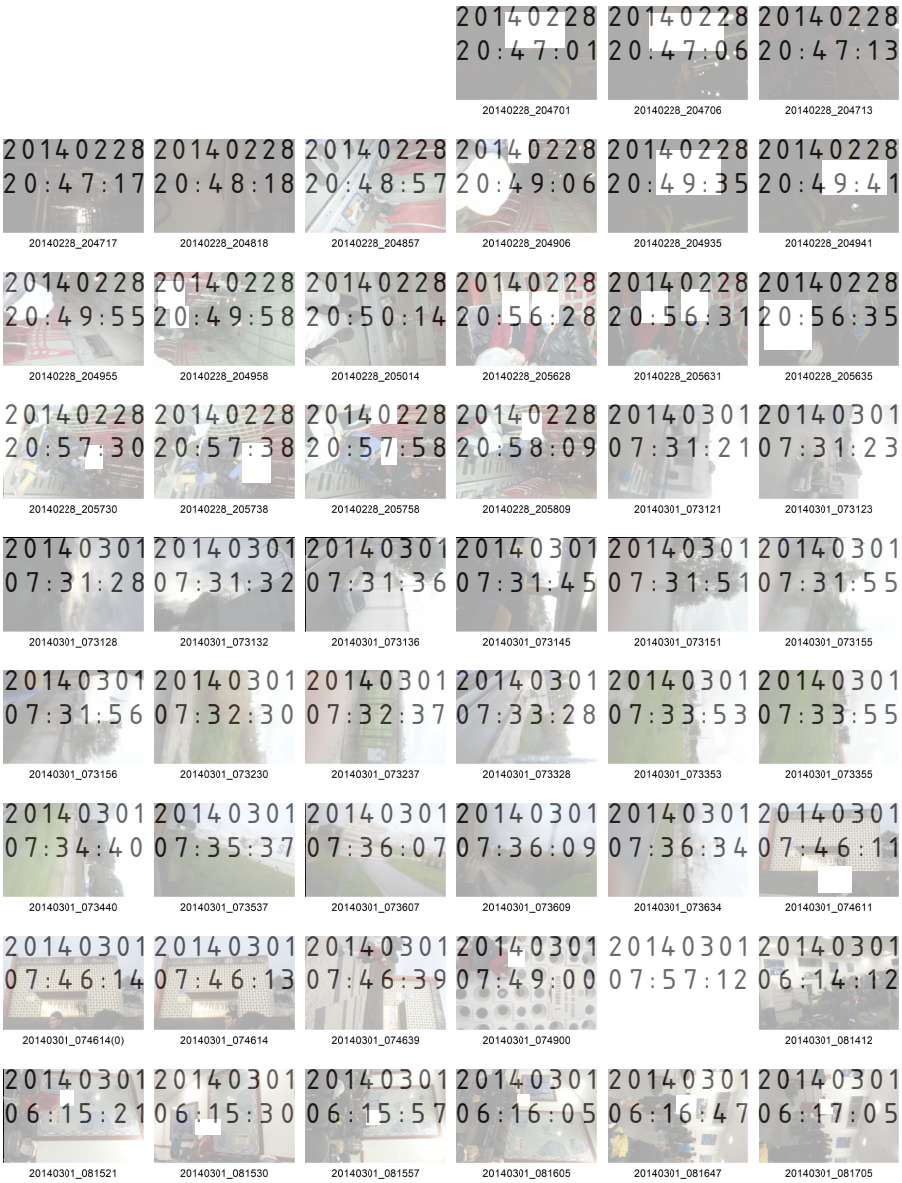


Figure 43. Archival photo-album of the female student migrant from *Intima'a* case study taken along her migratory path from 28th of February 2014 to 1st of March 2014.

photo archive serves as both a visual and data-analytical guide, providing empirical evidence to support the narrative. Another helpful factor is that she saved and archived these images on a memory card immediately upon arriving in Portugal, thus preserving the original capture dates. Each selected image corresponds to a specific moment in her migratory path (Figure 43). The timestamps linked to each image help infer distance, location, and the sequence of walking paths, aiding in the temporal and spatial recognition and understanding of the surrounding environment. The importance of time and the sequence of events helps bridge her recollection and obliteration (or, partial erasure) of that event-memory, translating her migratory experience in relation to both the archival material and the dialogue. In *Atlas of emotion: Journeys in art, architecture, and film* (2002), Bruno connects memory to the act of mapping — memory being a practice of event dislocation (Bruno, 2002, p. 262). For the migrant's memory to align with the representation of the narrative, dislocated events in migration must be translated into mapped movement and fragmented path-lines, through a critical impulse to map across scales.

ii.ii.a.iii. Rafic Hariri International Airport

On the 28th of February, 2014, the female student migrant left the place where she had been temporarily staying with her parents after leaving Syria in early 2012. She left for Lebanon to catch a connecting flight that was planned and organized by the APGES scholarship program. Rafic Hariri International Airport, where the connecting flight took place, is the only commercial airport represented in this thesis and is situated within a neighboring border-related context. She did not want to pass through Lebanon, aware of the structural racism, bias, and arbitrary divisions imposed by some officers — experiences that many Syrians had endured while in Lebanon or in transit. This hesitation was also tied to her previous encounter at the border and at the same airport two years earlier. Upon landing, she felt that her interaction with a Lebanese officer would not go smoothly. On the ground floor of Rafic Hariri International Airport, after leaving the shuttle, she was told to fill out a document that she supposedly needed to hand to the officer at passport control in order to proceed to the transit area.

At passport control — the true frontier, the barrier between continuing her path or being sent back — her anxiety grew. The officer took the completed document, nodded, and examined her passport. As soon as he realized she was Syrian, he ridiculed her and said, "You will not pass this checkpoint. Go to that room right behind you." When he mentioned the room, she turned and saw a doorless opening, dimmer than the area she stood in. At that moment, she experienced a deep sense of distress. As she stepped into the doorless room, she saw two other females who had just arrived. They were Syrian too and, unsurprisingly, shared the same scholarship. The three of them sat together on a waiting bench, hoping for news. An hour passed with no updates. Then, an airport employee in the reception area instructed them to enter another adjacent room — also without a door — equipped with a scanning machine. Their cabin luggage was scanned, and they were finally allowed to proceed to the transit area to find their gate and catch their connecting flight. This incident of being ordered into a room without a door recalls Emami's (2020) idea of the architectonic door being described as a border. Here, it is the doorlessness that reflects the structural weight of this border for the student migrant, as she moves through spaces with no clear boundaries. The lack of doors demonstrates how her path within the airport is not about arriving anywhere because of the uncertainty that comes with it, but about being stuck in a perpetual state of transition. Even though, in fact, she left that room afterwards, it conveys that this event-memory persisted in her thoughts.

After leaving the scanning room, her eyes caught sight of the baggage claim area. She then informed the airline service employee accompanying her and the other students that they had seen their luggage from a distance, among a pile of many others parked there. The airline employee assured her that the baggage was already being transported to the connecting plane, a Portuguese cargo aircraft. With that, they proceeded through the duty-free zone. The duty-free zone seemed extensive; she recalls walking a considerable distance until they reached Gate 22 on the first floor. This suggests an implied spacing that shortens the unknown distance and time taken while walking through this specific area and/or shortens the dimension of untraversed spaces within her memory, as represented in Figure 44 in different parts of the airport. Due to restrictions and political tensions, I was unable to obtain any fire escape maps or similar documentation for Rafic Hariri Airport. As a result,

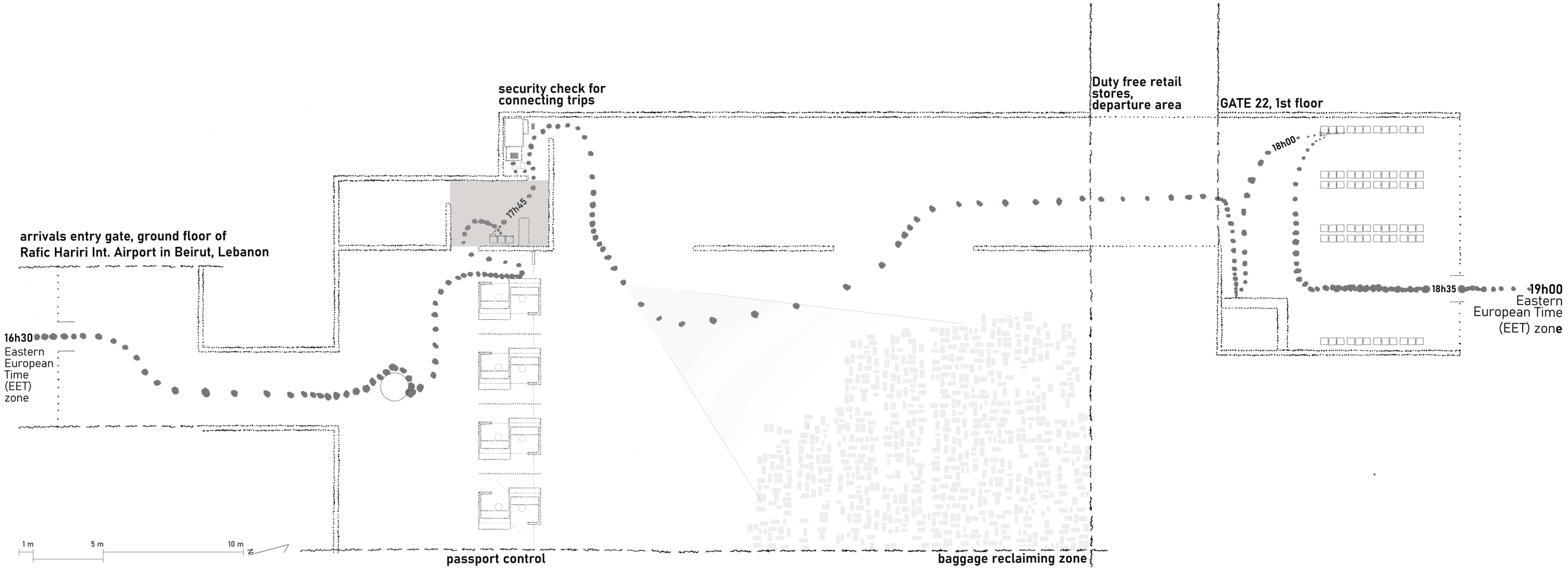


Figure 44. Recollection plan of the female student migrant from *Intima'a* case study, drawn based on her narrative upon arrival at Rafic Hariri International Airport and her temporal-spatial experience in the no-man's-land.

the spatial configuration of the airport is entirely represented based on the narrative of the student migrant and my re-interpretation of it. This means the airport representation is a fictional deconstruction of spaces and dimensions that may or may not align with the actual dimensions, spatial organization, and scale of the real airport. Additionally, because the student migrant neither provided photographic documentation nor retained detailed visual memories of the airport and did not traverse the entire space, a significant portion of the airport remains vague and unknown. In Figure 44, the female student migrant's path and her recollection of the spatial configuration of the airport are represented using dots of different scales: smaller dots signify the resemblance of a straight line in a technical plan created through spatial speculation. Matching and continuing, the dots form spaces, while larger dots indicate the path traversed on foot, including walking and waiting, along with time-intervals. Both dotted representations align with Ingold's (2007) suggestion: "In mapping as in travel, the trail left as the trace of a gesture is converted into the equivalent of a dotted line. Drawing a line on a cartographic map is like joining the dots [...] forming a network of point-to-point connections" (Ingold, 2007, p. 86).

After approaching Gate 22, she directly headed to the coffee balcony nearby to get some water. She then chose a seat among the many empty ones serving that gate. It was there that she noticed the rest of the student migrants from the scholarship, still bewildered by the reality of the adventure they were about to embark on. The thought that her dream of continuing her studies was becoming more real than ever overwhelmed her. She had never truly believed this moment would come — the moment when she would be part of something so tangible and hopeful. After years of waiting and simultaneously giving up hope, she found herself on the brink of resuming her education. Although she did not have Internet service at that moment, she recalls sending her family a message via Facebook Messenger, sharing her amazement at seeing Syrian students of all ages — older, her age, and younger. A few moments later, while waiting in the seating area, the students were instructed to line up to leave the gate and board a shuttle. At that moment, a board member from the APGES scholarship approached her, confirmed her name and identity, and guided her to proceed. After exiting the shuttle, she experienced a first: encountering a military cargo aircraft. It was the Portuguese Air Force's military cargo aircraft — the first of its kind she had ever seen. The aircraft, parked on the tarmac of Rafic Hariri International Airport, stood ready to load and receive 45 students on board, marking the beginning of an unprecedented path — the military aircraft that would fly from the Middle East to Europe.

ii.ii.a.iv. Military cargo aircraft C-130

Like her fellow student migrants, the female migrant relied on multiple modes of transportation to reach the place where she would stay to study in Portugal. However, during our dialogues, her words and narrative repeatedly emphasized the significance of one particular moment and mode of mobility that occupied her memory and photo archive. It was her very first encounter with a military aircraft, upon arriving at the airport tarmac in Beirut, Lebanon, where the C-130 was parked for the scheduled flight (Figure 45). In that moment, she realized it was her sole means of achieving freedom of movement and escaping what she had perceived as a dead-end for her studies and dreams. That military aircraft symbolized the possibility of free movement, border facilitation, and crossing, evoking overwhelming, mixed emotions: uncertainty, reassurance, and determination. She felt both part of something extraordinary and profoundly impacted by the unbelievable experience of coming into close contact with such a unique event — a military cargo aircraft.

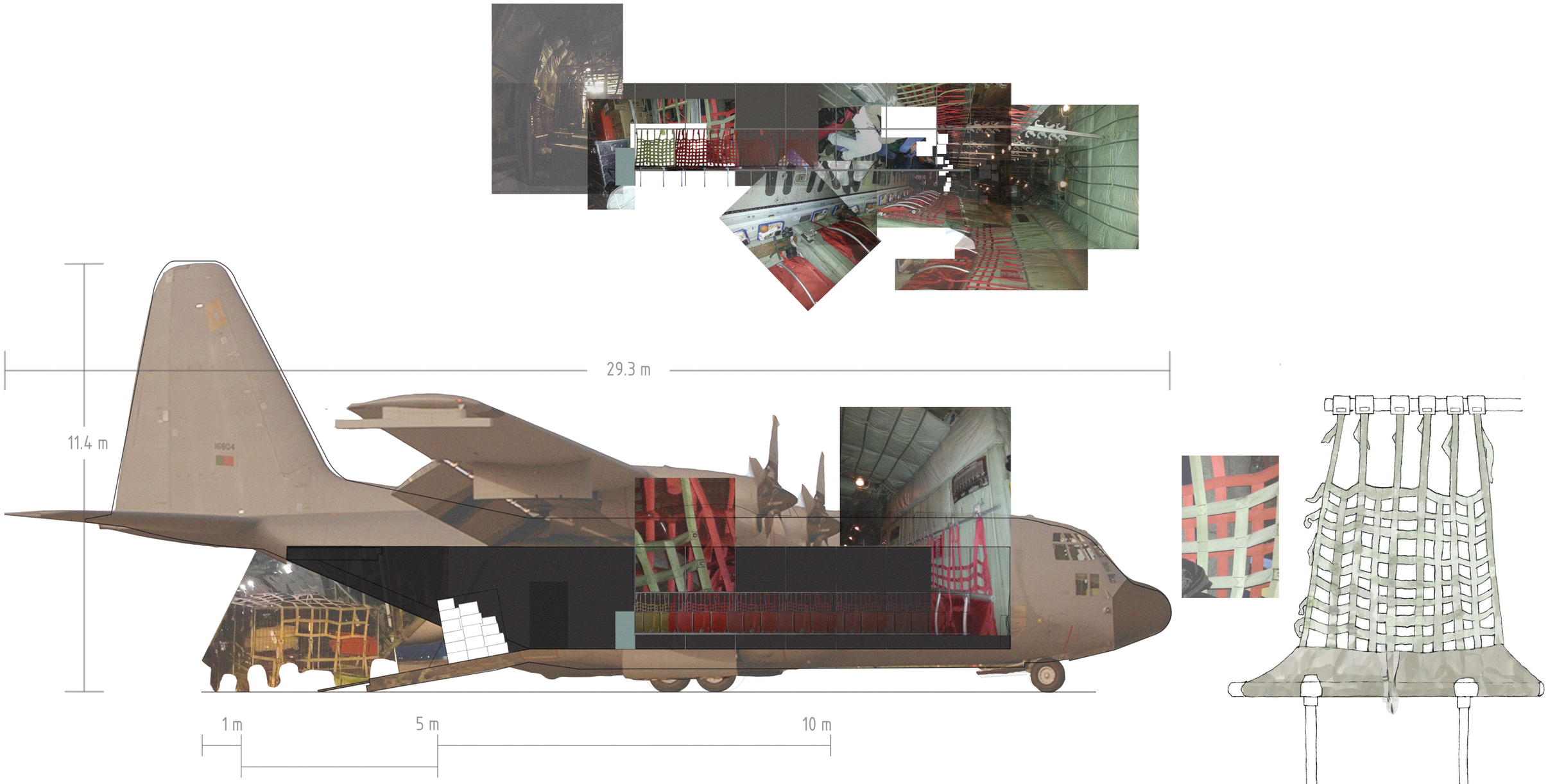


Figure 45: Section montage from the student migrant's photo archive of her entry into a Portuguese Lockheed C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft's folded seat (2014) on the tarmac of Rafic Hariri International Airport, showing the greenish-khaki double seat she chose among other red double seats.

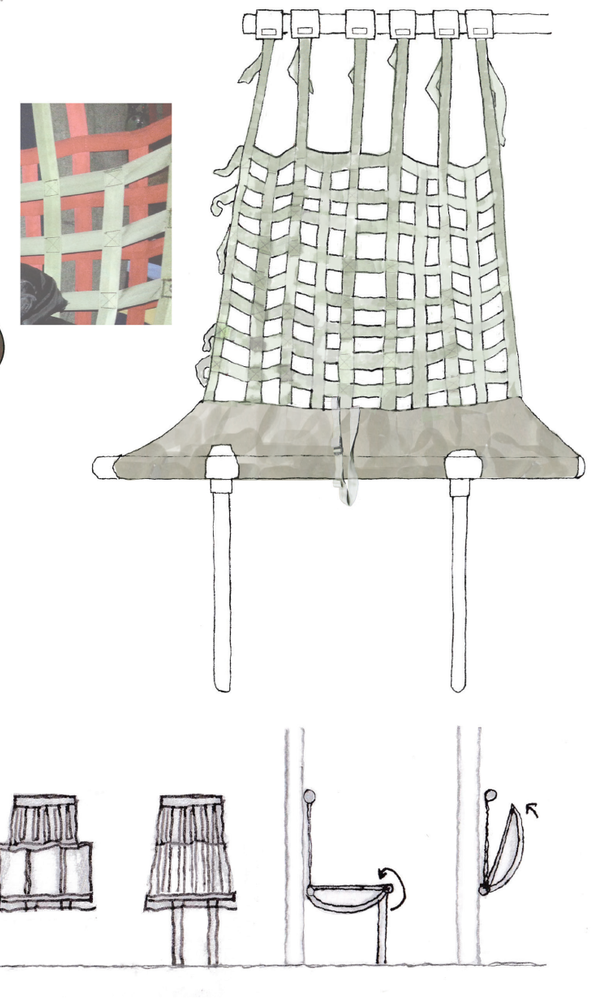
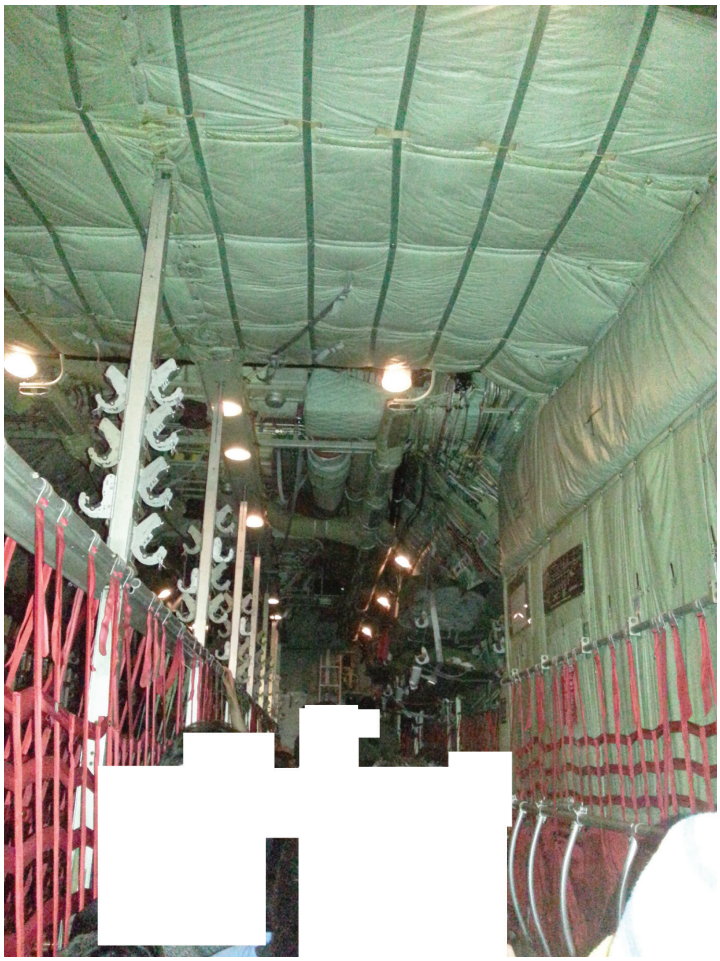


Figure 46: Drawing of the folded greenish-khaki-netted double seat of the C-130 cargo aircraft. The scheme below shows the mechanism for folding and unfolding the seat.

Figure 47 and 48: Images taken by the female student migrant from the first group of Syrian students to travel to Portugal through APGES scholarship in February 28th, 2014. The images are from the interior of the C-130 Portuguese Military Cargo Aircraft carrying 45 Syrian students on Board, heading directly from Beirut, Lebanon to Lisbon, Portugal. The white blank boxes are used to hide the identity of the student migrants and others on board.





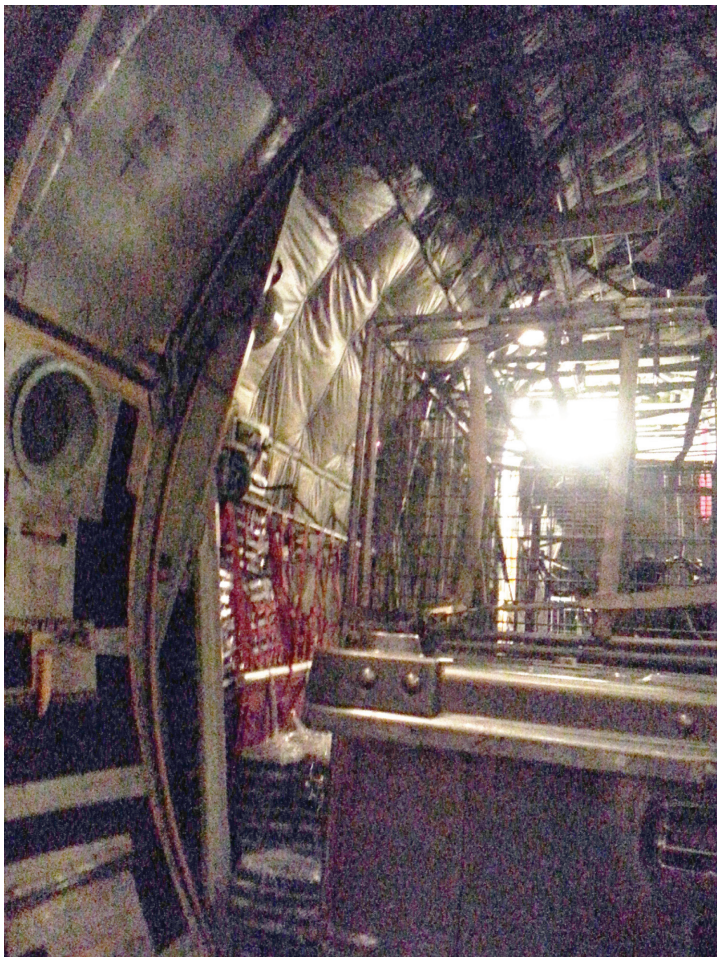




Figure 49 and 50: Images taken by the female student migrant from the first group of Syrian students to travel to Portugal through APGES scholarship in February 28th, 2014. The images are from the interior of the C-130 Portuguese Military Cargo Aircraft carrying 45 Syrian students on Board, heading directly from Beirut, Lebanon to Lisbon, Portugal. Figure 49 shows the rear of the military aircraft with the netted container that secured the students' baggage. Figure 50 shows the food that was served regularly and constantly to the student migrants by the Portuguese Air Force officials.

The female student migrant, along with the other students, had approached what could be identified from the photo archive she shared with me as the Lockheed C-130 Hercules Portuguese Air Force cargo aircraft to start boarding at around 19h00 Syrian and Lebanese time,[48] in the Eastern European Time (EET) zone (UTC+2), which corresponded to 21h00 Lisbon time, in the Western European Time (WET) zone (UTC+0). The luggage bags were being loaded and secured in a netted container at the rear of the aircraft while all the students waited in a clustered formation. Her name was first on the list, so she was the first to board the C-130 airborne context. She made her way onto the aircraft from the airport apron, ascending the ramp, stepping inside, and coming into contact with its interior. While absorbing and familiarizing herself with the surroundings and choosing her seat, her luggage was placed. And as she approached the seating area, it was the unique, single greenish-khaki double seat with a netted backrest that became her actual transporter during the following nine-hour direct trip to Portugal (Figure 46). The double-folded seat was where she realized her connection to Portugal, marking the first contact and moment of a spatial yet mobile relation — even though she was not yet on Portuguese territory. The aircraft, however, was steadily and gradually approaching it as the hours passed, flying over the Mediterranean.

Her experience within this mobile space brought back memories of certain characteristics associated with the military aircraft's interior, such as the coldness throughout the entire flight. This was because she sat for nine consecutive hours next to a loud silver box, which she assumed was some sort of engine cooler. She had not moved from her seating area, but instead observed the interior from a distance. The Portuguese Air Force military officers or sergeants were constantly shifting seats as they served food to the students, coming and going, sometimes occupying the seats in front of her. Her seat was in the middle row, facing the padded ceiling and insulated walls of the military aircraft, with no windows to provide any view — at least none that were visible to her. She had no way of knowing where the aircraft was flying or what the weather was like outside, only how it felt inside during winter. The military aircraft is represented in the section — the longitudinal cut shown in Figure 45 — depicting only one part of the transportation mode, as the migrant has no memory or photographic records of the other areas beyond the rear entry, her seating area, and the end of the seat row where she had her visa stamped.

ii.ii.a.v. Figo Maduro military terminal

At approximately 6h00 Western European Time (WET), the C-130 landed at Aeródromo de Trânsito N.º1 (AT1) in Figo Maduro, a military terminal in Lisbon. She was not the first to disembark from the military aircraft, but she had already assimilated to the greenish khaki double-folded seat, leaving traces of temporal and spatial occupation — a realization of her first encounter with a closed interior space in Portugal. The trail she left is greenish khaki and dotted, aligning with the visual extent captured through photography and the traces of memory from experiencing that space. In this sense, these captured memories are used to translate floating recollections into representation, as Bruno's (2002) notion of memory as an art of mapping in *Atlas of emotion* explores how memory is not only a personal experience but also

48 At that time, Syria and Lebanon shared the same time zone. However, Syria now follows Arabia Standard Time (AST) (UTC+03:00). On October 4, 2022, Syria abolished daylight saving time (DST). Before this change, Syria operated on EET (UTC+02:00) and observed DST as EEST (UTC+03:00), while Lebanon continued to adhere to the Eastern European Time (EET) zone.
.Information retrieved from: https://www.timeanddate.com/news/time/syria-jordan-abolish-dst-2022.html?



Figure 51. Recollection plan of the temporal-spatial experience of the female student migrant from *Intima'a* case study in Figo Maduro terminal in Lisbon, Portugal, overlapped with images from the student migrant's photo archive.

a spatial practice, where visual representations help preserve and process past events. Much like the depiction of images through oral history, as Abrams (2010) argues, oral history is not a mere recollection of facts but an interpretative act where individuals construct meaning through storytelling: "[...] the subjectivities present in the oral history interview that facilitate the construction of a memory story" (Abrams, 2010, p. 54).

As these dotted lines form, they encapsulate a series of instances tied to her path. The trail recognizes the immediate environment and temporal-spatial correspondences to these moments. Upon entering the terminal, the end of the corridor remained a peripheral, blurry memory, partially obscured by her sleep-deprived state. This condition affected her recollection of the spatial and temporal aspects of the place. As she stepped into the terminal, the passage after skipping the corridor was not a simple act of movement; it was an act of inscription, where every step and pause contributed to the recollection of her shared event-memory. The terminal, an in-between space of arrival and further displacement, momentarily framed her presence before she continued toward the next station of her migratory path and experience. The scattered dotted path — denser where she lingered in queues, sparser where she moved freely — reveals the rhythm of migration: moments of stillness and waiting juxtaposed with fleeting instances of autonomy. An understanding of the relationship between dot, line, and surface, and their connection with walking and spatial configuration through visual memory, began to intersect repeatedly with Ingold's theorization and representation within the context of mapping.

The point-to-point connector (Ingold, 2007, p. 74) represented by the dotted line, bifurcates into two paths: the trail of her walking movement and the realization of the immediate environment — the surfaces and objects perceived, or left unseen, within the built environment and spatial configuration. The thicker trail and concentrated dots indicate a suspension in time, such as when she was waiting in line among her colleagues. Conversely, where the dots in the trail become spaced-out, they suggest autonomous movement without delay. When the trail scatters, it reflects a combination of time passing and her stillness, as well as her growing familiarity with the surroundings. Her arrival in Portugal through the military terminal of Figo Maduro was not merely a geographical transition but a temporal-spatial threshold where traces of her path materialized in both tangible and intangible ways. The greenish-khaki seat she occupied in the C-130 left an imprint — both physical and mnemonic — marking her first enclosed spatial encounter in Portugal. These traces, scattered yet interconnected, formed a dotted path that aligned with her visual memory and bodily perception of that place of no-man's-land. Altogether, they echo Ingold's (2007) idea of wayfaring, which physically means traveling long distances and metaphorically suggests belonging (Ingold, 2007, p. 79).

The trail records a sequence of temporal presences: from entering the terminal to retrieving her luggage from a corner carousel, resting briefly in two connected waiting areas, taking a group photo with other Syrian student migrants after listening to a warm welcome speech from former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio, and finally washing her hands in the restroom before departing for her final destination at around 7h20 Western European Time (WET) to catch a bus assigned to the students. After leaving Figo Maduro, it was cloudy and raining. They headed to Cantina 1 dos Serviços de Ação Social da Universidade de Lisboa (SASULisboa) (Lisbon's University Social Action Services Cafeteria 1), where they met other board members from the APGES scholarship program. Then the student went back to their

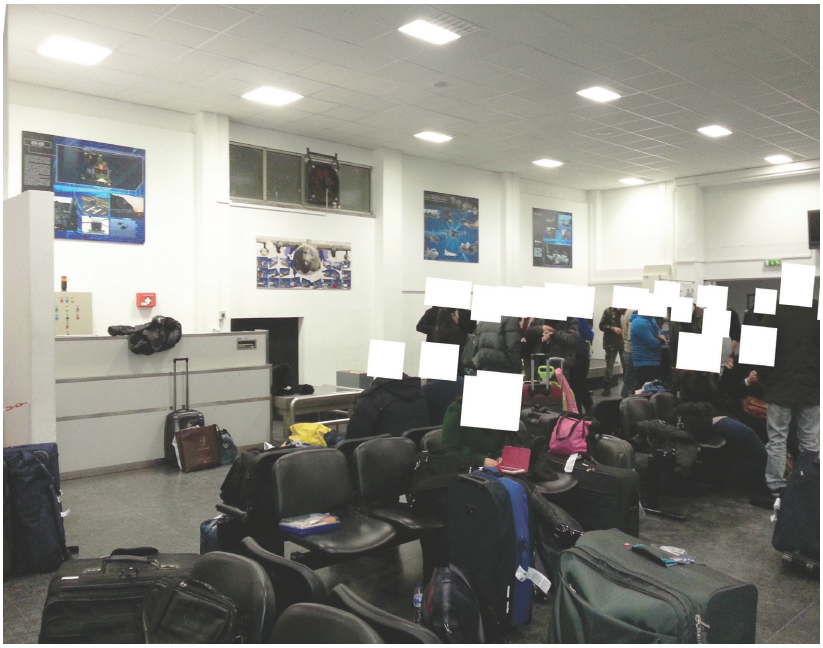




Figure 52 and 53. Images taken by the female student migrant from the first group of Syrian students to travel to Portugal through APGES scholarship in February 28th, 2014. Figure 52 is taken after arriving to Figo Maduro and entering the terminal. Figure 53 is taken after leaving Figo Maduro, AT1.

buses and continued their migrations, with the bus making stops in different Portuguese cities to take the students to their cities. At 1h00 Western European Time (WET) on the 2nd of March, 2014, the following day, the female student migrant finally reached the university residence where she stayed to continue her studies.

Figo Maduro, this foreign border-related context and entry port, evoked migratory stories and temporal-spatial experiences, becoming part of her memory of this terminal. Her migration trail to Portugal emerges as continuous and ongoing, even though the event itself was ephemeral. The search for home remains unending. Though her migratory event as programmed from the scholarship concluded upon reaching the place where she stayed to study in Guimarães, Portugal, this search may one day lead her back to a place she once called home. For now, she sees a kind of home only in her family, suggesting that her migratory path will continue, branching out into new, uncharted paths.

The migratory path of the female student migrant extends beyond a fixed itinerary — it is a continuous negotiation and learning process between past and present, memory of a migration event and recalled movement. Her search for home, therefore, did not conclude upon reaching Portugal. The very notion of home remained suspended between the fragmented past she carried and the uncertain futures ahead. Though she reached her designated student residence in Guimarães in the early hours of the 2nd of March, 2014, the act of migration persisted. Her dotted path of arrival did not settle into a single endpoint; instead, it stretched forward, intertwining with other migratory traces, continuously reconfiguring itself with every new displacement, every memory recalled, and every place inhabited. For now, home exists not in a fixed geography but in the presence of family, suggesting that the search for home is ongoing. *Intima'a* becomes a process of belonging, rather than merely seeking a physical space to call home. This migratory path transformed from her search for home into a search for belonging, learning about what it means to belong and how to belong. Her path, like many others, is one of ongoing movement, constantly redefined by experience, memory, and the places she traverses — whether marked by migration's structured itinerary or by the personal, uncharted routes that extend beyond them.

In this case study, the concept of home emerges as a fragmented and evolving condition, shaped by displacement, institutional structures, and the migrant's pursuit of stability. The student migrant's experience aligns with Al-Sabouni's (2016) analysis of pre-war Syria, where homeownership was an unattainable dream for many due to systemic inefficiencies and corruption. The incompleteness of her family's apartment reflects how home, as a physical space, remained elusive and out of reach even before the war, reinforcing the broader crisis of housing in Syria. However, home is not solely a material entity; it is also an affective state, one that is disrupted by forced and survival migrations. Skeiker (2021) argues that a migrant's existence unfolds in multiple places simultaneously, a condition that resonates with the migrant's trajectory across four countries. Her path — marked by pauses, interruptions, and institutional spaces such as transit hubs and university accommodations — expresses how home is experienced not as a singular place but as an ongoing negotiation. The act of mapping her migratory path, both physically and through memory, becomes a crucial tool in articulating this shifting sense of belonging.

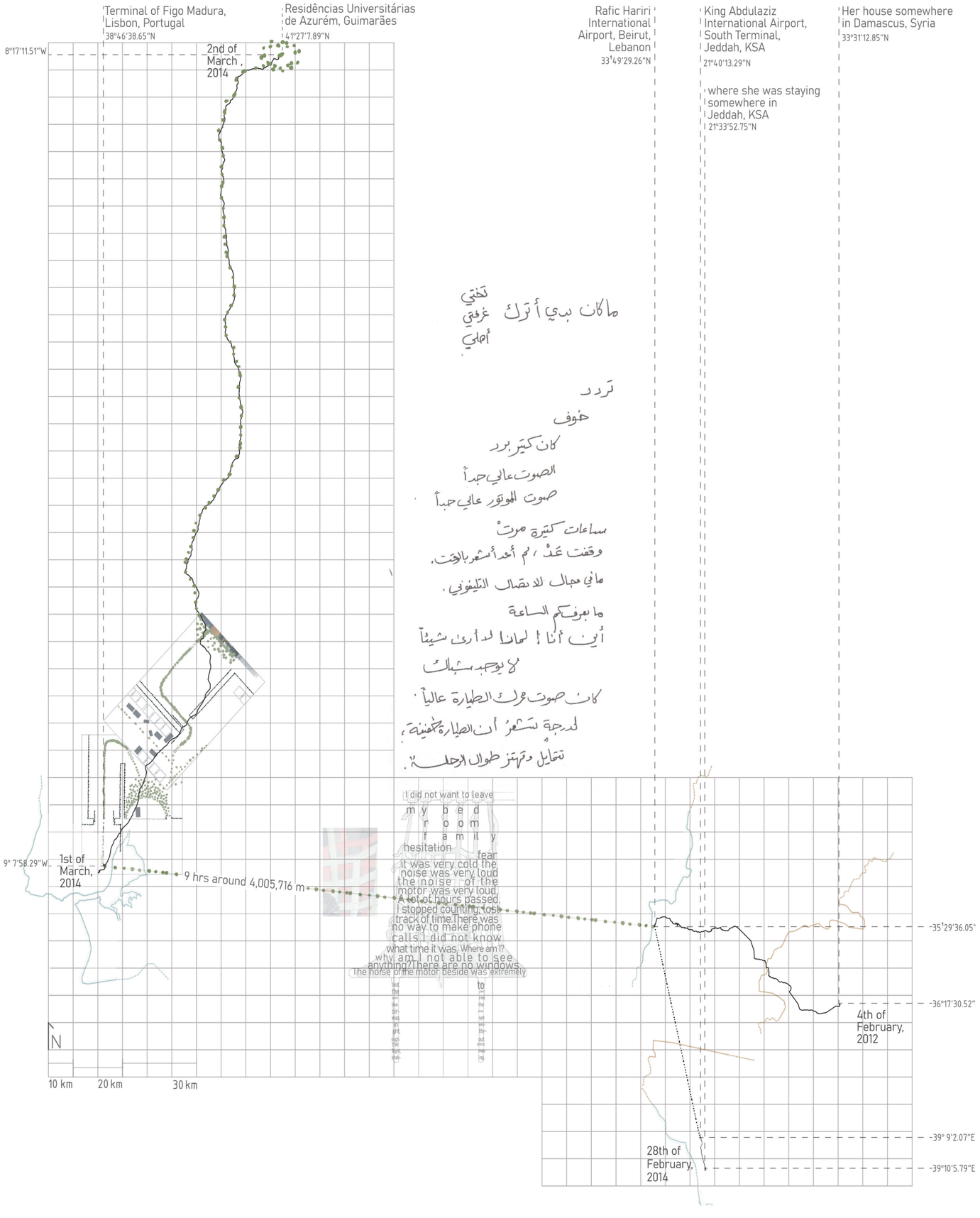


Figure 54. Distorted map of the migratory path and experience of the female student migrant from the *Intima'a* case study, tracing her migration from Syria to Saudi Arabia and then to Portugal. The map includes a written testimony collected and created during the performance of a dialogue with a migrant who escaped to Portugal from the first group of Syrian students in the Global Platform for Syrian Students program. This handwritten testimony, written in Syrian Arabic, describes the emotions and instances remembered during the migratory path (with the translation overlapping the double-folded seat).

The notion of home also extends beyond personal space to encompass political dimensions, as explored by Franz and Silva in "Introduction: Theorizing belonging against and beyond imagined communities" (2020). Franz and Silva position 'home' as a critical site for analysis, noting that, as they express, "[...] we locate our analyses in the creation of 'home.' [...] we see 'home' as a productive site of investigation because 'home' is both intimate and public, personal and political" (Franz & Silva, 2020, p. 15). With that said, they assert, "We locate home as a productive site for answering these questions because 'home' is both 'a physical presence — a geographical location' and 'a metaphorical place — of comfort and belonging" (Franz & Silva, 2020, p. 16). This dual conceptualization underscores the complexity of home as both a tangible and symbolic space. Franz and Silva also emphasize that one's understanding of home is intricately linked to broader societal and political structures. They argue, "One's feelings about where and what home is, then, are intertwined with how law and public culture predetermine a sense of 'home'" (Franz & Silva, 2020, p. 16). This insight highlights the ways in which legal frameworks and public culture shape individuals' perceptions of home, demonstrating the intricate relationship between personal belonging and external forces.

On the other hand, Syria as a home became a sentimental loss for many generations, as Krishnan expresses in "Dreaming of Addis Ababa in the afterlives of inter-war christian internationalism" (2020):

> When I interviewed my grandmother in 2012, she spoke of how she too dreamed of Damascus and has, in recent years, experienced the destruction of Syria as the loss of a personal horizon of belonging. (Krishnan, 2020, p. 122)

Like the student migrant from the *Intima'a* case study, Krishnan's account further expresses how home can be a personal and emotional space, one that is shaped by memories and aspirations but also by loss and destruction. The destruction of Syria, for Krishnan's grandmother, marks not only a physical displacement but the severing of an affective connection to the past, emphasizing the complexity of home as both a lived and imagined experience. In this way, home can be seen not just as a geographical location, but as a symbol of continuity and stability that migrants often struggle to reclaim. A struggle that meant prolonged waiting to see their home, Syria, stable and secure. The forced and survival displacements thus transform the detached belonging to Syria, due to all the devastating events from the 1960s[49] until today, into an involuntary forced detachment from Syria.

49 According to Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami *Burning country: Syrians in revolution and war* (2016). The 1960s in Syria were marked by significant political upheaval, with the country experiencing multiple military coups. In 1963, the Ba'ath Party took control of Syria, and the following years saw internal struggles and a coup that further solidified the party's power. This period was also shaped by Syria's brief involvement in the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Egypt, which ended in 1961 after a military coup in Syria. These political upheavals contributed to the instability that would affect many Syrians' sense of home and belonging. Moreover, Syria's defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967, when Israel stole and illegally occupied the Golan Heights, deepened the feeling of loss and displacement for many Syrians, symbolizing the beginning of a series of crises that would shape their collective memory and identity for generations.

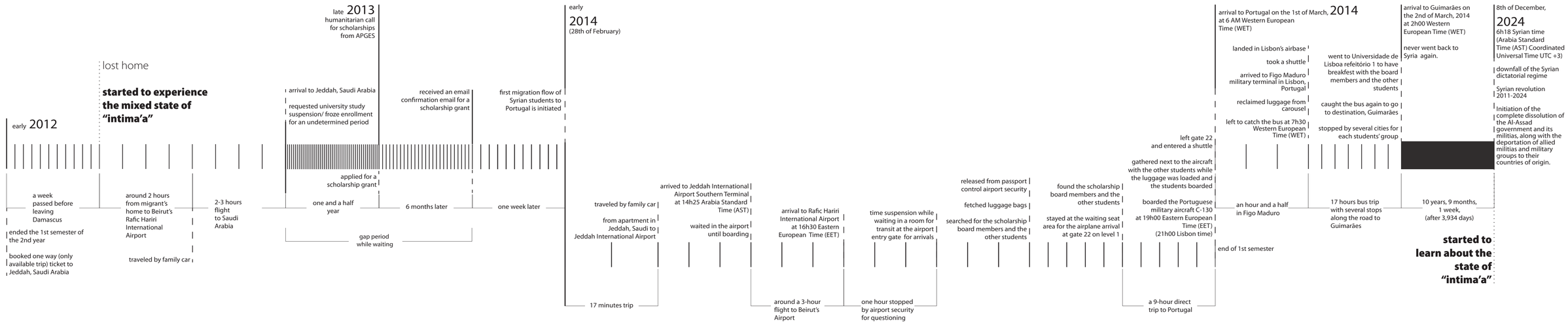


Figure 55. Chronological timeline of the female student migrant — from the *Intima'a* case study — starting not in 2014 with APGES' first emergency migratory event for Syrian students, but in 2012, when she left her homeland, home, and studies, and ending in late 2024, when she begins to understand her migratory state of intima'a and the feeling of belonging.

ii.ii.b. *Tatneesh* تطنيش

While researching data for the five case studies, I came across a serious and concerning issue that needs acknowledgment and representation in this analysis: the underrepresentation, non-representation, and exclusion of certain categories in statistical works regarding Syrian migration. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Immigration and Border Management (IBM) Division, many factors — such as geographical and geopolitical barriers and data collection methodologies — limit statisticians, particularly those from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the IOM, from conducting more detailed studies. This is because data is typically compiled by specific countries and often covers only particular aspects of migration. These barriers hinder the ability to accurately capture the full reality of migration, especially in the case of Syrian migrants. As a result, these organizations often rely on data collected from administrative sources, typically reported by countries to these organizations. In the case of older United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) activities that were carried out within Syria, the data was overseen by the Syrian regime. This reliance leaves significant gaps in understanding the true scale and reality of migration.

ii.ii.b.i. For the missing data

The absence of data stems not only from the inherent difficulties of gathering information during the Syrian migration crisis but also from data lost due to traumatic events, lived experiences, and the ongoing impact of war. This trauma has contributed to gaps in international and national statistical archives, leaving certain information speculative and further complicating efforts to establish a reliable foundation of data, resulting in an unknown number of data points, as expressed in Figure 56. Data loss should also be attributed to the confusion and conflation of information obtained from surveys and interviews with migrants who have been forcibly displaced. Particularly for those who have just crossed a frontier or border, there is often an expectation to provide information, whereas what many — if not all — truly need is rest and a sense of safety.

Why do I connect trauma to missing data? It all began when these migrations became forced. It involves being compelled to leave home, to abandon everything familiar, to distance oneself from the life one has always known, and to embark on a migratory path in search of safety because home is no longer safe. These migrations — whether legal or illegal — are fundamentally forced, particularly those that occurred after the Arab Spring and the outbreak of war in 2011. All those who left Syria before that date, directly affected by the Syrian dictatorial regime, or after that date due to the war and other factors, are considered forced migrants. Belonging is a long process to cultivate. Imagine spending your entire life building your foundations in a place, only to be forced to leave — not necessarily because someone directly compelled you, although that is true for many, but because circumstances left no alternative. Even student migrations can be regarded as forced migrations. Although some students travel voluntarily, many do not. While they embrace the challenges of pursuing education abroad, their decisions are often shaped by circumstances that leave little choice, making it untenable to remain at home.

According to the Migration Data Portal and UNHCR, by the end of 2014 — the year this female student migrant received her scholarship and migrated to Portugal — there was a recorded estimate of approximately 3,887,490 Syrian “refugees,” 79,649 Syrian “asylum-seekers,”

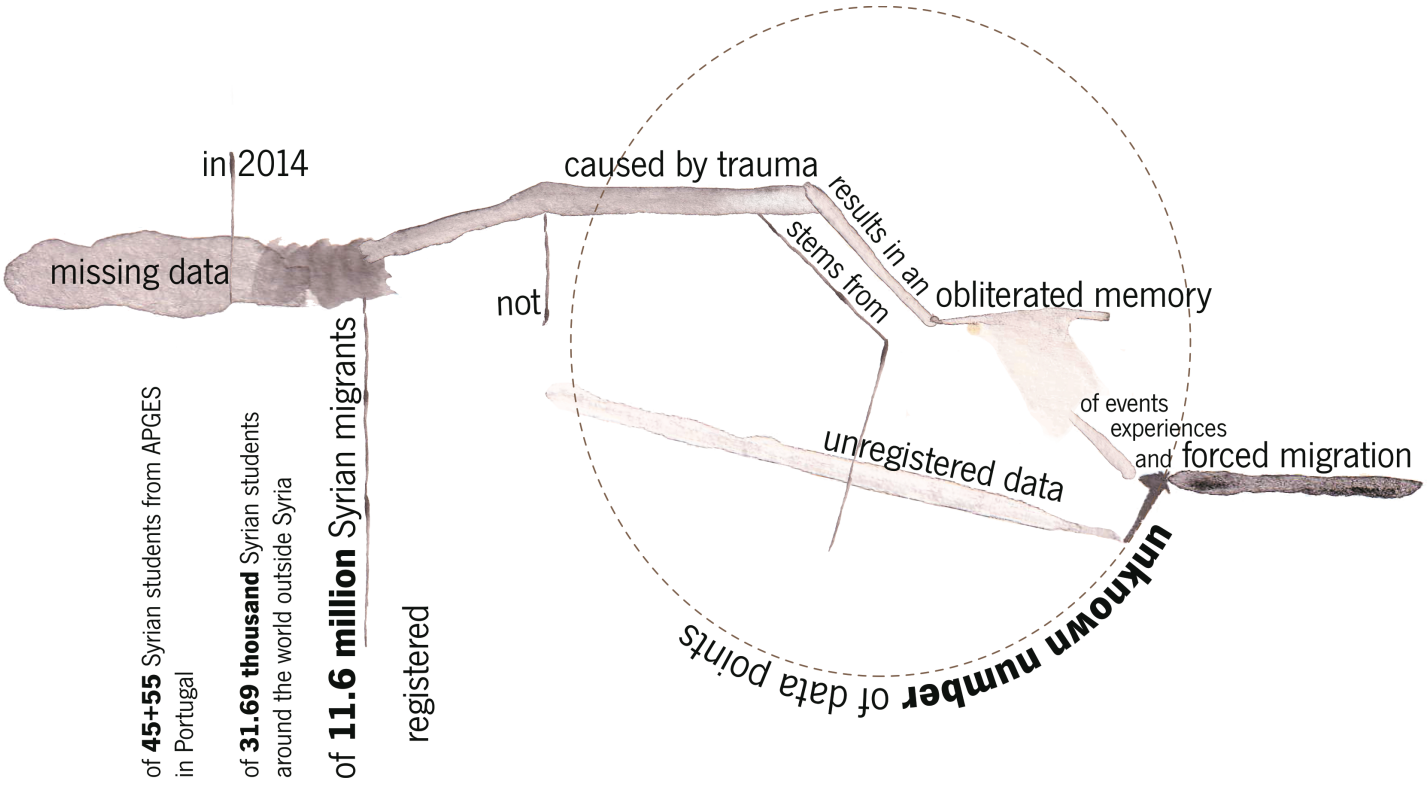


Figure 56. Diagram for the missing data using sentence diagramming to show the relation of words through the possibility of two options:
1: missing data (in 2014) caused by trauma results in an obliterated memory of events, experiences, and forced migration.
2: missing data (in 2014) not caused by trauma stems from unregistered data of events, experiences, and forced migration.
Either of these options results in an unknown number of data points.
Data retrieved from: APGES archival reports, IOM Migration Data Portal, and UNHCR Refugee Data Finder.

7,632,500 Syrian "IDPs," zero "stateless" Syrians, and zero listed under "other people in need of international protection," which contradicts all expectations, as these individuals remain unregistered. Additionally, there were 1,992 categorized as "others of concern," without specifying what that concern entails, bringing the total to approximately 11.6 million displaced Syrians. This statistical absence raises critical questions about the criteria used for inclusion and the bureaucratic limitations that render certain lives invisible and unrecognized. It also underscores the urgency of rethinking how data is produced and whom it ultimately serves in both contexts of forced and survival displacements.

ii.ii.b.ii. Trauma

'Trauma,' as a term, encapsulates the referential meanings of home and place of habitation within the complex structure of memory. It encompasses both amnesia and anamnesis in the obliteration, recollection, and imagination of memory-events. The representation of trauma in mapping presents a challenging concept to construct. It involves the construction of gaps, disorders, or even absences. Nonetheless, it deeply perforates the memory of a migrant, especially when that migrant has endured a traumatic experience. In such cases, where trauma dominates memory, the student migrant has left behind family and familiar surroundings.

The case study of this female migrant is named after her emotional state during her migratory experience: *tatneesh*, which literally means forgetting, both intentionally and unintentionally. [*Tatneesh* written in Arabic as: تطنيش: (noun); used in informal Syrian Arabic, derived from tanash (طناش), meaning total disregard. The verb form, *tanashet* (طنشت), means to ignore—whether selectively, randomly, or entirely — either intentionally or unintentionally. In the context of migrants, non-intentional forgetting and disregard of surroundings or events often lead to uneasiness and distress. *Tatneesh* serves as a protective mechanism that shields memory from recollecting events that may destabilize one's emotional state.] Thus, through the forced departure from home, trauma becomes an integral part of a migrant's itinerary. The state of *Tatneesh* is mirrored in her migratory path and experience, from the moment she received the Global Platform for Syrian Students (APGES) scholarship grant to her arrival at the institution where she would begin her studies. *Tatneesh* is not a chosen state but rather a defense mechanism that emerged to protect the student migrant from recalling experiences she wishes she could forget. This is inevitable, as Matos describes in her doctoral thesis *Journeys in meaning: Psychological adjustment to trauma in resettled Syrian refugees* (2022), stating: "Regardless of legal status on arrival, civilians from war-torn countries may be exposed to pre- and post-migration trauma and stressors [...]" (Matos, 2022, p. 74).

The student migrant has experienced two types of trauma. The first occurred after leaving her country due to the war and conflict, resulting from her forced displacement from Syria to another place in the Middle East (Figure 57). The second came after she was granted the scholarship and left her family behind to begin her migration to Portugal. I chose to relate this case study to psychology because it provides the closest technical framework for understanding how intangible aspects, such as feelings and emotions, can take form and affect spatial configurations, environments, and their relationship with time-intervals. The passage of time plays a significant role in the experience of trauma. One of the statements the migrant made was: 'time heals,' reflecting her personal belief in the gradual recovery from the

wounds of her past.

The same week she turned 18, she received an email from the Global Platform for Syrian Students, informing her that she had been granted a scholarship in Portugal through the second emergency humanitarian call for Syrian students. The email included instructions to provide personal information to the scholarship's logistics section to arrange flight tickets and trip details. Unlike the first emergency call, the second call's itinerary involved booking regular passenger flights. She recalled feeling more relieved upon receiving the itinerary, though she was also fearful about venturing into this new phase of life.

When I first reached out to this female migrant to request a dialogue for the case study, she agreed but kept postponing the date. I remained patient and continued reminding her. Eventually, we had the dialogue. During our conversation, she repeatedly mentioned that she could not remember parts of her experience, emphasizing how recalling that period was a struggle for her. She shared with me a personal activity she began a few months after her arrival in Portugal in late 2014: seeing a psychologist. While not everyone seeks therapy, her decision to do so indicates that she is actively working through her struggles, including those related to her migratory experience. In fact, one of the most important steps a migrant should take after arriving in a host country is seeking psychological support and therapy. I am uncertain how many Syrian student migrants in Portugal have received psychological support, either through the healthcare system, scholarships, or their universities. It should be a priority above all else, before integration into the host community and before beginning studies, even if the therapy extends throughout these moments. "Yet refugee integration policies are often overwhelmingly guided by their primary, short-term goal of financial self-sufficiency. They tend to lack medium- to long-term planning and resource allocation and fail to prioritize psychological well-being as a key driver of successful integration" (as cited in Matos, 2022, p. 77).

For a person who has come from a war-torn country, a place of intense struggle and hardship, who has witnessed indelible scenes of war and lost family members, neighbors, colleagues, and even strangers, these are burdens of repressed memories. They cannot be forgotten; they require therapy to process and heal. Being abroad, kilometers away from a war zone, does not mean that concerns about the news from one's conflicted country no longer exist. Being away does not take away the problems. "These stressors may not only heighten the effects of previous trauma but also impair refugees' ability to recover and achieve psychological adjustment [...]" (Matos, 2022, p. 77). Matos mentions the international protection granted through the Global Platform for Syrian Students scholarship humanitarian and academic emergency calls, as well as the European Commission's 2015 emergency relocation scheme, which brought many Syrians to Portugal "following relocation from Italy and Greece" (Asylum Information Database, 2019, as cited in Matos, 2022, p. 78).

Some of the Syrian students who were part of the academic scholarships in Portugal visited Syria during their stay, as they were allowed to do so under their student visas. This provided them with an advantage, as they were considered student migrants rather than refugees. However, many shared traumatic experiences, as Matos (2022) highlighted by giving an example of these student experiences: "After living free and safe in Portugal, participants

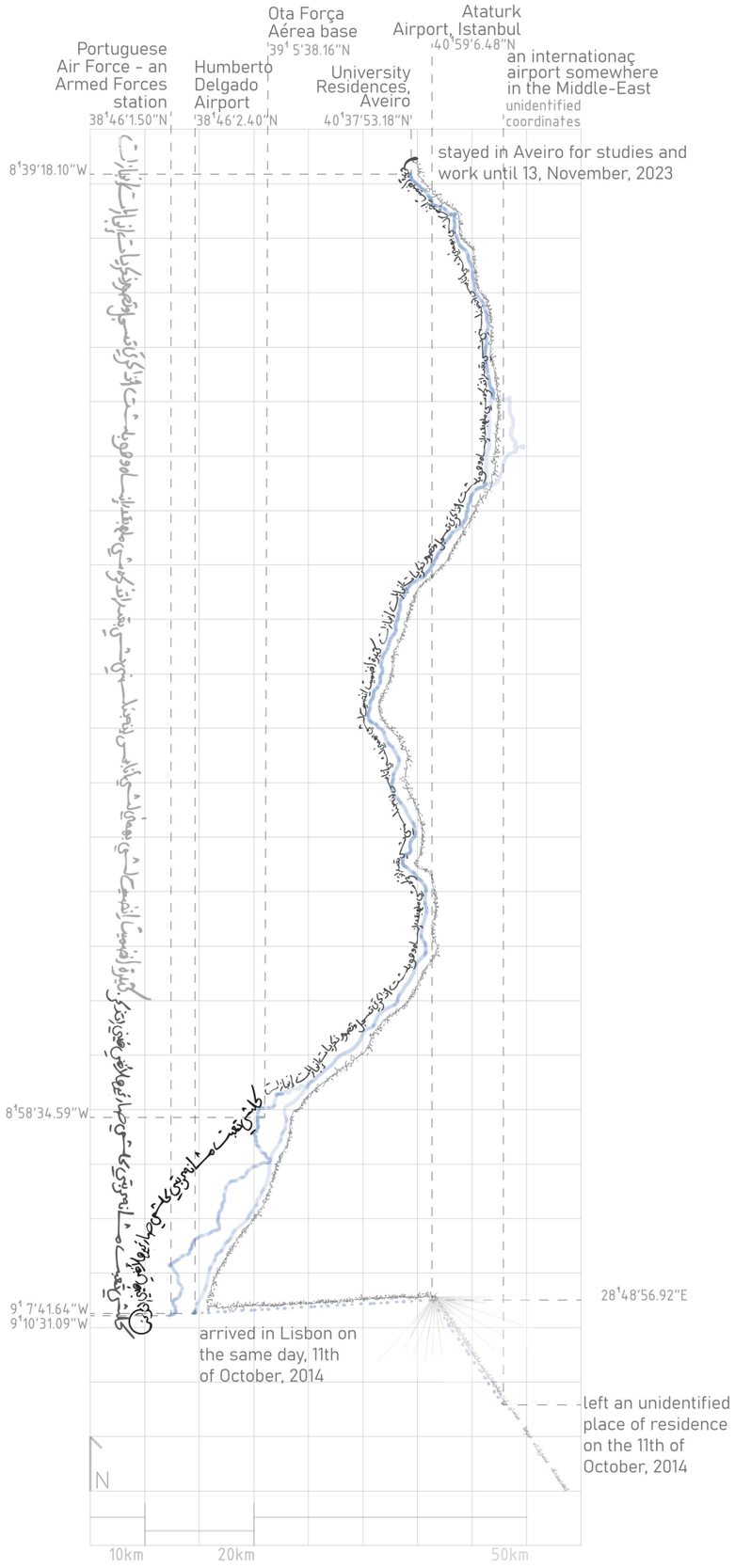
appeared to be ill-equipped to deal with once-common challenges of being in a country at war [...] with one participant reporting being imprisoned upon return; (b) perceiving their society as changed, and (c) a shattered sense of belonging, as students felt out of place and unable to fit back in. These visits appeared to be especially disruptive, with participants reporting deep regret for having gone back. After being stopped at a checkpoint, which triggered severe anxiety for the rest of his stay in Syria, one young man [24M(St/201X)] declared: 'I left [Syria] deciding: Goodbye, forever. I mean, that is not my country anymore.'" (Matos, 2022, p. 86).

For the female student migrant, she knew she would never return to Syria, even with her student visa, because she had been forcibly displaced. Despite the traumas she had endured, which affected her memory, she refuses to confront another trauma related to her return. Many migrants go through similar experiences related to the trauma triggered by returning. One reason for this is that they find stability and security guaranteed and not threatened elsewhere. It is in this "elsewhere" that they seek psychological help and begin the process of recovery.

The second migratory group is composed of individuals who are siblings of those in the first migratory group. Many of the students who were part of this migratory flow had siblings already studying under the APGES scholarship program, as family reunification was one of the program's integrated objectives. Family reunification, even if partial (meaning siblings studying abroad in the same country, though in different regions and/or cities), helps student migrants find some familiarity, which leads to a sense of stability, even emotionally, in a foreign environment. The female student migrant of the *Tatneesh* migratory path and experience was one of those who had a sibling from the first migratory group. Knowing that her sibling had gone through a similar experience alleviated the uncertainty about the legitimacy of the scholarship, which many from the first group had before migrating, and made her more at ease with this concern. However, she was already experiencing trauma — stemming from the Syrian reality, concerns for her family in Syria, and the forced displacement that compelled her to leave her country due to war, never to return. This is similar to the various traumas that affected many Syrian households and the lives of Syrians both inside and outside Syria.

On October 11, 2014, the *Tatneesh* migratory path and experience began somewhere in the Middle East, far from her country. The student migrant chose not to name the place, as her trauma had become more concentrated there. During the conversation, she began to express phrases which, as the dialogue progressed, revealed an underlying layer of trauma linked to both her migration and pre-existing war-related displacement experiences. This started with a reflection on the emotions that stayed with her from the migration event — emotions she did not wish to remember: "I did not choose to go. I did not want to leave. Why did they make me leave?". She continued her dialogue with these consecutive floating phrases, spoken in a lower tone that resembled murmurs in informal Syrian Arabic: "Why am I leaving my parents behind? Why am I leaving, all alone?

Because she only recalled a few moments of her path, most of the itinerary details were retrieved from the information shared in her flight tickets. The trauma she carried from Syria came with her. It made her forget events, spaces, and places. After arriving at Atatürk International Airport in Türkiye, the *Tatneesh* migratory path initiated another trauma. The



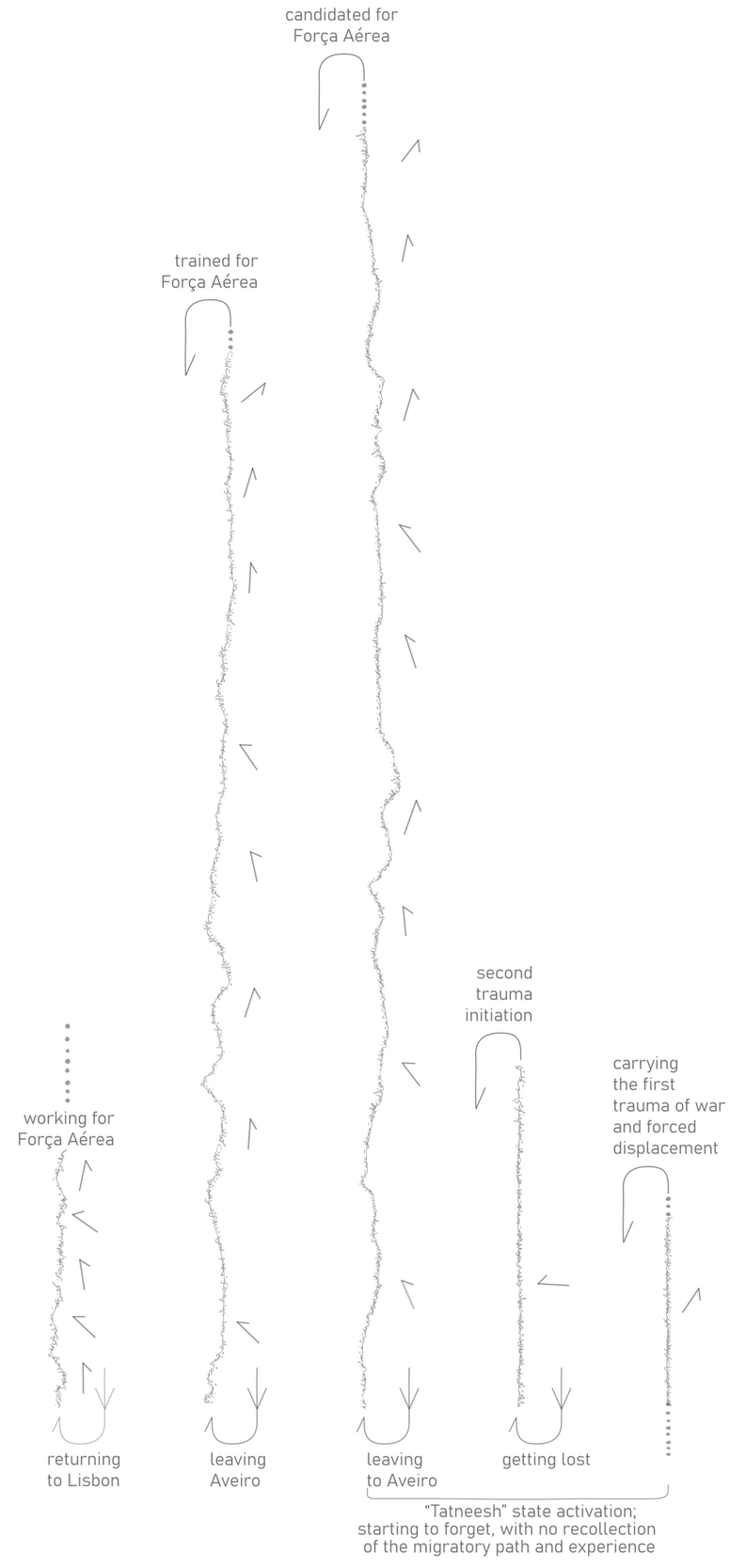


Figure 57. Distorted map of the migratory path and experience of the female student migrant from the *Tatneesh* case study. The map is represented through the words, which are fused and written in informal Syrian Arabic by the female student migrant during the dialogues, describing the phases of her migration and the second trauma that emerged during her migration itinerary.

student migrant went missing. She was lost in the middle of the airport and could not find her colleagues. “Where am I? I am lost. I did not find anyone. I forgot everything. After going to the airport in Türkiye, I started forgetting,” she said, emphasizing that it was her first time traveling alone. Fortunately, a board member from the APGES scholarship program found her in front of a retail store in the airport, sitting on the floor and waiting. She then joined her other colleagues. During their time at Atatürk International Airport, their passports were stamped. The *Tatneesh* migratory path continued, attaching a deliberate and conscious form of forgetting, which is *Bitnasaa* (بتناسى) [in informal Syrian Arabic dialect; first-person present tense verb. There is no exact literal translation into English. The verb conveys an expressive sense of attempting to forcibly, automatically, or immediately self-forget and erase a memory or situation. It originates from the formal Arabic first-person present verb *atansaa* (اتناسى), which is related to the verb *ansaa* (انسى), meaning ‘to forget.’ The noun form *al-nisyan* (النسيان) translates to ‘forgetfulness.’ Complete forgetfulness caused by a traumatic event is referred to as *nisyan tam* (نسيان تام)]. From Türkiye to Portugal, the airplane landed in Lisbon, Portugal, carrying 55 Syrian students on board. After that, the *Tatneesh* migratory path continued, leading from Lisbon to the Aveiro University Residences. From her first night there, she remembers saying, “Why did I go alone?” This was followed by, “I forgot everything. I was very young when I left. I do not remember anything.”

Years passed, marked by the weight of that second trauma and the remnants of the first. After completing her master’s degree at Aveiro University, the moment arrived when she consciously decided how her path would continue. She submitted an application to join the Portuguese Air Force. The *Tatneesh* migratory path continued — after leaving Aveiro, she expressed, “Now I am starting to make memories. Things that I want to remember, choose to remember. A path that I chose. A path that I will not forget. My memory will register and capture many memories, accomplishments. I joined — joined something that I feel will give me hope. Hope after everything that I struggled for in this life abroad.” Because *tatneesh* signifies the selectiveness in forgetting, she made a conscious decision not to forget. She fully embraced this new U-turn (Figure 57), a choice made intentionally to adapt and integrate even further into the Portuguese community. She then recalls a personal coincidence — something that, at the same time, felt meant to happen, where past and present lives intersect. She recalls her grandfather, who passed away at the beginning of the Syrian war in 2011, after the dictatorial regime sought to erase the revolution. He had worked at the Syrian Air Force Military Academy, teaching aviation to pilots and officers from around the world. Now, it was her time to bring his memory back, to follow in his footsteps, and to serve and give back to Portugal, contributing to a better future for her and for this country.

At first, she believed she would not pass the briefing, interviews, or physical training examinations. Yet, against all odds, she succeeded. She then proceeded to the official training facility of the Portuguese Air Force in Ota at the Centro de Formação Militar e Técnica da Força Aérea (Air-Force Military and Technical Training Center, CFMTFA), where all the candidates were put through an intensive five-week mission to train and evaluate their capacities in a phase called *recruta* (recruit). At that time, she was still in a civilian status with a *recruta soldado cadete* (cadet soldier recruit) post, a student category. Then, the Portuguese Air Force held a ceremony for the oath of allegiance, *Juramento da Bandeira* (Flag Oath), for the Portuguese government, during which she marched and officially received the title



Figure 58.
Image of the C-130 military cargo aircraft taken by the female student migrant from *Tatneesh* case, which she captured at the Ota Air Force Base during her training.

aspirante graduado (graduated trainee). From that moment, she became an official member of the Portuguese Air Force.

Then she completed the common phase over another seven weeks, during which she had classes about the military. Afterward, there was a two-week phase to complete Individual Common Core Skills (ICCS).[50] After completing these phases, she left Ota. She was then allocated and promoted to *Aspirante* (Trainee). With her academic certificate, she went to Lisbon to train and integrate her profession into the Air Force, working approximately 8 kilometers from where her sibling had arrived in early 2014 at an Armed Forces station in an aeronautic section. She now serves the humanitarian entity that had helped her sibling and other Syrians arrive safely in Portugal. Later, she continued her path and was recruited to work at a base for the Portuguese Air Force. Until this year, she changed the allocation base and was promoted to the rank of *Alferes* (Second Lieutenant) in the officer category.

50 According to the student migrant, she went through all the following six components:1. *Componente de Reconhecimento Pós-Ataque* (Post-Attack Reconnaissance Component). 2. *Componente de Primeiros Socorros* 'First Aid Component' 3. *Componente de Defesa Individual NRBQ* (Individual Defense Against CBRN [Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear] Component) 4. *Componente de Combate a Incêndios e Salvamento* 'Firefighting and Rescue Component'. 5. *Componente de Segurança Protetiva* (Protective Security Component). 6. *Tática e Tiro Individual* (Individual Tactics and Shooting).

Today, the migratory path of *Tatneesh* continues to follow her, as she leads the way. It is evolving as her chosen migratory course unfolds, ongoing, even if it were uncertain. *Tatneesh*, in its essence, signifies the balance between forgetting and remembering. It is an act of survival that allows her to navigate the emotional and psychological weight of her past, of her migratory experience. To forget enough to regain the will to remember, and to do so with intention, is no simple feat; it is a process that requires resilience and a choice to confront or suppress memories selectively. As Matos states, "[...] despite the severity of trauma and compounding daily stressors, refugees are extremely resilient, and can achieve positive psychological adjustment and perceive posttraumatic growth as they make meaning of their past experiences and integrate them into their life stories" (as cited in Matos, 2022, p. 76).

Freud's (1925) concept of negation (of the mind as an inseparable entity) further expresses this memory process, in which the student migrant's inability to recall specific moments of her migratory experience in border crossing reflects a psychological exclusion of trauma that paradoxically persists, affecting her consciousness. Negation, which involves the mind's ability to block or exclude certain memories, can be considered architectonic in the sense that it structures the psyche by compartmentalizing trauma, creating mental boundaries or 'walls' that both protect and imprison the individual from fully confronting their experiences. This exclusion mirrors architectural processes of boundary-making, where certain spaces (or memories) are intentionally sealed off yet continue to influence the overall design of one's consciousness. Similar to Emami's (2020) idea of the door being a border, Freud's concept of negation can be seen as a threshold — a mental boundary that prevents direct engagement with trauma while still allowing its presence to shape the structure of the mind's internal architecture (how the psyche is internally organized).

In Figure 59, the connected Arabic words represent fragments of her dialogue, floating thoughts that encapsulate her emotional migratory path and experience. These phrases are visualized as her path, stretching from an unnamed airport somewhere in the Middle East to the Portuguese Air Force base in Lisbon. The migratory path and itinerary are not merely geographical but layered, interweaving moments of dislocation, adaptation, and reconstruction. Her migration symbolizes a continuous negotiation between the memories she carries and the life she seeks to build, each step forward shaped by the imprints and traces of her past. Today, she emphasizes that her academic specialty was only recently introduced to the Portuguese Air Force after she joined and started working there.

A few months after the last dialogue, during one of her shifts at the Portuguese Air Force base, she shared an image (Figure 58) that she had come across and captured, showing the C-130 H, the same military cargo aircraft that flew over the Mediterranean with the first migratory flow of Syrian students facilitated by the APGES scholarship program, and which also carried her sibling. This image not only served as a reminder of her extended migratory path and experience of joining the Air Force but also as a symbol of the ongoing connection between a past experienced by her sibling and the succeeding migratory experiences of the final migratory flow through APGES.

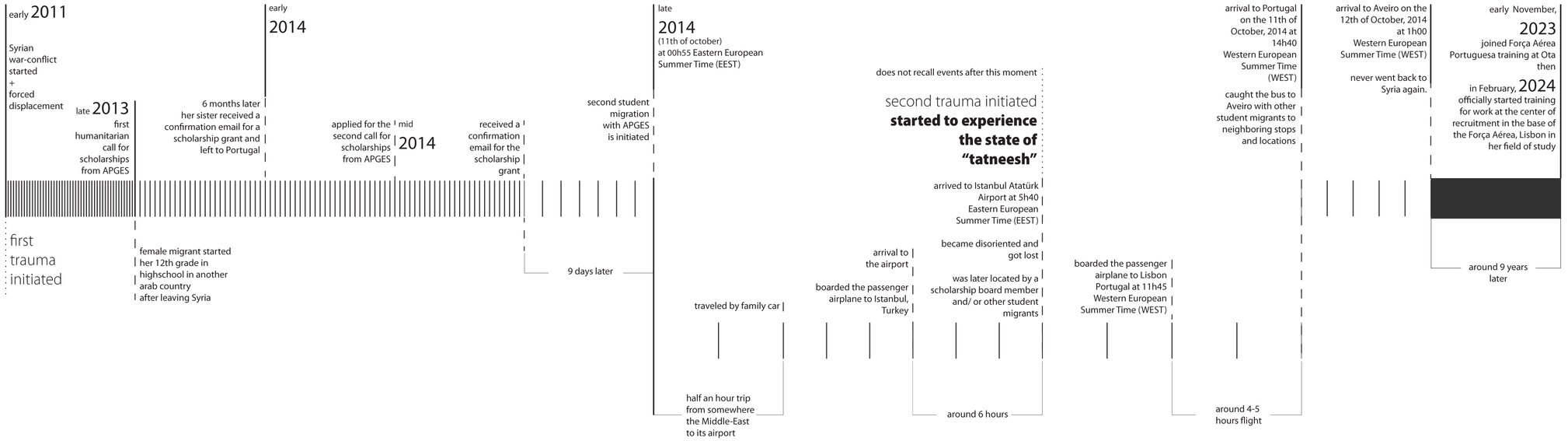


Figure 59. Chronological time-line of the female student migrant — from the *Tatneesh* case study — from 2011 to November 2023 and February 2024, when she joined the Portuguese Air Force.

ii.ii.c. *Tanmeel* تنميل

The United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT), part of UNITAR, shares satellite analyses of the damage assessed and registered. This includes cartographic examinations through comparisons of changes, such as destruction and building collapses, primarily documented (though there may be unannounced cases) between years. The unregistered information that remains undiscovered and unstudied by UNOSAT is an issue that should be addressed. Academic institutions, public services, residential areas, and markets are not categorized, which risks undermining the significance of these buildings in terms of the lives lost, displacements, and halted studies. This omission prevents these issues from being properly addressed and recognized as highly significant. All buildings and infrastructures, along with the people who inhabit and occupy them, are interconnected in all aspects and considerations.

ii.ii.c.i. for the destroyed zones

If a person loses their home but their academic institution remains intact, their education is inevitably impacted. A place considered home or refuge, especially from war and adverse weather conditions, when destroyed or damaged, affects one's life in all aspects. The opposite is also significant: when one loses their academic institution, their education is suspended. When both are damaged, the larger problem persists, often remaining unsolved, as many cannot leave their place of residence even when it is destroyed or damaged. In the case of Northern Syria, many people remain internally displaced in tents under extremely poor conditions. How will these individuals be able to pursue an education? And if there are any institutions nearby that remain intact, what about the proper and necessary conditions that would enable these individuals to study after returning to these institutions?

An unstable environment for living brings an unstable environment for studying. Hence, many of the people living in camps outside Syria also continue struggling in this aspect. Even if there are individuals in Syria whose residences and academic institutions were not directly affected by the war, the general environment remains unstable, mainly due to the economic crisis caused by the war and the lack of imports from neighboring countries. Electricity is available for one to two hours per day, with some areas receiving less and others more. The cost of daily necessities, from groceries to gas for cooking, has inflated to levels that many cannot afford. With all the destruction and damage that affected many Syrian regions, how can education not eventually and subsequently be affected?

From human rights organizations reports to what remains unregistered

During the representation process, I began further research into damage assessments, which encompass the case study of *Tanmeel* on a general scale across Syria and on a more specific scale in the zones where this path intersected with sites of destruction. I found limited information in the UNOSAT records (as expressed in Figure 60), constrained to a relatively short time frame, which was established and represented in relation both to Syria as a whole and to the specific region the male student migrant identified as his. That region lies on the outskirts of Damascus, or in Arabic, ريف دمشق (Rif Dimashq). In the southern and eastern parts of the Rif Dimashq Governorate, both Eastern and Western Ghouta witnessed atrocious,

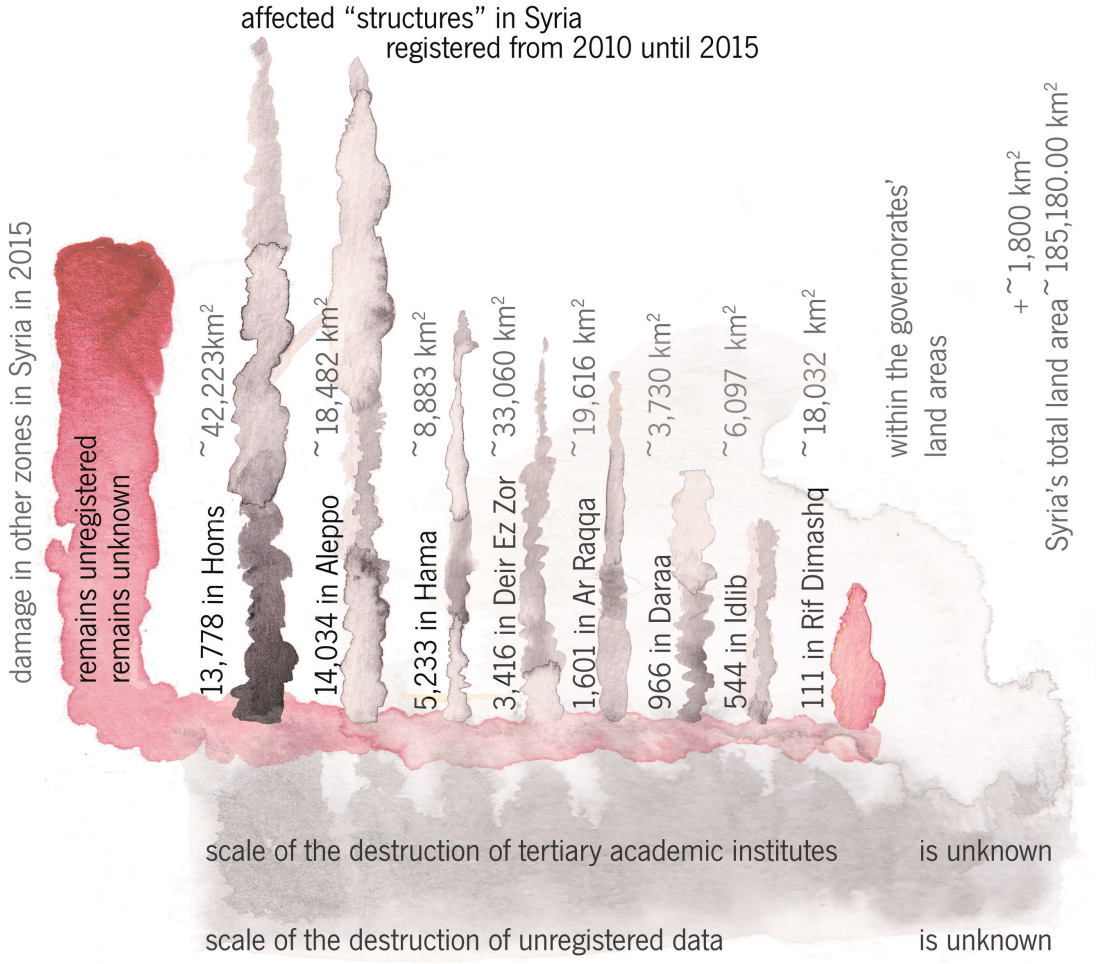


Figure 60. Diagram for the destroyed zones expressing the area of some governorates in Syria in comparison to the registered affected structures in these administrative divisions and regions according to UNOSAT reports and the unregistered data between 2010 and 2015.

inhumane massacres and destruction — notably chemical attacks[51] and indiscriminate barrel bombings.

Like many other war-affected regions in Syria, a large number of inhabitants from this area left their homes in vast migratory waves — whether their homes were damaged or intact — due to the armed conflict. A significant portion became internally displaced, relocating to other parts of the country, while others sought refuge in neighboring or distant countries. In doing so, they left behind structures and communities — homes, neighborhoods, and local infrastructures — that had once supported the lives they built over time. These were subsequently affected, disrupted, and damaged by the ongoing war. This is why Syria today contains many areas that remain abandoned, filled with the remnants of war — stark reminders of the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime and its militias. Many of the consequences and ramifications of the war remain unrecorded and unknown, still waiting to be uncovered, studied, assessed, documented, and registered. One documentary that captures some of these occurrences is Mohammed and Bedirxan's *Silvered water, Syria self-portrait* (2014). The filmmakers document the devastation of the Syrian conflict using personal video testimonies and footage sourced from social media to reveal both the physical and emotional damage. Through its raw footage, the documentary not only portrays the destruction of homes and infrastructure but also highlights the profound psychological and social impact on both survivors and those who did not survive — all of whom endured multiple cycles of hardship.

As for data reports, after searching multiple sources,[52] I came across the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), which documents and records attacks and casualties in Syria. These reports are archived on the network's website, which is openly accessible to the public worldwide. At the time, I attempted to analyze these reports in correlation with the date when the male student migrant from the *Tanmeel* case study initiated his migration, following the receipt of the scholarship grant from the Global Platform for Syrian Students. It was, at that moment, the only source I found legitimate for assessing damage and intersecting it with the student migrant's path.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) is an independent human rights organization. As stated on its website, SNHR has served as the primary source for information on human rights violations in Syria since 2011. It shares its database with international humanitarian bodies that monitor and/or document the situation in Syria — including the United Nations

51 Forensic Architecture has conducted investigations related to Syria. One of these investigations is about the chemical bombing in the Douma region in 2018. Information retrieved from: https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/chemical-attack-in-douma

52 First, I came across the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), claiming to be a Syrian but UK-based human rights organization. As reported by Action on Armed Violence, since international media is banned from Syria, verifying the information provided by SOHR is challenging. While the incident reports archived by SOHR are detailed and extensive, they remain intricate and ambiguous. The methodology for acquiring such data requires on-site reporting rather than being conducted from abroad, which is not the case here. For this reason, the information found on this observatory was deemed unreliable and disregarded. Information retrieved from: Action in armed violence: "Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) (2015)
EA WorldView "Syria Analysis: When Journalists Rely on an Unreliable 'Monitor'" (2017)

(UN), among others.[53] The SNHR website provides search options and results in both English and Arabic, which I used interchangeably to locate specific reports related to specific zones. This was necessary because certain zone names in Arabic carry multiple meanings. For example, Jisrein (or Jisrin), written in Arabic as جسرين, translates literally to 'two bridges.'[54] However, in this context, it refers to a town located in the eastern part of the capital, within the Rif Dimashq Governorate. As a result, searches in Arabic could mistakenly return results about the term 'two bridges' rather than the intended geographic location. This type of language-based discrepancy occurred with many other zones, streets, and regions across Syria, necessitating careful interchange between both languages.

The SNHR website also includes specific categories that assess damage. Through categorized and thematic reports on Syrian women and children, political and military groups in Syria, and analyses of the dictatorial regime of Al-Assad, the complexities of the Syrian war conflict appear to be documented through these reports. However, although SNHR includes a subcategory on attacks against "vital facilities" — such as camps, medical facilities, and schools (primary, elementary, and secondary, excluding tertiary) — there are only about 57 reports available. While these reports are detailed, including the names of the facilities and available for download, they only cover the period from early 2014 to early 2019. This highlights the limitations in obtaining comprehensive information to archive data on such facilities across Syria, due to war-related restrictions and the lack of access for in-person damage assessment and fieldwork-based data reporting. It also underscores the inaccessibility of unregistered information, which remains undeniably difficult to obtain and, therefore, to document.

From damage assessment to the possible route

This student migratory path concerns a Syrian male student who was unable to commence his studies in Syria after completing high school due to the conflict, resulting in a pause in his education. In 2015, the APGES scholarship program launched its third emergency call for Syrian students, aiming for a third successful instance of humanitarian support. This call was similar to the second: all selected Syrian students had to fly to Atatürk Airport to catch a connecting flight to Lisbon, Portugal, following standardized travel procedures with guaranteed visas. Those residing in Syria had to first travel to Lebanon to have their passports stamped by a Portuguese consular official, alongside members of the scholarship board, as recalled by the student migrant.

Just before the start of the 2015/2016 academic year, the third migratory flow of Syrian students was initiated. At that time, the student was living somewhere in the outskirts of Damascus (Rif Dimashq governorate), specifically in the Eastern Ghouta and Douma regions on the city's eastern peripheries. Many roads to and from Rif Dimashq were closed, while others were known as deadly entry and exit points. These were controlled by roadblocks,

53 SNHR focuses on documenting violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in Syria, including cases of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and civilian casualties. While its reports are often used by humanitarian organizations, SNHR itself does not provide direct humanitarian aid. The other international bodies are mentioned in the information described in SNHR website: "About Us, Syrian Network for Human Rights (No Justice without Accountability)." Information retrieved from: https://snhr.org/about-us/

54 Jisrin reflects its geographical features, typically referring to areas near bridges or crossings.

which regulated access and left the war ruins suspended in time—remaining in a state of destruction and decay. Rif Dimashq, once known for its vast agricultural fields, especially olive groves, is now recognized for its dense concentration of war ruins — white and gray irregular masses scattered across the landscape, often indistinguishable as to whether they were once multi-story buildings or empty plots of land.

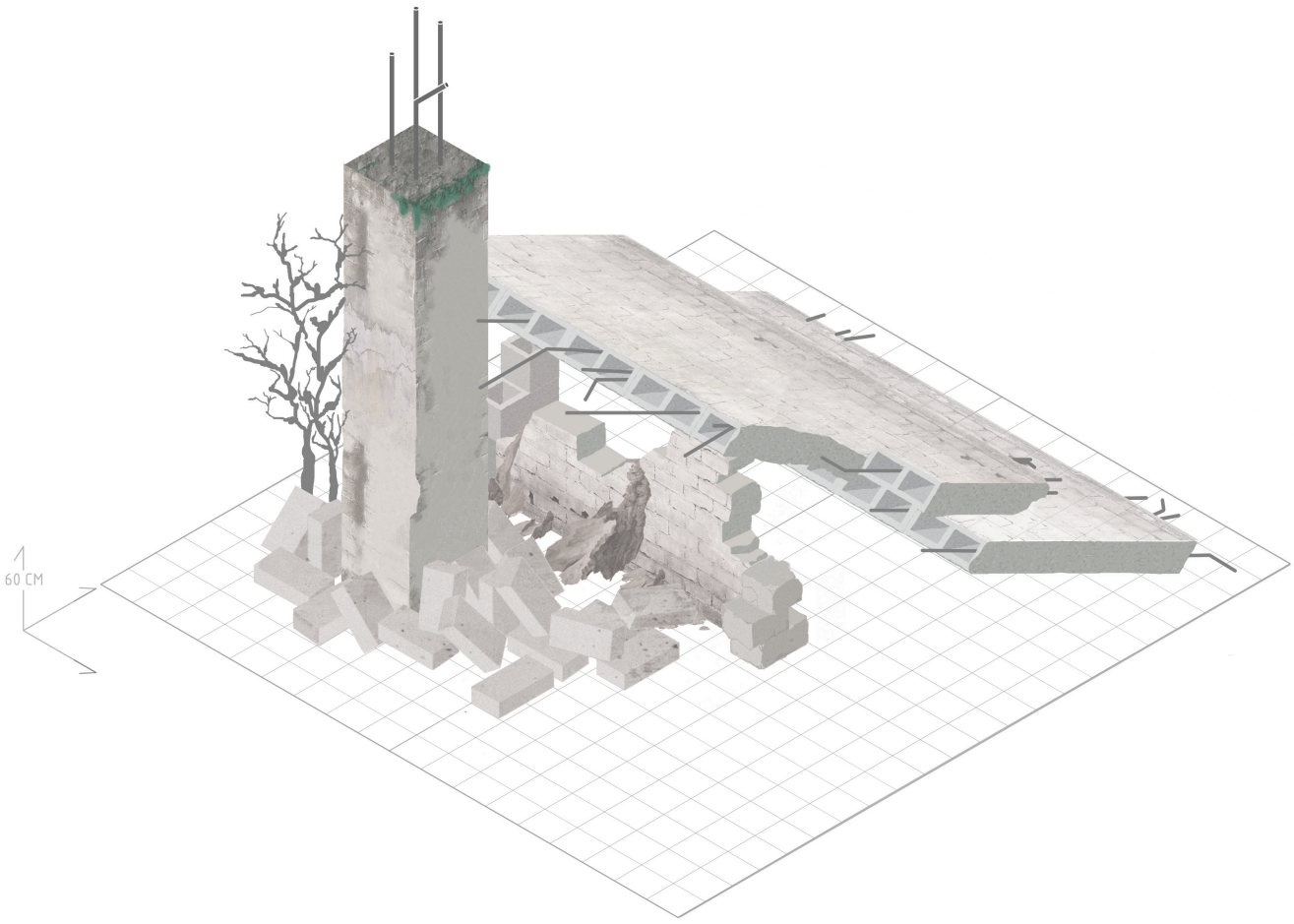
Many war images and videos shared online depict buildings with similar characteristics: rubble composed of concrete blocks, concrete floors collapsed and tilted at various angles, stacked upon one another, nearly fusing with the exposed metal rods. What might support these slanted floors are the structural walls or other collapsed floors below and behind them, as bombardment can partially or entirely damage a building. In different zones — especially those relying on reinforced construction — the foundations, often made of reinforced concrete and buried underground, may remain intact. However, in most cases, the visible surface is composed of ruins. The isometric drawing (Figure 61) emphasizes this sense of leaning, reminiscent of the figurative expression 'leaning on my shoulder' for emotional support — though here, the leaning is physical. The drawing depicts abandoned war ruins that remain intact today, presenting a dystopian image that reflects the reality of many places in Syria.

The student migrant insisted on using the word somewhere in his descriptive narrative about his hometown during our dialogues, as he refused to specify where his home was located — particularly which suburb or rural area in the eastern peripheries. Similar tendencies appeared in dialogues with other student migrants, but in his case, the insistence was more pronounced. This is mainly because many do not want to be identified, as the total number of Syrian students in Portugal is very small compared to the broader Syrian population. Any form of home address identification could easily reveal their place of origin and, consequently, their identity. I recognized this preoccupation and the right not to share such details. At the same time, I could not deny this request, which clearly stemmed from the fear that sharing their story might expose them or endanger the families they left behind in Syria.

After receiving the flight ticket reservation notification with the departure dates, the student migrant realized he would finally be able to pursue higher education, as two previous scholarship groups had already begun to achieve this goal. He then proceeded to email the scholarship board members, expressing his intention to continue with the booking procedures to pursue his studies. For this to happen, he had to complete all the necessary paperwork to ensure everything was properly verified in the system, particularly regarding the postponement of mandatory military service, as he is not the only male sibling. This, in itself, was a daunting task — especially considering that during the early years of the war, many men who sought to delay their military service faced, and perhaps are still facing,[55] significant challenges, with many being forcibly recruited to participate in the conflict on behalf of the dictatorial regime.

55 When using the present tense to discuss the government, politics, or policies, it reflects the current state of transition in the country following Independence Day on the 8th of December, 2024, and the victory of the revolution over the dictatorial regime. Although political decisions have already been made — such as making mandatory military service voluntary, freeing political prisoners and activists, eliminating intelligence reporting positions, dissolving the Baathist party (of Al-Assad) and its membership, and removing the 12th grade subject of 'nationalism' about Al-Assad and his party, among others — these changes mark a series of positive developments taking place during this transitional period.

Figure 61. A deconstructed isometric drawing of war ruins with collapsed floors visually conveys what the student migrant from the *Tanmeel* case study described when recalling buildings that appeared as melted concrete, unrecognizable from their original forms and structures.



Since he was expected to pass through roadblocks [in Arabic: حاجز (*hajez*) for singular and حواجز (*hawajez*) for plural] and border checkpoints [in Arabic: معبر (*ma'bar*) for singular and معابر (*ma'aber*) for plural], he had to present his identification card and undergo security checks to cross the borders. If, at any point, he had been summoned for military service, he would have been stopped at the roadblocks or borders and immediately conscripted. Many young men fled Syria primarily to escape this compulsory military enlistment and, during the war, to avoid being forced into the army.

Because of the unfixed and constantly shifting locations of these *hawajez,* or roadblocks, it was difficult to determine which exit from that region led to the Damascus–Beirut Highway. Knowing this detail about the *hawajez* placements would help trace the only possible — if not the exact — route taken, because they would have acted as dead-ends for the taxi. The hypotheses developed to trace the possible route taken from somewhere in the outskirts of Damascus to the edge of that area — and from there to the larger region toward Beirut — are based on speculations and path studies informed by damage assessment. These aim to explore multiple potential routes rather than a single definitive one. This is due to the fact that the damage occurring before and during the student migrant's departure was unregistered, unknown, unsearchable, and unquantifiable for those living in that region. Even when brief descriptions of events were heard and documented, the true scale of the disaster was unimaginable and continued to worsen over time, escalating in both intensity and scope. This made it impossible to identify a single route that the male student migrant might have taken in his initial mode of transportation: a taxi.

ii.ii.c.ii. Automobile

In Syria, most of the population relies on public transportation within cities and suburbs. This includes taxis, all painted in shades of yellow — ranging from orange tones to very pale yellow — commonly manufactured by Romanian, Russian, and Iranian companies such as Dacia Solenza, Lada Samara, and Saipa Saba. Additionally, there are *servees* سرفيس, also known as *meecro* ميكروباص/ ميكر (microbuses), which are white vans accommodating 10 to 15 passengers with several planned stops across cities or towns, as well as regular buses that transport passengers between more distant regions within the municipality. Taxis are the most expensive option, while white vans and buses are the most affordable, creating a distinction between financial statuses — between those who can afford a taxi ride and those who cannot. As the student migrant recalls from 2015 and earlier, while riding in a yellow taxi or a white van *servees*, it was common to see numerous yellow taxis and white vans filling up the streets. Car ownership, however, is considered a luxury. For those who owned or aspired to buy a car, even a used one, there was an additional expense called a welfare tax *darebet al-rafahiyeh* (ضريبة الرفاهية) — a Syrian 'luxury' tax that signifies crossing into the line of living comfortably.

The day before his migratory path began, he called a taxi driver who usually drives between Damascus and Beirut and is licensed to cross borders and take passengers. The white vans, *serveesat* سرفيسات, do not usually make these trips, as he mentioned. He asked the driver to take him from his hometown somewhere in the eastern peripheries of Damascus to Hamra, Beirut in Lebanon the next morning. At the rise of dawn, Syrian Eastern European Summer Time (EEST), on the 26th of September 2015, he recalled confirming with the taxi that he

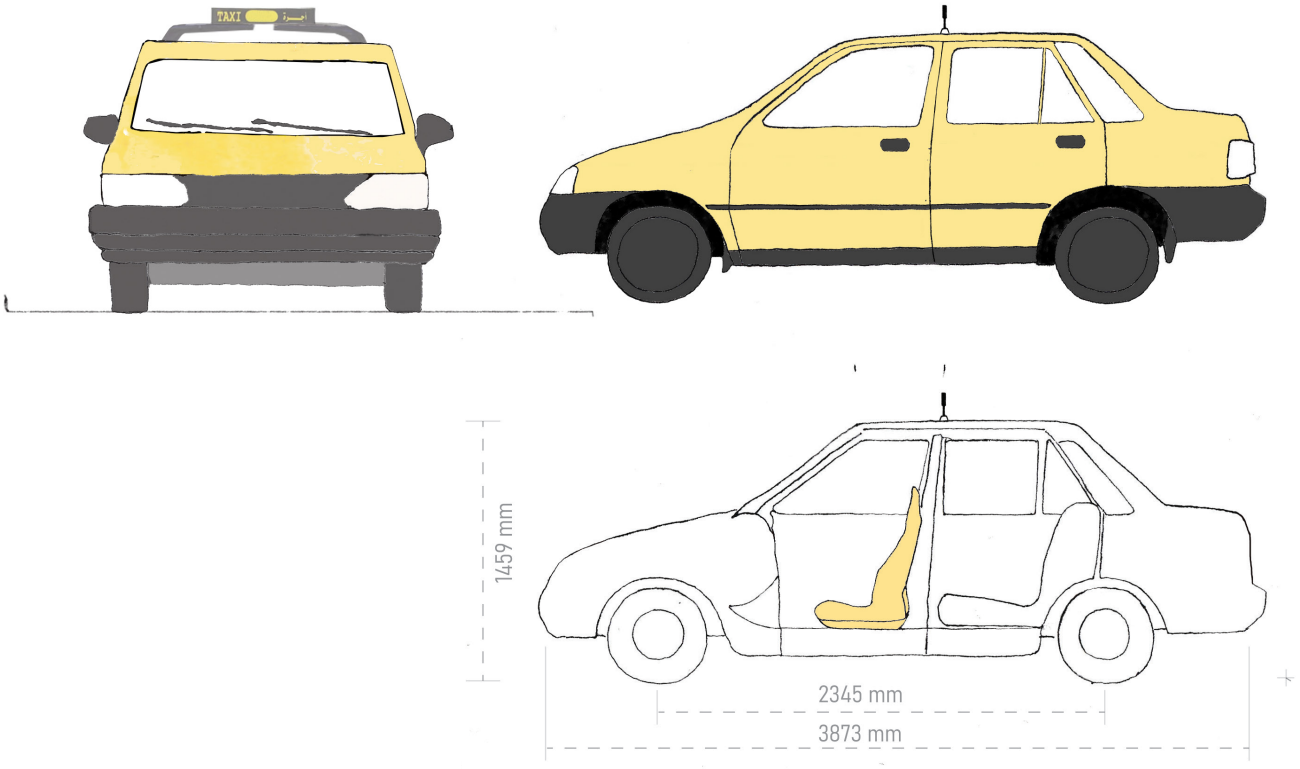


Figure 62. Saipa Saba, an Iranian-brand taxi, transported the male student migrant from *Tanmeel* case study from his home somewhere in the eastern outskirts of Damascus, Syria to Beirut, Lebanon. Saipa Saba, model: sedan (based on Kia Pride, Iran), manufactured in 2010.

would be coming as planned, upon the taxi's arrival. The taxi driver, upon seeing the young student migrant who had just turned 18 that year, immediately realized without hesitation the need to adjust the itinerary to avoid the numerous military roadblocks heavily present in the region at the time, as the authorities would certainly halt the taxi and question both him and the student migrant — if not detain them.

The migratory path began with the student migrant seated in the front passenger seat next to the taxi driver — a common practice among many male Syrians, who often prefer sitting in the front rather than the back. The taxi was a widely used Iranian-produced, Syrian-assembled Saipa Saba. During the initial phase of the escape, the Saipa Saba, within the land context, departed from the student migrant's hometown in the eastern outskirts of Damascus. Under stress and due to an unexpected mishap or moment of forgetfulness, the Saipa Saba took a wrong route to avoid a military roadblock a few kilometers ahead. However, it ended up on a path lined with war ruins and destruction in the eastern outskirts of Damascus. The Saipa Saba continued along this path for 15 minutes before finding a sign directing to another town. For the migrant, these 15 minutes encapsulate his memories of Syria. One of his most vivid memories during this time was of the tallest residential building — like all others, constructed from concrete blocks — now in ruins, with slanted concrete completely hiding its floors from view and concealing them beneath multiple layers, creating a melting effect and resembling structures liquefied by destruction, as he described (Figures 61 and 64). The Saipa Saba taxi (Figures 62) passed by this scene, as shown in Figure 64. The male migrant shared that he could not recognize the place — perhaps he had passed through that route many times before, but this time it felt unfamiliar, unidentifiable, a lost part of history, dislocated from his previous memories. The landscape, once familiar to many — and perhaps to this student migrant as well — seemed erased or overwritten, transformed by the passage of time and the scars of war. His experience revealed how war not only shifts one's geographical position but also disorients one's sense of recognition and relation to space. Places once tied to personal or collective memory dissolve into literal fragments of construction materials — remnants of war-related ruins. This disintegration of memory is visually expressed through a disrupted path of wishes and alternative scenarios, as shown in Figure 63.

From the moment the Saipa Saba taxi took the wrong route through war ruins, the *Tanmeel* emotional state — a feeling of numbness experienced by the student migrant — was triggered. During those 15 minutes, this emotional state influenced his migratory experience, shaping the entire path he traversed. [*Tanmeel*, written in Arabic as: تنميل: (noun); is used in both formal Arabic and informal Syrian Arabic dialects. It literally refers to the sensation of ants crawling on the body and technically describes the temporary tingling or numbness in a part of the body due to an unusual physical position. Metaphorically, *tanmeel* refers to total emotional numbness or a state of dormancy. The verb form *namalet* نملت (singular first person) is used to express a person's feelings toward a specific scene, situation, or memory. *Namalet* is a first-person verb-expression that conveys the experience of emotional numbness and a developed detachment toward something — such as an event or life in general — often in response to an accumulation of past events and hardships. The term originates from the noun form of ant, the formal Arabic word نملة (*namla*), with the plural being نمل (*namel*).]

To understand where the path might have started, where it could have passed, and where it

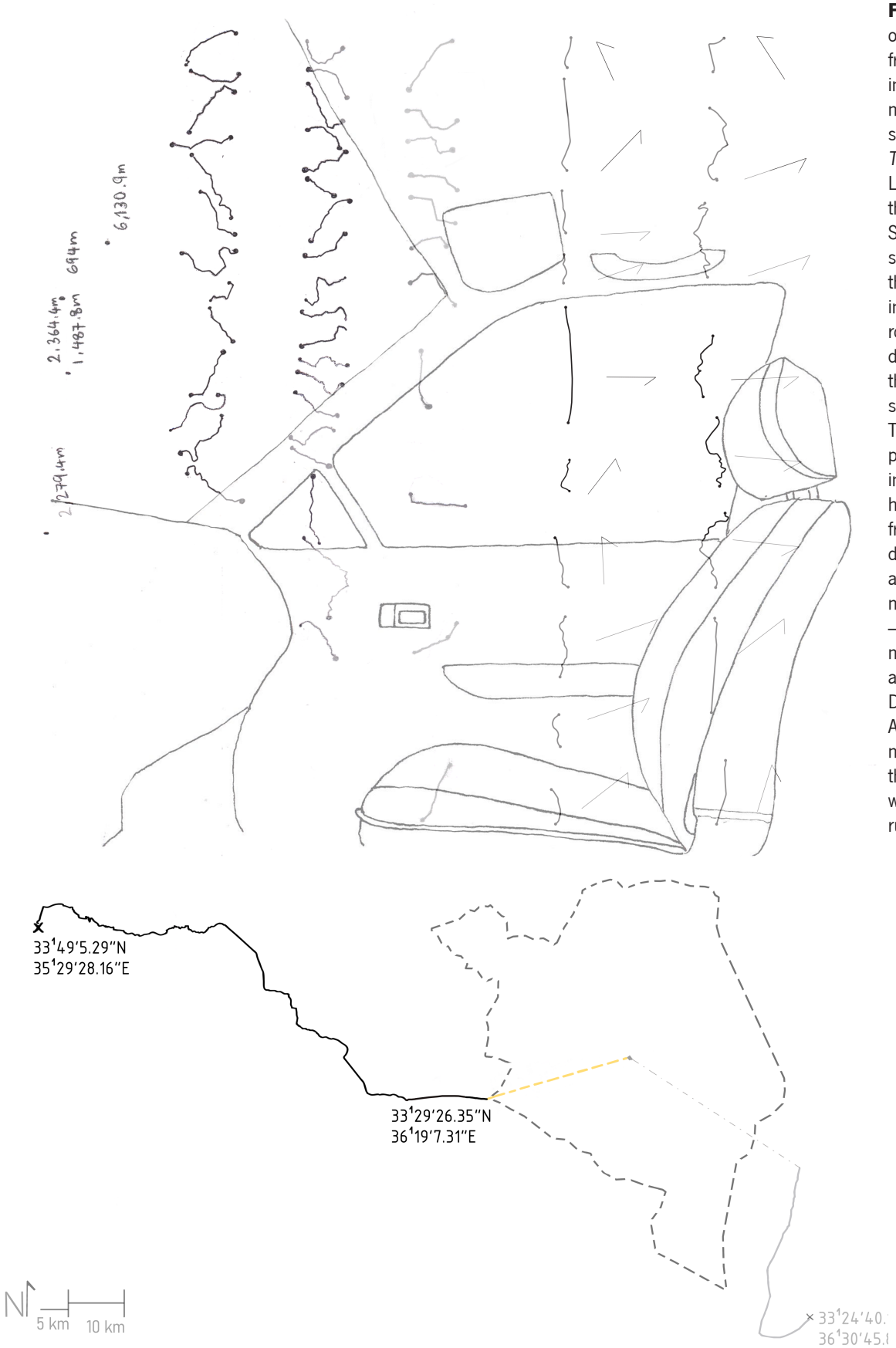


Figure 63. Diagram of disrupted path fragments from the initial transition in migration of the male student migrant from *Tanmeel* case study. Looking from within the passenger seat of a Saipa Saba, where the student migrant sat, there is a disruption in time, fragmented routes, and shifting distances across the three phases of the student migrant's path. These phases include possible zones of inactive war and areas he may have exited from after a 15-minute duration. The diagram also represents a moment of 'what-if' — what if the student migrant had taken a flight directly from Damascus International Airport? In that case, he might not have passed through the inactive war zone filled with war ruins.

might have exited before reaching the Damascus-Beirut highway, I assessed the damage in the outskirts of Damascus, including the Eastern Ghouta and Douma regions. I focused on the date the student migrant initiated his path, considering a one-week buffer period before his departure to evaluate any possible attacks and war-related damage. Thus, the assessment covered the period between September 20th and September 27th, 2015, the day he left for Portugal from Lebanon. Using SNHR and IOM reports, I aimed to identify zones in Syria with both active and inactive attacks, first considering his hometown as the first phase. Inactive attacks in a zone indicate that it had already been attacked, leaving behind war ruins — representing the second phase of his escape, the 15-minute duration. Active attacks in a zone signify that it was under attack when the student migrant left his hometown in the eastern peripheries of Damascus. He mentioned not passing through any zone under active attack, suggesting that his hometown, as confirmed by him and inferred from his reaction, was a zone with little to no war ruins and not under attack at that time. This description also aligns with the zone he may have passed through after exiting the 15-minute duration and before heading to the Damascus-Beirut highway, marking the third phase.

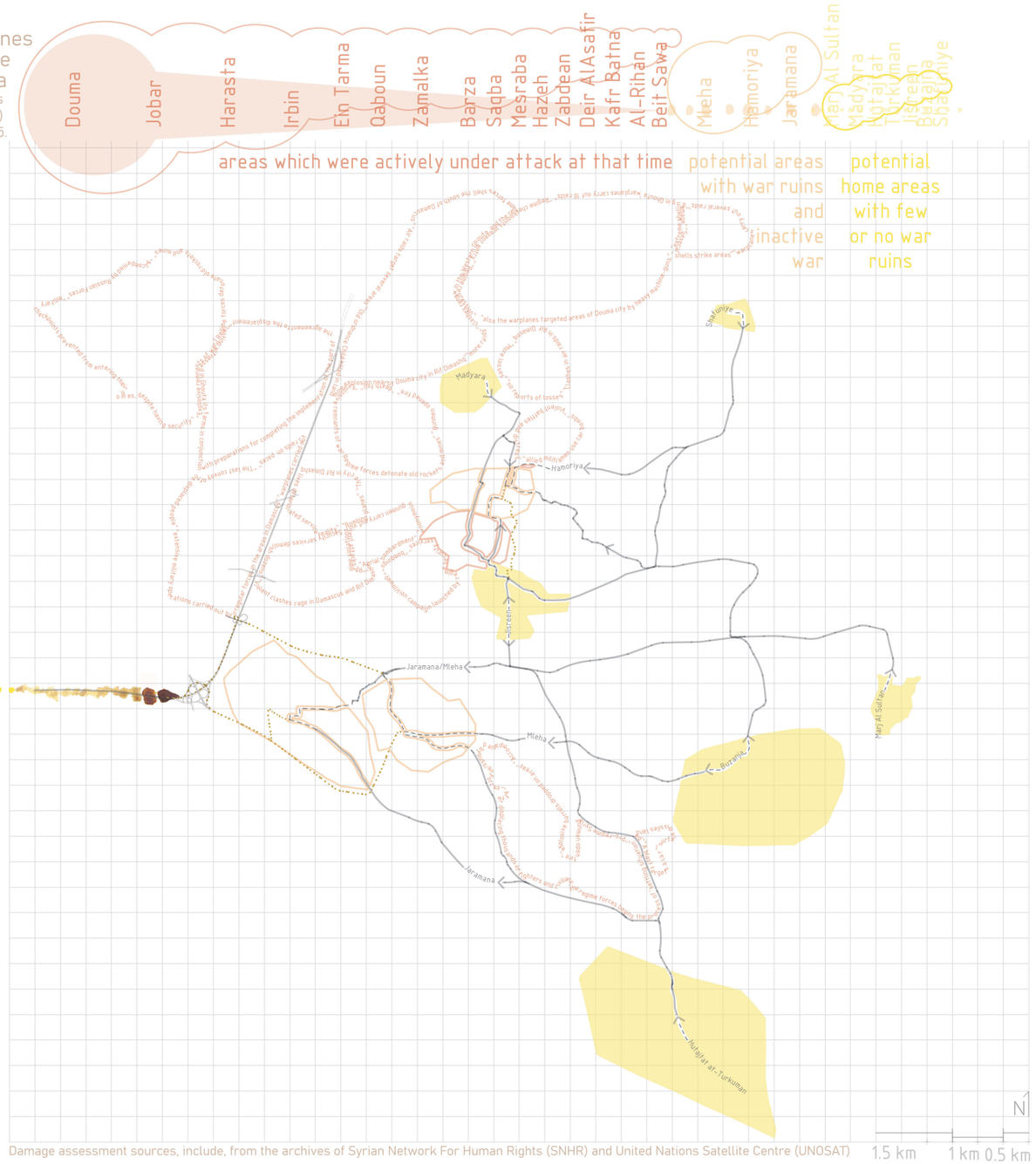
These three phases of the *Tanmeel* migratory path and experience result in a disruption of time, path fragments, and distance. In this context, 'disruption' (Figure 63), which represents part of the outskirts of Damascus, Eastern Ghouta, and Douma regions — but not the entirety due to a lack of information in the damage assessment — refers to representing uncertainty. This representation of uncertainty also raises a 'what-if' moment, to which the student migrant refers: what if he had booked a flight to Beirut, Lebanon, from Damascus International Airport and headed there directly? In that case, he might have avoided crossing the inactive war zone, which had become an abandoned wasteland of ruins.

This disruption implies a blur in time, movement, and progress. Specifically, it describes the feeling or condition of being in the state of *Tanmeel*, where elements such as time, path fragments, and distance are unclear, unresolved, or disconnected, causing disruption in path representation. In this disruption, to this day, distance becomes a number detached from physical presence, the path fragments remain unquantified, and time remains unknown prior to the 15 minutes and before heading to the Damascus-Beirut highway. This disruption does not result in an incomplete representation, but rather a representation of all the possibilities in all three phases (Figure 64), before entering the fourth phase. Figure 64 shows the knots and webs created from interlacing all these possibilities in all locations, from zones to routes, in all three phases in the outskirts of Damascus, Eastern Ghouta, and Douma regions.

The damage assessment regarding the suburban regions of Eastern Ghouta and Douma, part of the larger Ghouta to the east (Rif Dimashq, which translates to the countryside of Damascus), has been registered through UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research) by UNOSAT (United Nations Satellite Centre) and is the only source where damage has been identified through mapping in that region. However, the data represented spans the following periods: late December 2014 to late August 2015 for part of Douma; late February to early March 2018 for Harasta, Douma, Arbin, Modira Misraba, Beit Sawa, Joubar, Zamalka, Hammura, Hezzeh, Saqba, Ein Tarma, Kafr Batna, Jisrein, and Eftreis; and early April 2016 to mid-January 2017 for farther east of Damascus, bordering the Ghouta with the Joubar neighborhood and Irbin city. The damage assessment shows an interrupted and limited two-

Damage assessment of war zones
in Damascus countryside
and Eastern Ghouta
on the occurrence or absence of events
(such as bombings, missile strikes, or attacks)
between the 20th and 27th of September 2015.

Douma started in late 2011 all through 2015 (until mid 2022)
Jobar from late 2012 into 2015 (until early 2022)
Harasta from mid 2011 all through 2015 (until early 2022)
Irbin from late 2012 all through 2015 (until early 2018)
Ein Tarma from late 2012 all through 2015 (until late 2020)
Qaboun from late 2012 all through 2015 (until mid 2017)
Zamalka from late 2012 all through 2015 (until late 2020)
Barza from late 2012 into 2015 (until mid 2023)
Saqba from late 2012 all through 2015 (till early 2018)
Mesraba from early 2012 all through 2015 (until early 2018)
Hazeh from late 2012 into 2015 (until late 2017)
Zabdean from late 2012 all through 2015 (until early 2016)
Deir AlAsafir from late 2012 into 2015 (until mid 2016)
Kafr Batna from late 2012 all through 2015 (until late 2019)
Al-Rihan from late 2012 into 2015 (until late 2019)
Beit Sawa from late 2012 into 2015 (until early to mid 2018)
Mleha from late 2012 one event in 2015 (until mid 2020)
Hamoriya from late 2012 into 2015 (until early 2022)
Jaramana from late 2012 interrupted by 2015 (until mid 2023)
Marj Al Sultan from late 2012 before and after September 2015 (until late 2016)
Madyara no signs of active war during 2015 but emerged from early 2016 (until early 2018)
Hutajtat at-Turkuman from late 2012 (until late 2013) and no signs of active war during 2015
Jisreen from late 2015 after September (until late 2017)
Buzajna from late 2012, before september and after September 2015 (until late 2022)
Shafuniye from mid 2013 but no signs of active war during 2015 (until early 2018)



Damage assessment sources, include, from the archives of Syrian Network For Human Rights (SNHR) and United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT)

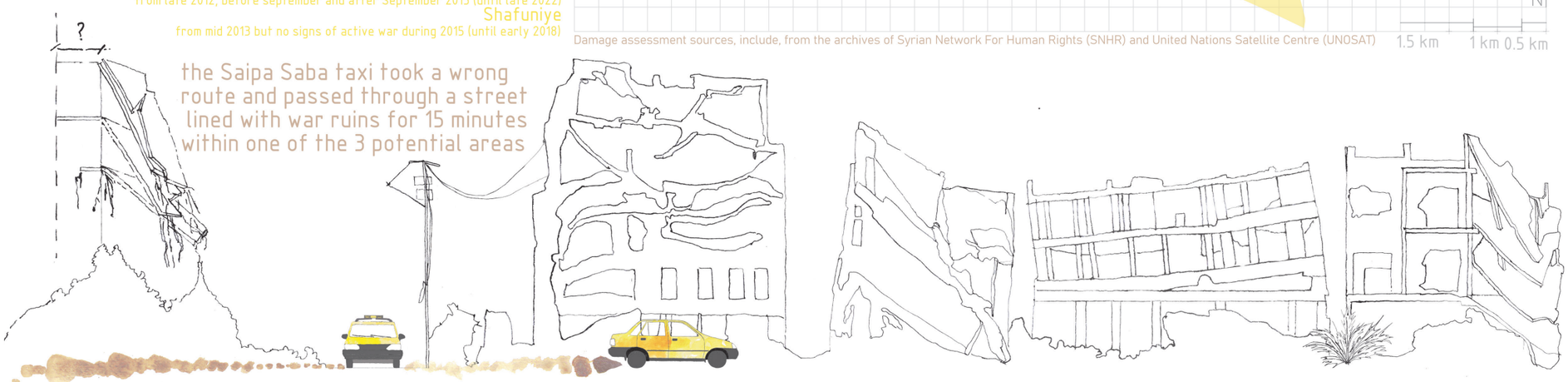


Figure 64. A path study on the migratory route of *Tanmeel*, emphasizing the damage assessment of the eastern outskirts of Damascus — specifically Eastern Ghouta and Douma — and tracing the possible routes taken by the student migrant in the Tanmeel case study, who travelled in a Saipa Saba taxi before exiting the zone and heading toward the Syrian-Lebanese border. The section below depicts a line of war ruins based on actual destruction from these regions that the Saipa Saba crossed in the 15 minutes interval. Information of data analysis retrieved from: SNHR: https://snhr.org/ and UNOSAT: https://unosat.org/products

date damage observation and comparison. It also consists of the only updated and legitimate data represented in mapping of what the outskirts of Damascus, Eastern Ghouta, and Douma regions have endured since the war-conflict in Syria.

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the outskirts of Damascus, Eastern Ghouta, and Douma regions have been aggressively attacked since 2012. Additionally, according to Amnesty, the first war attack was reported starting in 2013, when the use of chemical weapons in that region was detected by Western media, with alleged remarks. The east of Ghouta, or Eastern Ghouta, refers to a region that surrounds the eastern and southern outskirts of Damascus, Syria. It has been a significantly affected area in the Syrian conflict, with reported and documented humanitarian crises, including the escalation of building and infrastructure destruction, as well as regional populations being besieged. Life under siege led to famine and a scarcity of essential medical and food resources.

According to Najjar's "Damage Caused by the Syrian Civil War: What the Data Say," published in the Towards Data Science Archive (2018),[56] Damascus ranks second in the number of most damaged and destroyed structures in Syria, according to UNOSAT satellite images, primarily referring to its suburbs and outskirts. However, the capital, within the seven gates, has not been as significantly affected by the destructive impacts of war, as assured by the student migrants from the case studies. This is also described in the Syrian Network for Human Rights news archive, with titles that include descriptions such as "outside Damascus" and "clashes near Damascus." Others mention Ghouta and Rif Dimashq, suggesting that Douma, Joubar, Eastern Ghouta, and Yarmouk Camp are among the most affected areas in the Syrian South. To this day, the same route remains unchanged — the ruins persist, as if frozen in time, like many other roads, routes, entire cities, suburbs, villages, and regions in Syria. From the moment he descended the stairs to catch the taxi and placed his luggage in the trunk, to passing through the eastern peripheries of Damascus, the experience was deeply unforgettable and ingrained in his memory. It was as if the scenery relentlessly played before his eyes every time he recalled it. Recalling it was difficult for him, as he only remembered his home through these images, and he would never wish to return.

ii.ii.c.iii. Syrian-Lebanese land checkpoints

After exiting the eastern peripheries of Damascus, the Saipa Saba and the *Tanmeel* path proceeded onto the Damascus-Beirut highway. First, they headed east through the Southern Bypass (Mohalaq Al-Janubi), which cuts through the middle of Damascus. Then, the Saipa Saba made a sharp turn onto the Damascus Airport motorway, accelerating past the previous event intervals, to rejoin the Southern Bypass. This maneuver was critical, as taking a wrong direction would lead back into the eastern peripheries of Damascus, where the probability of encountering a roadblock was inevitable. After following the Southern Bypass, they reached the Damascus-Beirut highway and continued until arriving at Jdeidet Yabous, a town adjacent to no-man's-land. At its far end lies the Syrian Jdeidet Yabous border checkpoint. At this point, the role of the Saipa Saba shifted — it now served solely to transport the student migrant between the buffer zone shared by the two countries (Figure 65). The taxi driver remained

56 Towards Data Science Archive: Data report on "Damage Caused by the Syrian Civil War: What the Data Say." (Najjar, 2018) Report retrieved from: https://medium.com/towards-data-science/damage-caused-by-the-syrian-civil-war-what-the-data-say-ebad5796fca8

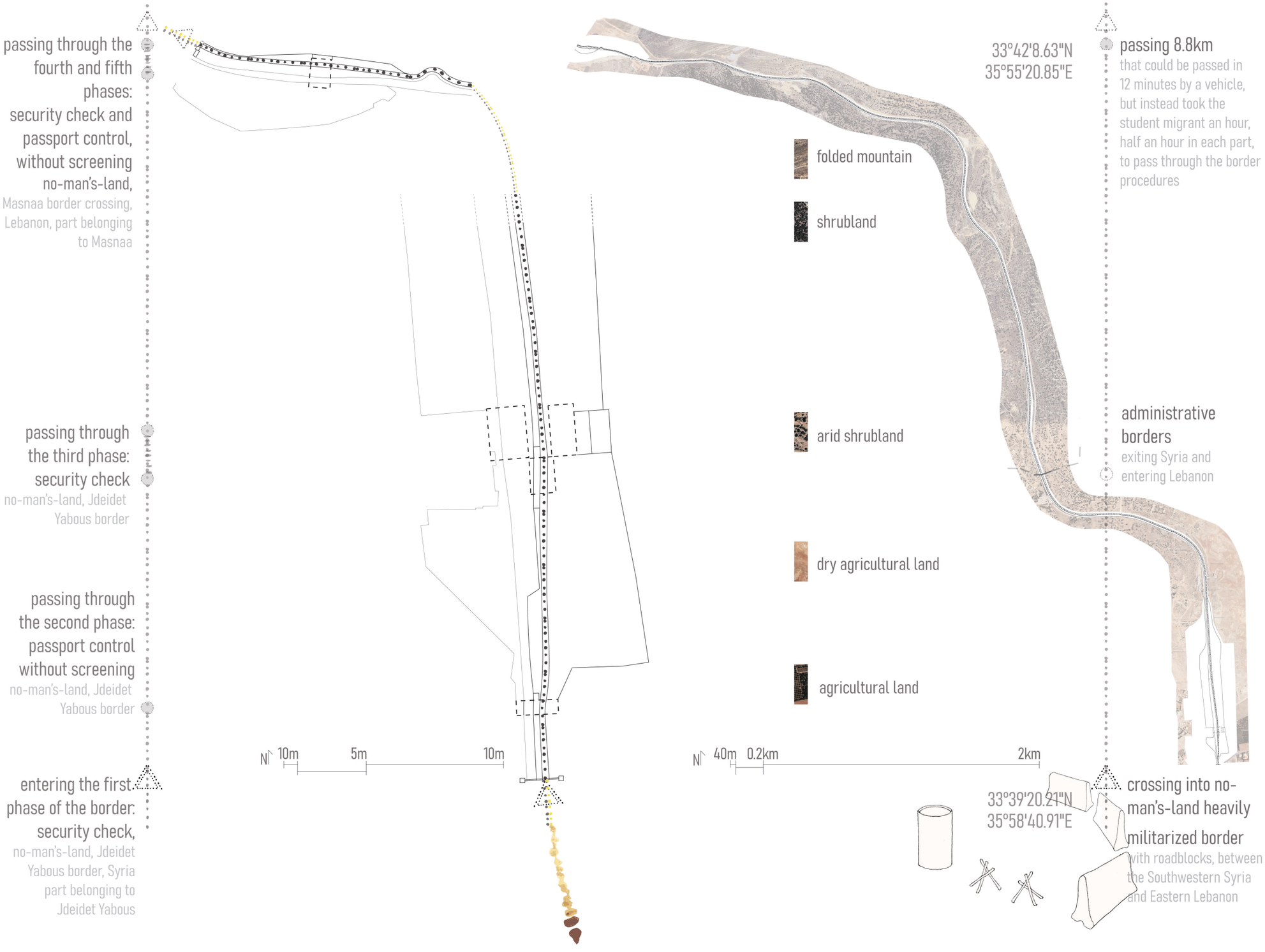


Figure 65. Map of the Jdeidet Yabous–Masnaa border crossing, located along Syria's southwestern administrative border with Lebanon, which the student migrant from the *Tanmeel* case study crossed in a Saipa Saba taxi.

in the car throughout the entire border-crossing procedure. At the heavily militarized Syrian border, marked by roadblocks far ahead of the border station, the student migrant left the Saipa Saba parked in line and entered a designated area for security checks and bureaucratic procedures. His passport was stamped, his identity verified, and his records checked for military service enlistment or reported status. Once cleared, he returned to the Saipa Saba, which moved forward toward the Masnaa border in Lebanon.

The migration across the national border context, from the Syrian to the Lebanese no-man's-land, covered 8.8 km in 12 minutes, crossing the administrative border located 2.8 km from Jdeidet Yabous and 6 km from Masnaa. At the Lebanese border, the Saipa Saba parked once again, and the student migrant exited the taxi for another, more stringent process as he entered a new country. He was questioned about his reason for entry and asked to provide proof of temporary accommodation. The student migrant explained his purpose and presented an invitation letter from the former Portuguese president, Jorge Sampaio, as part of the APGES scholarship program. After verifying his information and making calls, the border officer allowed him to proceed, stamping his passport. The student migrant returned to the Saipa Saba, which had remained parked in the same spot, and resumed the journey. The *Tanmeel* path continued, but now at a calmer pace, as the student migrant processed the emotional and mental toll of the migratory event. Although he could not recall specific spatial details of the border facilities where his passport was stamped and security checks were conducted, he remembered the total time spent at both borders — approximately an hour and a half. He also vividly recalled the arid landscapes and sparse agricultural lands he encountered along the no-man's-land, contrasting them with the greener terrain he had left behind in Syria. The student migrant had never crossed this border checkpoint before and had never left Syria prior to that day.

The relief that the student migrant felt after successfully passing through the border crossing triggered flashbacks of the destruction, as the intense focus and stress during the procedures had momentarily suppressed those memories. Bakhtin's (1975/1981) idea of memoir suggests that the migrant's memory of the war ruins is a dynamic, fragmented narrative, shaped by the interaction of past and present, self and other, in a constant re-imagining of displacement (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 24). After leaving the Masnaa Border and crossing into Lebanon, the Saipa Saba drove the student migrant to Beirut, where it dropped him off somewhere in Hamra, where he stayed for the night. On the 27th, he took another taxi, a Lebanese one, to Rafic Hariri International Airport. Between the 26th and 27th, he could not recall when his passport was stamped. The student migrant entered the airport and met with the student group from the third migratory flow of the APGES scholarship program. They all then boarded a flight to Türkiye, where they caught a connecting flight carrying 54 Syrian students to Portugal. Upon arrival in Portugal, the student migrant went to a hotel, where former student migrants and APGES board members met them. Many of these student migrants were family members of those from previous student migratory flows. The male student migrant from *Tanmeel* case study had a cousin among the crowd, who had been part of one of the two earlier migratory flows facilitated by the APGES scholarship program. After few hours, each migrant then departed for their respective cities on organized buses.

The male student migrant from the *Tanmeel* case study was part of a student group whose

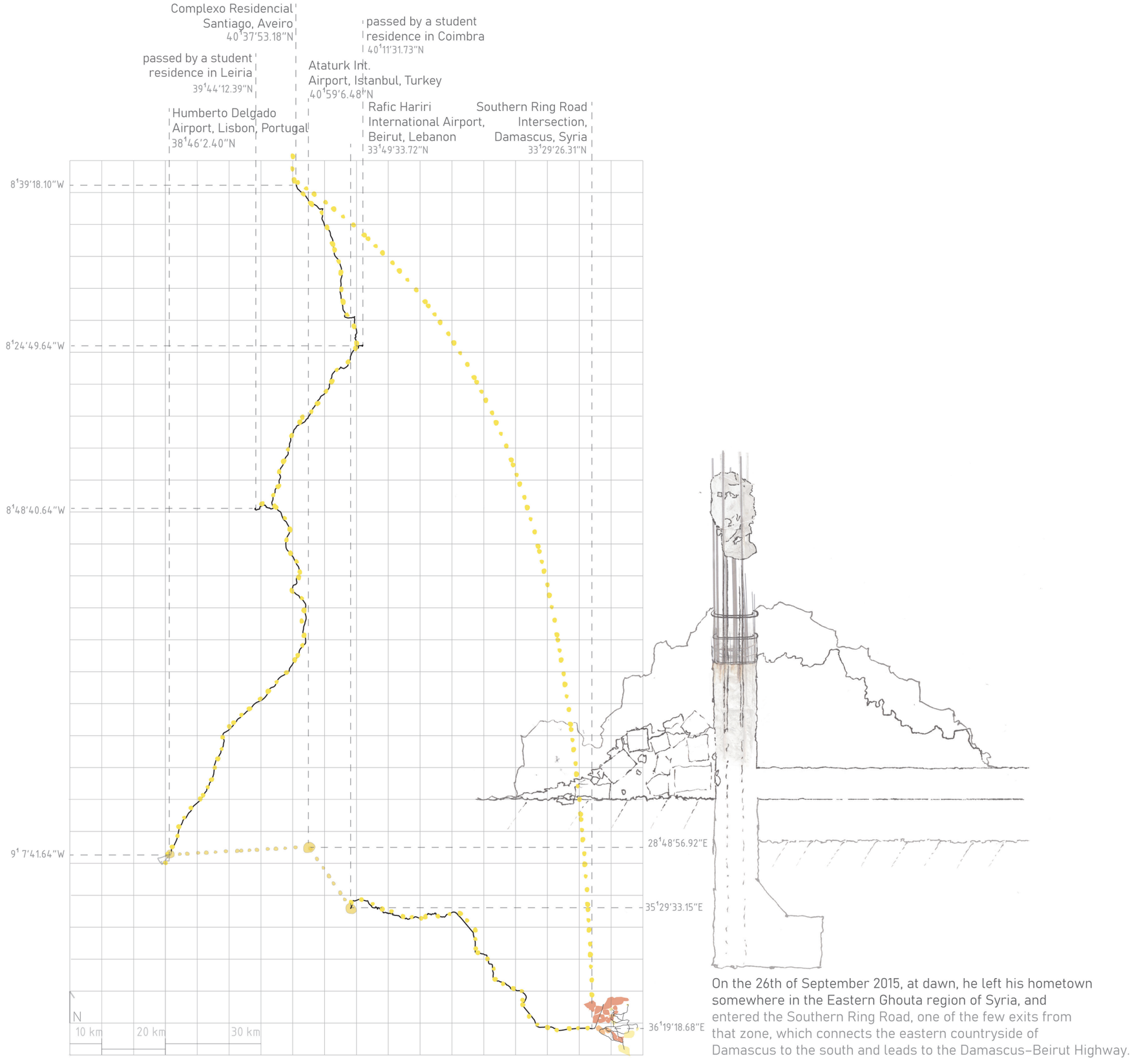


Figure 66. Distorted map of the migratory path and experience of the male student migrant from the *Tanmeel* case study, from somewhere in the eastern peripheries of Damascus to Portugal, carrying with him traces of memory of war destruction from the yellow Saipa Saba taxi.

bus made two stops. The bus first stopped at a university residence in Leiria, then passed by a university residence in Coimbra before heading directly to Aveiro. It was in Aveiro where he and his colleagues, whom he had the chance to get to know better during the bus trip, arrived at their destination city. This was part of the planned itinerary set by the APGES scholarship program, in accordance with the vacancies granted by the University of Aveiro. He then arrived at the Complexo Residencial Santiago (Santiago Residential Complex), where he stayed for his studies until graduation. Though the planned itinerary concluded in Aveiro and marked the beginning of a new academic chapter, the emotional and psychological weight of the migratory path and experience — especially the images that initiated the *Tanmeel* state — continued to linger.

The 15-minute stretch of war ruins that marked his migratory path of *Tanmeel* remains in his memory to this day. The memory of the war ruins symbolizes Syria as a whole — its name, its location, its places, and its administrative borders, overlapping with the student migrant's earlier memories before that incident. The war destruction, as recalled through the *Tanmeel* migratory path and experience, aligns with Madison's (2005) notion that trauma and displacement leave indelible marks on the body and lived experience, shaping how one navigates the present (Madison, 2005, p. 169). Building on this, Guattari's (1989/2013) concept of schizoanalysis helps explain how the experience of time — particularly through Freudian temporal processes — is both affected by and affects the persistence of traumatic memories, creating an interconnected, fragmented sense of self (Guattari's, 2013 p. 30). This temporal displacement reflects an ongoing reconfiguration of memory, identity, and place, where the state of *Tanmeel* — with its lingering war remnants — remains emotionally and psychologically unresolved. As Guattari suggests, these memories are not confined to the past but continually resurface, shaping the student's present understanding of displacement. His experience becomes a continuous negotiation between past traumas and the processes of adaptation in a new environment, where the ruins of his homeland remain with him, inescapable and unresolved.

This fragmented memory of *Tanmeel*, shaped by momentary traumatic experiences and the material remnants of war, illustrates what Pieris (2019) refers to as a spatial imagination contingent on border-thinking (Pieris, 2019, p. i) — a way of conceiving space through rupture, exclusion, and survival, where the meaning of place is produced through the experience of crossing, loss, and reconfiguration. In this context, the student migrant's memory of Tanmeel becomes a site of constant negotiation, where past and present spaces intersect, reshaping their perception of belonging and identity. The war ruins, as symbolic of displacement (places no longer belonging to their original form), are not only physical markers of loss but also mental and emotional thresholds that challenge the migrant's ability to reconcile the past with the future. This emphasizes that our understanding of space is inseparable from the histories, conflicts, and inequalities that borders represent. Rather than seeing space as neutral or universal, Pieris argues that spatial experience is shaped by the lived realities of those who cross or are constrained by borders. Through this perspective, spatial imagination becomes an ongoing process of mapping, reinterpreting, and re-engaging with the spaces that shape the migratory paths of migrants, imprinted with trauma, survival, and the struggle to understand war, its events, consequences, and impact amidst uneven and conflicted social realities.

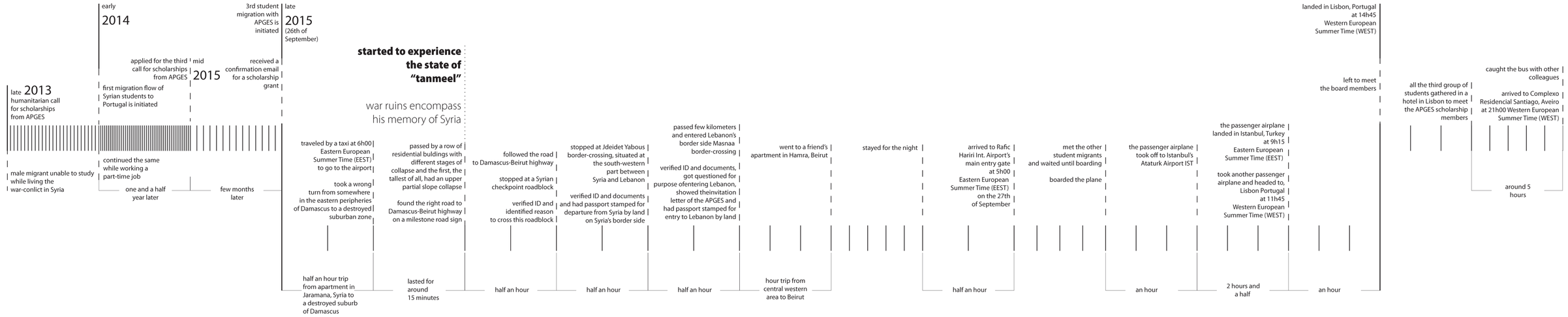


Figure 67. Chronological time-line of the male student migrant — from the *Tanmeel* case study — from 2013, when he was a high-school student, to 2015, until his arrival at the student residency in Portugal.

ii.ii.d. *Tamsaha* تمسحة

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s Missing Migrants Project, approximately 1,568 migrant vessel incidents involving Syrian migrants were reported in the Mediterranean between 2015 and 2017. These incidents occurred throughout the region, where vessels failed to reach their destinations, resulting in deaths[57] — due to drowning, violence, illness, vehicle accidents, or harsh environmental conditions — as well as cases of missing persons and survivors. The diagram in Figure 68 presents data in both numerical and textual form, drawn from IOM's Missing Migrants Project. Within the diagram, a condensed table includes all recorded vessel incidents from the IOM's Excel datasets. This table has been adapted and filtered to focus on incidents involving Syrians, individuals with unknown places of origin, and those with mixed origins that may or may not include Syrians. Emphasis is placed on the Eastern Mediterranean, Central Mediterranean, and parts of the Western Mediterranean, according to the routes associated with these places of origin. Floating life vests overlap the data to visually represent a natural survival response — these vests instantly float to keep migrants from drowning. They may be the only tool for survival in such conditions, and when migrants drown, the vests often remain on the surface, symbolizing an unimaginable reality of the perilous conditions faced by refugees. From this data analysis, notably, at least[58] 5,360 individuals had their places of origin labeled as unknown. To calculate these numbers, I further edited the original Excel tables and created a consolidated version combining data from 2015, 2016, and 2017, deliberately selecting vessel incidents that might have involved Syrian escapees. However, I could not calculate the exact number of Syrian individuals, as many vessels carried migrants from mixed origins — although some carried only Syrians.

ii.ii.d.i. for the Mediterranean escapes

These dates — 2015, 2016, and 2017 — also correspond to the migration attempts of this male student migrant, who escaped Syria and fled to Türkiye in early 2015, when Syrians were allowed to travel by air and land to Türkiye without restrictions. The timing is significant because it was during this period that large numbers of Syrians, many displaced by war and conflict, sought refuge in neighboring countries, triggering a widespread migration crisis. For many, the escape to Europe — and beyond — involved treacherous sea crossings, often facilitated by smuggling networks that exploited the dire circumstances of refugees. As such, the incidents reported by the IOM's Missing Migrants Project represent only a small fraction of the larger, more complex story of forced migration, with countless others embarking on similar migratory paths in search of safety and a future away from conflict.

The experiences of those who survived, like the student migrant in question, highlight the personal and collective toll of these migrations. Their irregular migrations, fraught with peril, can be understood not only in terms of physical displacement but also in terms of psychological and emotional wounds that remain unhealed, continuing to shape their lives long after they have reached their host countries. Understanding the scope of these incidents

57 Causes of deaths indicated are listed in the tables provided by IOM's Missing Migrant Project and are downloadable on their website. "Download Missing Migrants Project data" information retrieved from: https://missingmigrants.iom.int/downloads

58 According to the data that IOM's Missing Migrant Project provides, there are cases where unknown places of origin are accompanied with others from other places of origin.

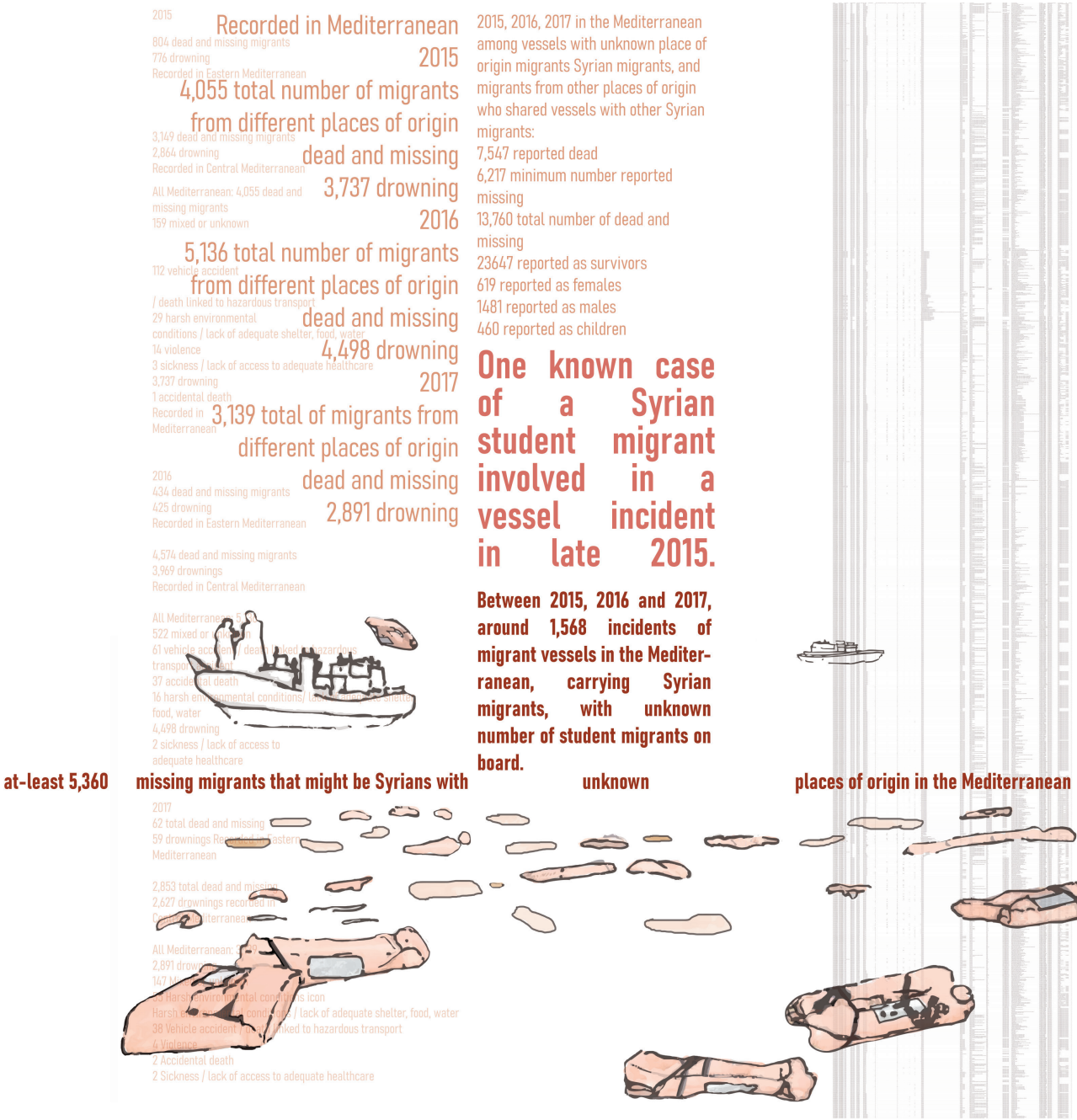


Figure 68. Diagram for Mediterranean escapes showing the number of registered vessel incidents in the Mediterranean between 2015 and 2017, according to the Missing Migrants Project (IOM). It overlaps with dense but filtered Excel data appropriated from the original Missing Migrants Project Excel data and an image of floating life vests.

— both in terms of raw numbers and personal stories — underscores the importance of examining the impact of forced migration on individuals and communities while also calling attention to the broader structural issues surrounding migration policies and humanitarian responses.

The data I had intended to add to this diagram was related to land escapes as well, not just sea escapes (as shown in Figure 68). However, because I could not find data on this subcategory and because much data remains unregistered due to political concerns, I changed the sub-chapter's title to encompass the entire Mediterranean. Some migrants escaped solely by land, while many others escaped by sea after first traveling by land to reach the coastal zones of the ports from which they departed. This is why the case study of this student migrant adds a significant layer to the narrative of land escapes experienced by many escapees, both Syrians and non-Syrians. This is especially true because, through smugglers and smuggling networks, migrants often escape in groups — first by boarding an organized bus on land, and later by embarking on escape vessels at sea. I am referring to escapees who are not financially advantaged, those who cannot afford private yachts or passenger boats, and who risk their lives not just in one escape attempt, but often in several.

Escape attempts and forced migrations

In all the other case studies, the student migrants did not receive any official document indicating refugee status. Instead, they were issued student residency cards, which were annually renewed through SEF (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras), Portugal's immigration and border services.[59] The male student migrant in this case study is the only one among the five who obtained refugee status, as he did not arrive in Portugal through the APGES scholarship program. Instead, he attempted to migrate irregularly and illegally through escape attempts. The interchangeable use of the terms refugee and migrant for the student in this case study reflects his migratory path: initially an escapee, then an asylum seeker, and finally a refugee after being granted conditional refugee status in Europe. This distinction sets him apart, just like all the other refugees who separately joined the APGES scholarship program, as they are distinct from the student migrants who arrived through emergency calls. The exact number of refugees who joined the APGES scholarship program is unknown. However, all Syrian students in the APGES program had resettlement plans integrated into their academic programs, ensuring they would not face enforced deportation after completing their studies.

In practice, whether the student migrants were part of the APGES program or asylum seekers who were granted refugee status in Europe (specifically in Portugal), they were treated similarly to refugees. Public services, including some hospitals and universities, provided these Syrian students with the benefits associated with refugee status, facilitating their stay in Portugal as students. It is crucial to emphasize that no one chooses to become a refugee. Seeking asylum is often a last resort after fleeing war, persecution, or violence, and refugee

59 The Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF) was officially dissolved on October 29, 2023. Its responsibilities were transferred to the newly created Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum (AIMA), with the goal of streamlining immigration services in Portugal. Additionally, the Institute of Registries and Notaries (IRN) took over tasks such as issuing passports and renewing residence permits.
.Information retrieved from: Governo de Portugal – "Official announcement regarding the dissolution of SEF and the establishment of AIMA"; and Portugal News – "Updates on the transition of SEF's responsibilities to AIMA and the Institute of Registries and Notaries (IRN)."

status is not a desired outcome, but rather a label assigned to those who are forced to abandon their homes. Being a refugee does not diminish a person's worth, but the reality of such a position—being labeled and categorized—is that individuals are often treated as different, inferior, or substandard. This disparity in treatment is not always subtle; it can be an overt and consistent reminder that their status sets them apart from the broader society. While refugees may share the same basic human rights as others, they often face a range of challenges and prejudices that accentuate and intensify their marginalized status.

The social, legal, and cultural treatment they encounter is often a constant reminder of their displacement and vulnerability. Refugees are sometimes perceived not as individuals with histories, aspirations, struggles, resilience, and agency, but rather as symbols of crisis or victims of circumstance. These structural distinctions, whether through language, policy, or social attitudes, contribute to the stigma and alienation that many refugees experience, underscoring the profound impact of being defined by one's refugee status. Many refugees are forced into this status due to circumstances beyond their control, and the male student migrant in this case study is one of them. These are, in essence, cases of forced migration and displacement. In technical terms, forced displacement, in formal Arabic *al-nuzooh al-qasri* (النزوح القسري), includes refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). A large percentage of the Syrian migratory population is considered forcefully displaced.

However, beyond the juridical definitions and statistical categorizations, the concept of forced displacement raises critical questions about subjectivity, agency, and recognition. While the legal status of 'refugee' affords a degree of international protection, it simultaneously risks defining individuals through a singular narrative of victimhood and dependency. This status often obscures the heterogeneous experiences of displaced persons, reducing them to abstract figures within a broader crisis discourse. Based on what this student migrant revealed, he also saw the label 'refugee' as a barrier in many spheres of his life. This label tends to fix individuals in a liminal state — a political and social interstice in which they are neither fully integrated into the host society nor able to return to their place of origin. This condition is not only material but discursive: it is perpetuated by bureaucratic classifications, policy frameworks, and social attitudes that reify the figure of the refugee as permanently 'other.' As such, the designation of refugee status, while protective, also contributes to a form of epistemic and political marginalization. To critically engage with forced displacement, it is necessary to attend to these layered dynamics — to consider not only the legal and political mechanisms that govern mobility but also the affective, relational, and embodied dimensions of forced displacement. Doing so allows for a representation of refugee subjectivities and a reconsideration of the frameworks through which such movements are documented and governed.

These dimensions are not merely abstract concepts but are deeply inscribed in the lived experiences of those subjected to forced displacement. And yet, such complexity is often flattened in dominant narratives. The experience of this male student migrant exemplifies these layered realities, as he experienced and endured both forced and survival displacements — referred to in formal Arabic as *al-nuzooh min ajel al-baqa'a* النزوح من أجل البقاء – an expression that emphasizes the survival characteristic of this type of displacement. It refers to his continuous (existential) struggle for survival and staying alive, which is reflected in his

story-map and chronological time-line. This student migrant was also the only one in the five case studies who made two escape attempts along his migratory path — one unsuccessful and the other successful. This case study focuses on the irregular migration of a male student refugee. He was the only participant with refugee status who responded to my request for dialogue and was willing to share his story. His openness was also influenced by the familiarity and trust I had established with him prior to the request. Because of this distinction from the other case studies, my positionality as a female student migrant shifts — prompting reflection on how, without having personally experienced (refugee) irregular migration, I can narrate, represent, and map such a trajectory solely through a dialogic exchange and encounter. This encounter involves someone whose migratory experience differs entirely from mine and from those of the other student migrants in this thesis — in terms of planning, safety, modes of transportation, and near-death experiences.

Furthermore, I must acknowledge the complexities of wartime Syria, particularly regarding gender-based border restrictions, and my limitations in fully addressing them. Given the political complications of the Syrian conflict, this case study provides only a general and surface-level overview of the specific border restrictions imposed on Syrian citizens. A more in-depth analysis is not feasible due to the limited availability of reliable data[60] on the impact of the dictatorial regime. This includes information on compulsory requirements, systemic control, oppression, intelligence operations, censorship, surveillance, and other restrictive measures imposed on the Syrian population. These issues, in their entirety, remain to be documented, along with the crimes committed against the Syrian people — from their forced migration to massacres and the destruction of their homes. In addition, these restrictions are constantly changing and intricate. It was not explicitly stated during the dialogues whether these restrictions interfered with the student migrant's life. However, on one occasion, while crossing a security checkpoint at Damascus International Airport after he left his home, he described a situation related to border restrictions that he was not conditioned to undergo. The re-reading of his story examines the moments of suspension and/or escalation in his migratory path in relation to these interferences. It highlights the inevitable relationship between time and space and their impact on understanding individual war experiences in Syria, which compelled many to flee.

The Syrian migration crisis began with the daily hardships and deteriorating living conditions Syrians faced after the civilian uprising for revolution and the subsequent outbreak of war in 2011. The loss of homes and the relentless, traumatic loop of events forced many to risk escape. In search of a safer present and future, countless Syrians crossed land and sea to escape the complications of war. From land to sea and from sea to new lands, escapees were transported through unfamiliar environments, stops, and ports on their way to safety. Many crossed the Mediterranean by boat, smuggled illegally. While some survived, others took their last breaths beneath the waves. In this context, Alzakout and Abdulwahed's documentary *Purple sea* (2020) captures raw footage of a migration attempt off the coast of Lesbos, Greece. Its layered narrative reflects on the aftermath of arriving in Europe. The documentary

60 Some bibliographical references address these issues, but not in a holistic manner that encompasses all the enforced power structures involved. In contrast, empirical data drawn from the shared lived experiences of the student migrants shapes the narrative flow and contributes to the analysis and critical reflection on some of these dynamics.

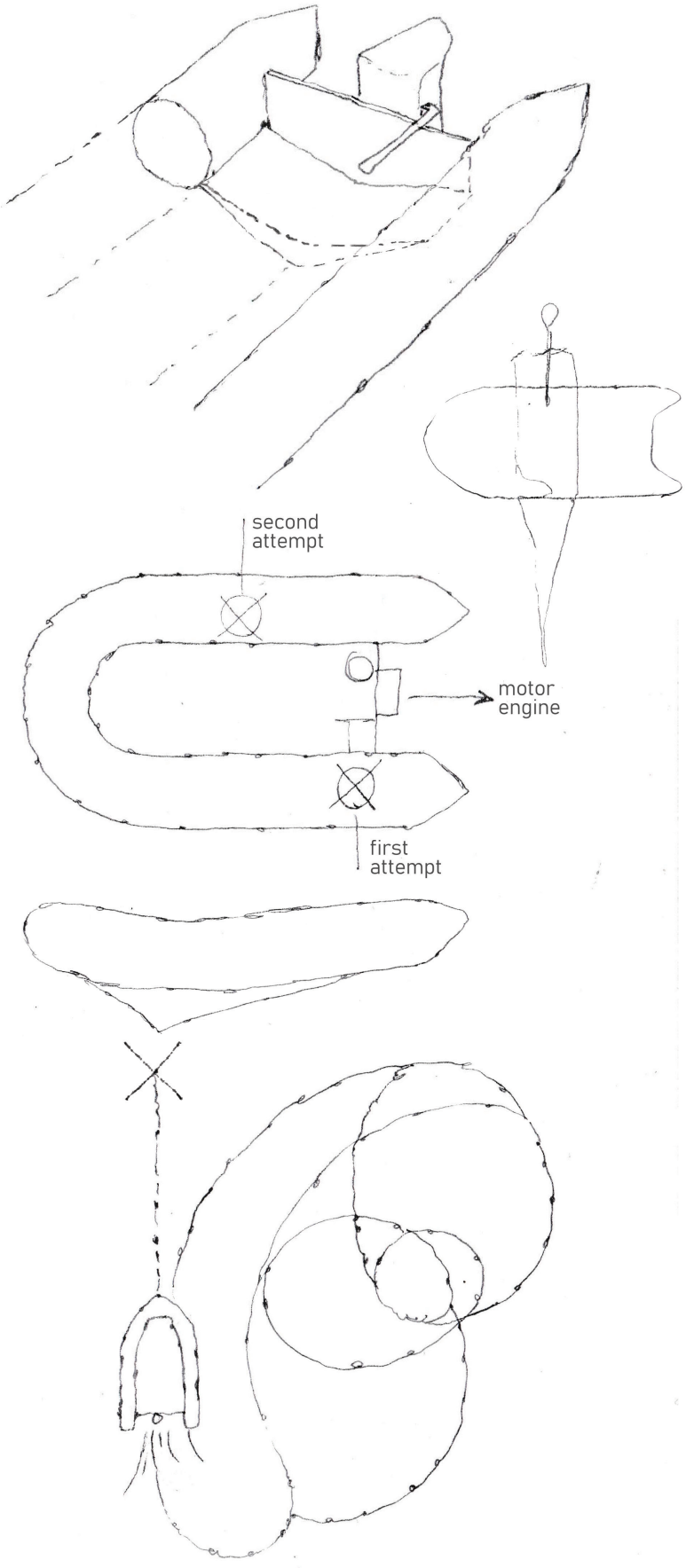


Figure 69. Inflatable boat scheme used by the male student migrant from *Tamsaha* case study that was sketched while listening to the recording of the dialogues to understand the story-map of the male student migrant before representation. Hand-drawing was used as a creative learning method prior to and after researching inflatable boats for image references. The sketches were made while listening to the recordings and from automatically imprinted memories of images and documentaries about escape attempts. They are composed of both imagination and research.

interweaves emotions felt during the sinking of the boat with memories of life before the war in Syria, creating a poignant fusion of past and present experiences. Through this approach, the director and narrator provide a comprehensive portrayal of the migration attempt — its causes, consequences, and climactic turning point: the capsizing of the boat, the desperate cries for help as the coast guard helicopter hovers overhead, the life vests floating along the sea's surface, individuals wearing only one shoe, or none at all, and the relentless struggle for survival, for the continuation of their journeys and migratory paths. These are scenes I could not fully comprehend, much like the news reports of dead bodies of drowned escapees found on shore — scenes whose harshness is indescribable, as both the reality and the numbers are beyond full comprehension. The Mediterranean Sea: a body of water connecting countries, cultures, languages, and continents. The same sea that Syrian students crossed to reach Portugal. A body of water so significant, yet one that has claimed countless lives in its depths.

ii.ii.d.ii. Inflatable boat

In the chronological time-line of the male student refugee's migratory path and experience, a word from the informal Syrian Arabic dialect is included within the migratory event, specifically in his experience of the sea context: *Tamsaha* [*Tamsaha* written in Arabic as: تمسحه: (noun); verb form: *tamsahet* تمسحت (*tamsah'na* first-person plural form تمسحنا ; third-person singular *tasmsah* (m.) تمسح | *tamsaheet* (f.) تمسحت) This word, used multiple times by various student migrants during the dialogues, also describes the emotional state of a Syrian individual both inside and outside the homeland. *Tamsaha* has no direct English translation. It is a first-person singular past-tense verb derived from the noun *temsah* (تمساح), meaning crocodile. Metaphorically, it conveys a sense of numbness, normalization, and the acceptance of hardship. The verb captures the emotional toll of becoming desensitized to adversity and reflects a negative but familiar tolerance of difficult circumstances. This feeling of *Tamsaha* is pivotal to understanding how the lines in the student's narrative are shaped and affected by their emotional state during their migratory path and in dialogue.

Although the word *Tamsaha* appears only in the midst of the first escape attempt in the chronological time-line (Figure 74), it lingers throughout the entire venture as a self-soothing and goal-focused method to look forward and remind oneself that what is left behind no longer matters. When recalling the event, the student (refugee) migrant was asked whether the act of remembering brings up disturbing feelings and sadness. His answer included the verb form *tamsahet* as a coping mechanism, as well as a reflection of his current state during the dialogue. According to him, although what he went through remains quite vivid in his memory, he is not overly traumatized by it, as it is a page from the past. This state of *Tamsaha* may or may not have affected his recollection of the event and his personal sense of time and space, which are discussed throughout this narrative and story-map. Although the time-line spans three years, his migratory path and experience before reaching Portugal lasted approximately one year and three months. This occurred one year after the first wave of Syrian student migration through the APGES scholarship program in 2014, and a few months after the second wave through the same scholarship.

At that time, he was not aware of the APGES scholarship. Like him, many others were unaware, even though the scholarship application calls were posted on both Portuguese and

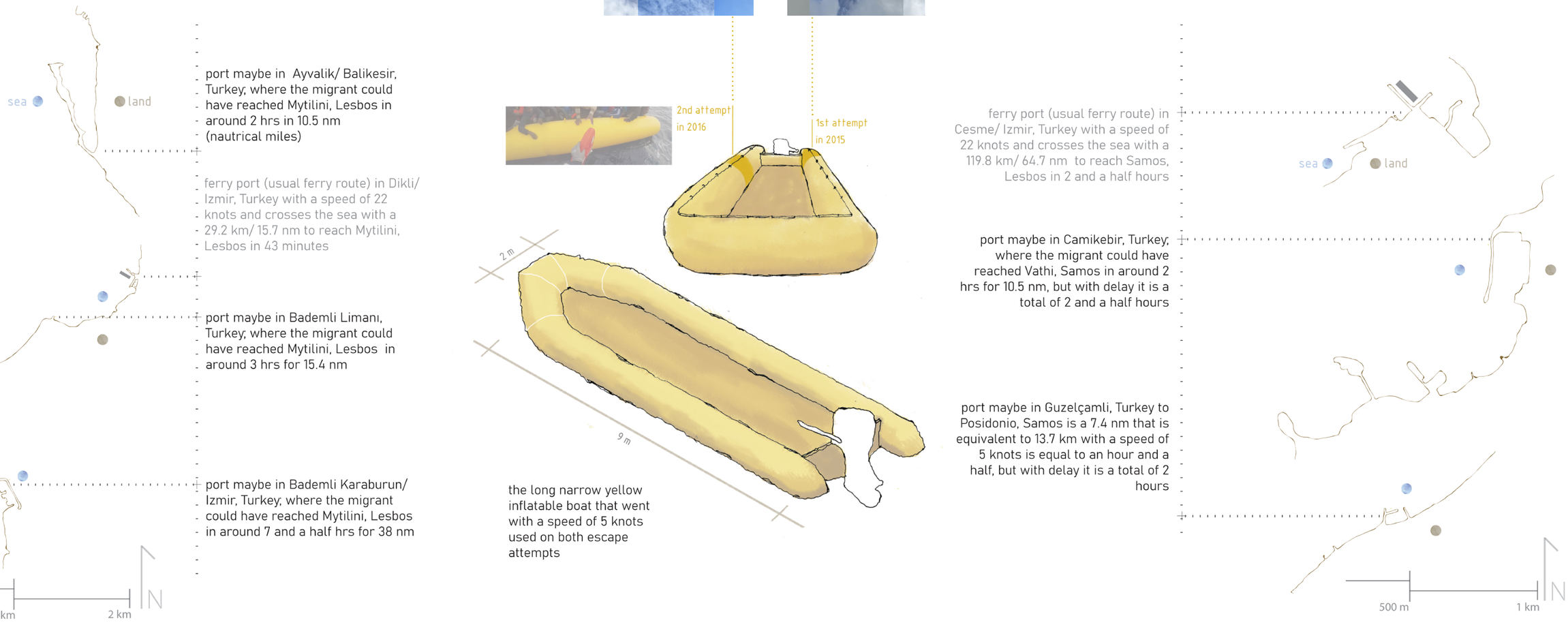


Figure 70. Diagram of the 'maybes' and 'what-ifs,' along with a montage of the yellow inflatable boat, expressing where the male student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study sat during his two attempts to escape to Europe, alongside the boat's dimensions. The motor engine is augmented in size due to its significance on it action and inaction in obscuring and hindering the attempt and the path or continuing them.

Photo-still of the boat taken from Sea-Watch recording footage. Image source: https://twitter.com/seawatchcrew/status/1366420397919514624?s=20&t=VRZMUlAqnGDR9Pafqlie1Q

Arabic online platforms that shared similar news. One reason for this lack of awareness is the disbelief in the legitimacy of the scholarship, as many scholarship programs set nearly unattainable requirements, such as expensive language exams like IELTS, Cambridge assessments, and entry exams, which most Syrians cannot afford or leave Syria to complete. In contrast, the APGES scholarship program established a humanitarian foundation and did not require these exams, instead emphasizing the academic level of the student and their need for the scholarship.

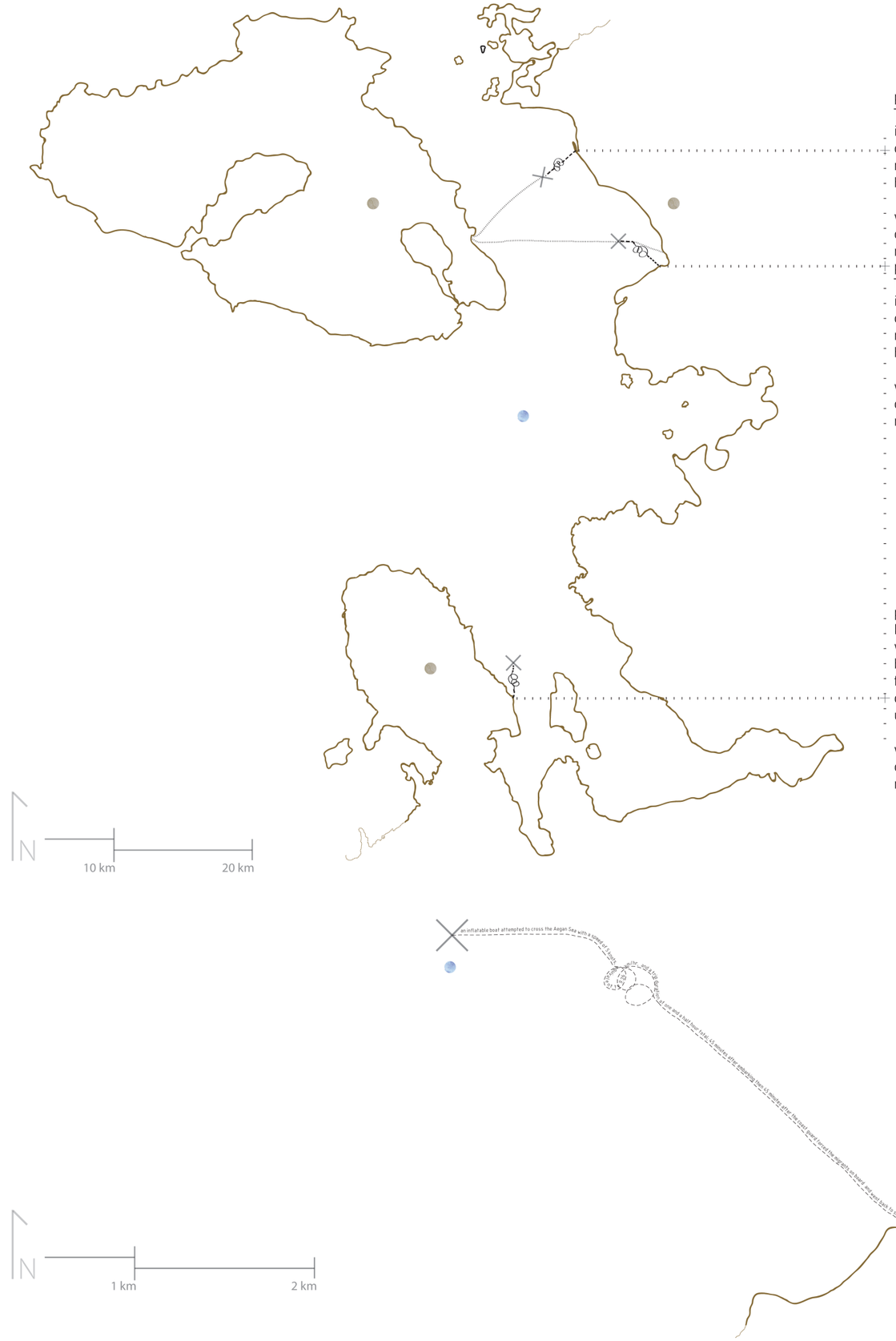
This case study focuses on a male refugee who had never left Syria before this migratory event took place. I met this student migrant in 2017, and at that time, he had just entered the Global Platform for Syrian Students scholarship. He had obtained refugee status prior to entering the scholarship, and afterward, he became a student refugee. The chronological timeline (Figure 74) illustrates how his status as a migrant changed from being a person without labels, living in a war-conflicted zone, to someone whose labels define where he enters, how he transitions, and what he crosses. The only positive aspect of the label, from his point of view, was the exemption it granted him from certain Syrian governmental services. The flow of his migration when leaving Syria was initially influenced by the fact that he was the only male among his siblings. This made him exempt from compulsory military service,[61] alleviating the fear that many others faced when crossing Syrian borders or entering and leaving Syrian airports — the fear of being detained, forcefully conscripted into military service, and/or sent to fight in the Syrian army under the dictatorial regime.

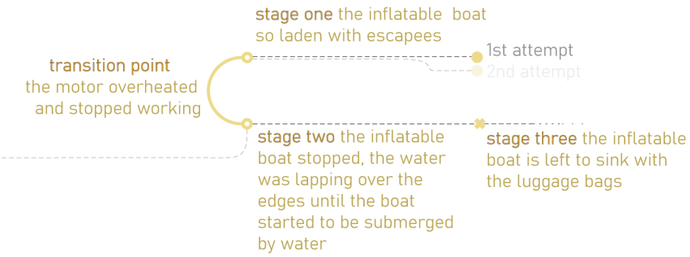
From the start of his migratory escape from Syria, he had no plan for where he would go after arriving in Istanbul, Türkiye, in late 2015. What he fully wanted, however, was to leave the Middle East and flee to Europe. A few days passed before he was able to find a smuggler who provided various transportation options to escape by sea to a Greek island. The escapee (soon to be a student refugee) chose the most reasonable option for him: an inflatable boat, which cost him 1,500 dollars (mentioning dollars because it was the currency used by the smuggling network), compared to the other options: a jet-ski for 500 dollars, a motorboat for 2,500 dollars, and a yacht for 3,500 dollars.

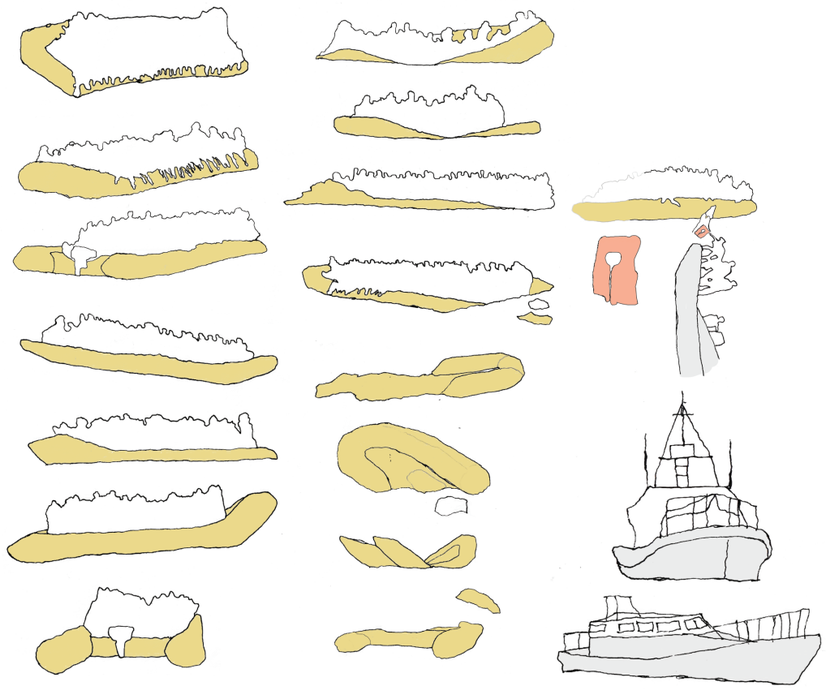
The first month upon his arrival in Türkiye had not yet passed before he made an immediate deal with the smuggler, and, on short notice, he was informed of the date, which was immediate. Before embarking on the inflatable boat, the escapee had to catch a bus that would transport him to the port the smuggler had mentioned. In both of his attempts, the

61 One example I found through Google Search Engine that briefly describes the situation of compulsory military service is the report "Syria's reserve military service transformations and objectives" by Al Mustafa (2024). The report provides a detailed analysis of the Syrian regime's evolving approach to military service, criticizing its ineffective and socially divisive conscription system, which the government uses both as a tool of control and to generate revenue through financial demands on citizens. It also highlights the regime's manipulation of reserve service laws and the creation of a 'professional army' as attempts to shift military power away from conscripts while maintaining control over society and suppressing dissent. Long before this decision was made, the Syrian army under the dictatorial regime was a violent force that went through many conflicting stages since 2011, from planned political splits and desertion to advancements in rank within the military — the same force that has destroyed entire villages and cities and bombarded regions.
.Omran Studies: report on "Syria's Reserve Military Service Transformations and Objectives" (Al Mustafa, 2024). Information retrieved from: https://omranstudies.org/index.php/publications/articles/syria%E2%80%99s-reserve-military-service-transformations-and-objectives.html

Figure 71. Diagram of the male student migrant's first escape attempt from *Tamsaha* case study, expressing the port and shore 'maybes' with the three different stages of the inflatable boat versus the coastguard in relation to the escapees.







escapee was unfamiliar with the surrounding environment, as he had never left Syria before. Not recognizing the location of things and places, he started mentioning the 'maybes' and using the duration of time. This repetition of the word became a way to build hypotheses and speculate about place and movement, calculating distance according to time on Google Maps Pro. His movement, depending on the time duration given and the bus stops and ports that could be possible points of departure and arrival, came to be the 'maybes.' The maybes became connected—the maybe bus stops to the maybe ports — but all had this duration of around four to six hours for the trip, covering approximately 400 km.

Yet, according to him, that path from the maybe bus stop to the maybe port was a nine-hour trip with no stops. His nine-hour bus trip, after catching the bus from a stop half an hour away from Taksim Square to the port, was based on a mere personal sense of time. The nine-hour journey stretched far to the east of Türkiye, making it too distant to reach a port near the destination of the first attempt to Mytilene, Greece. The 'maybes' thus became a four- to six-hour bus trip, expressing both possibilities as part of the re-interpretation, representation, and analysis of this migrant narrative. At the same time, it involved speculation on the level of fiction behind the path taken (as shown in Figure 73) and the upcoming thresholds — the entry ports of the sea between the two lands that the escapee might have traversed. The map representing the migratory narrative is distorted, both in geophysical appearance and geographical location, to translate the uncertainty of the places and the personal sense of time-space.

After arriving at the 'maybe' ports on both of the escapee's attempts, the long but narrow yellow inflatable boat was waiting for him and the other escapees: 70 persons in the first attempt and 50 in the second, for a boat that was supposedly made to fit a maximum of 40 persons. The boat traveled at a speed of five knots during both escape attempts. With a length of nine meters and a width of two meters, the yellow inflatable boat was partially aground and partially lodged on land. In both attempts, the sky was relatively cloudy, and the water of the Aegean Sea in the Mediterranean was calm, with occasional breezes and barely noticeable waves, as it was a calm and mild autumn and winter between 2015-2016.

The first escape attempt was intended to reach Mytilene, the capital of the island of Lesbos in Greece. From a 'maybe' port in Türkiye, the inflatable boat began to leave shore at a speed of five knots. A volunteer among the escapees was tasked with navigating the inflatable boat. However, it was an unsuccessful effort, as the inflatable boat circled, or went in circles, until water began entering through its edges. At this point, the escapee (the student migrant) took responsibility for piloting and navigating the inflatable boat, even though he had never done this before. He switched seats to sit next to the motor, which had no steering system but featured a built-in throttle handle (as shown in Figure 70). However, the attempt failed when the engine broke down, and the boat began to partially sink. By then, 45 minutes had passed since they left shore. Many escapees began yelling, and everyone became distressed. But for him, his state of *Tamsaha* intensified even more.

When I repeatedly asked how he was able to remain calm during the event, he explained that his response to danger had become normalized and numb to this day, even during the conversations in which he vividly recalled his migratory path and experience. Meanwhile, a

stage one the inflatable boat so laden with escapees

1st attempt

2nd attempt

transition point the motor overheated and stopped working

stage two the inflatable boat stopped, the water was lapping over the edges until the boat started to be submerged by water

stage three the inflatable boat is left to sink with the luggage bags

2nd attempt arrival to a shore in Samos



Samos, Greece

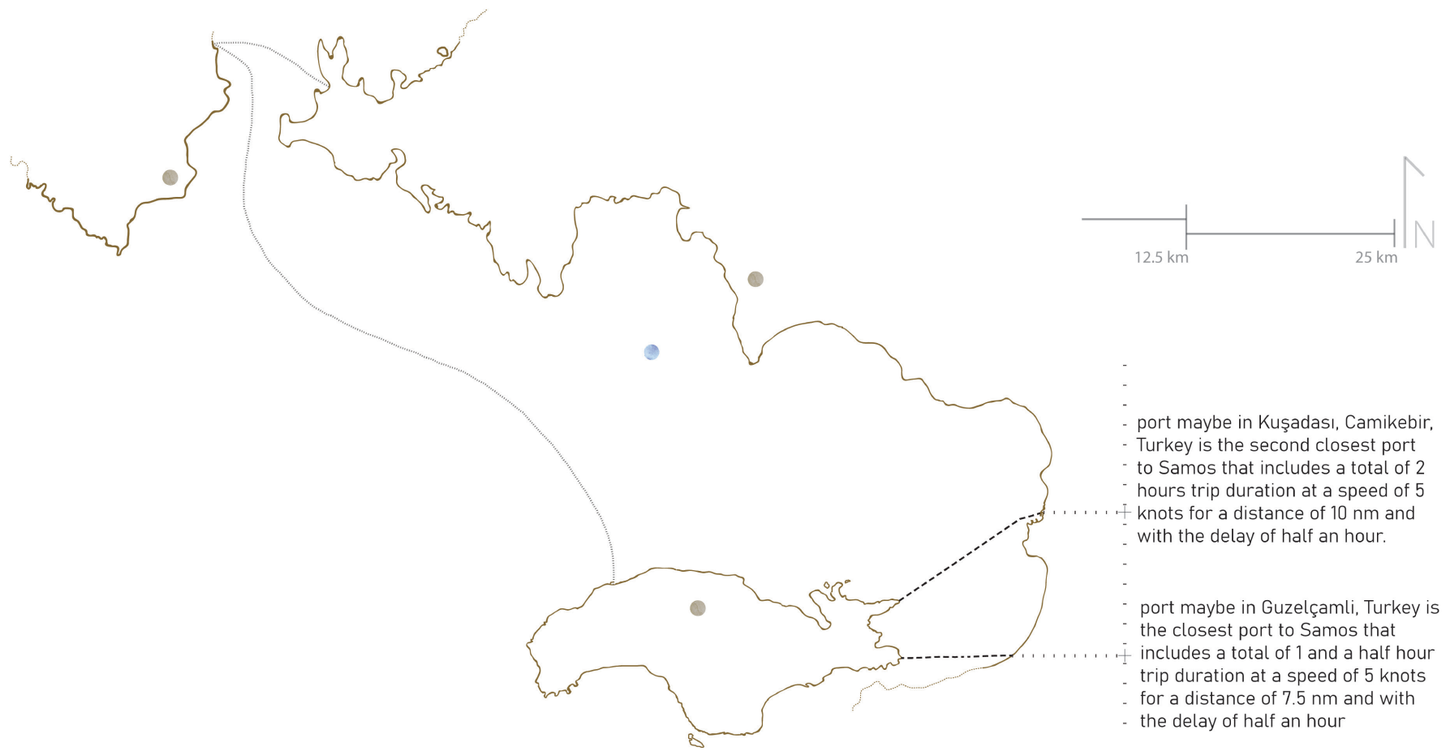
an inflatable boat crossed the Aegean Sea with a speed of 5 knots, equivalent to 9.26 km/hr, and a trip duration of two hours that included a 30 minutes delay in about the middle of the path.

Güzelçamli, Turkey

2.5 km

5 km

N



12.5 km

25 km

N

port maybe in Kuşadası, Camikebir, Turkey is the second closest port to Samos that includes a total of 2 hours trip duration at a speed of 5 knots for a distance of 10 nm and with the delay of half an hour.

port maybe in Guzelçamli, Turkey is the closest port to Samos that includes a total of 1 and a half hour trip duration at a speed of 5 knots for a distance of 7.5 nm and with the delay of half an hour

Figure 72. Diagram of the male student migrant's second escape attempt from *Tamsaha* case study, expressing the port and shore 'maybes' with the inflatable boat passing through one stage and arriving at the coast of Samos.

Turkish Coast Guard vessel, with a gray hue (Figure 71), approached the inflatable boat, threw the escapees' luggage into the sea, forced the escapees aboard, and returned to the Turkish shore. From the inflatable boat's sudden stop in the middle of the sea until the coast guard brought them to shore, another 45 minutes passed. This escape attempt recalls the true story of the Mardini sisters, though with a different turn of events. These two Syrian swimmers and activists swam alongside their inflatable boat after it capsized while crossing the Aegean Sea, helping save the lives of fellow escapees until they reached the shore.[62]

The first escape attempt at sea took a round trip of an hour and a half, yet it seemed much longer, passing through all three stages (as shown in Figure 71). Afterwards, he was left on shore with the other escapees, all 'luggage-less,' waiting at a lighthouse for eight hours to catch a bus, for which they paid 30 euros each, and which took them back to Istanbul. In the first attempt, the 'maybes' provoked the 'what-ifs,' which are also part of the hypotheses, as shown in the diagram in Figure 70. These three 'what-ifs' express the time and distance it would take for the escapees in the inflatable boat, traveling at a speed of five knots, to reach Mytilene. Three months after the incident, a bombing took place in Türkiye in 2016. This event immediately prompted him to escape again, initiating his second attempt, as it reminded him of what he had witnessed in Syria and undoubtedly left him feeling unsafe.

Among the reasons many Syrian migrants attempted to escape to Europe are, without a doubt, the guaranteed safety and the education for them and/or their family members, which are sought after and highly valued. Education is undeniably both a means of survival and a way of thriving. The issue of safety means that the war feels distant, and, even though Türkiye is a neighboring country, it was considered safer than Syria for him. A short time later, he booked a plane ticket and flew to Izmir, where he stayed at a friend's place not far from the airport. After making an arrangement with a different smuggler to escape, he went to a port near Izmir, located in the Gulf of Kuşadası, where the clouds were fewer this time, and he had a view of Samos, Greece, with the mountains of Samos visible from his position. There, he boarded a yellow inflatable boat, identical in size and color to the one used in his first escape attempt.

This time, the second escape attempt was successful, although the engine broke halfway, causing the inflatable boat to stop. Luckily, it restarted and continued, allowing them to pass through one stage (as seen in Figure 72). With 20 fewer people this time, he reached a shore on Samos Island, Greece. Upon approaching the shore, the inflatable boat ran aground, and local police arrived and took them to the island's Civil Registry Centre, where they were issued a police note, similar to an identity card, called *kharti*.[63] They were then relocated to a temporary camp, which I assume was the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) near

62 The El Hosain and Thorne's film *The swimmers* (2022) depicts the sisters' migratory paths, showcasing their escape from Syria, the struggle for safety, and Yusra's eventual triumph as a refugee athlete in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

63 "Kharti" (Χαρτι) is a singular noun in Greek. A police note, informally known as *Kharti*, is a document issued by the police to third-country nationals who have entered Greece illegally after being detained. This police notice requires the individual to leave the country within a specified time-frame. However, while the police note remains valid, the individual cannot be arrested or deported to their country of origin. The validity of the police note typically ranges from one to six months, depending on the individual's nationality. Information retrieved from: Mobile Info Team: https://www.mobileinfoteam.org/police-note-ur?rq=police%20note

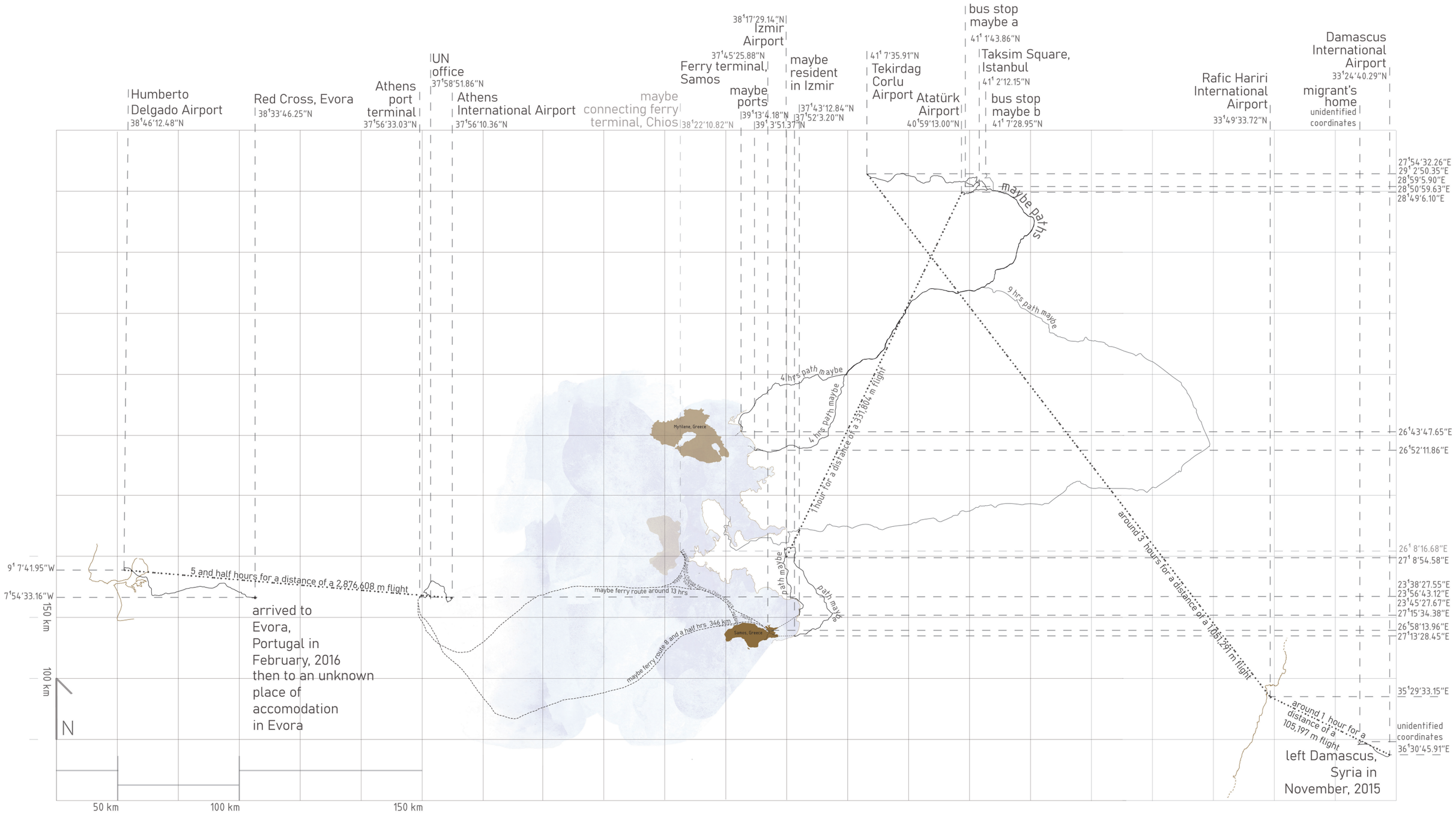


Figure 73. Distorted map of the migratory path and experience of the male student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study, tracing his irregular refugee migratory escape from Syria to Portugal and connecting the 'maybes.'

Samos Vathy, which began hosting asylum seekers in 2016, coinciding with his arrival. At that time, the Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) had not yet been established. The escapee stayed only one night. During that night, he went to a coffee shop somewhere near the camp, possibly even within the camp, because individuals who request asylum and are relocated to the RIC are considered detainees with illegal status. The assumption that it is within the RIC is based on the subsequent life-changing event. At the coffee shop, two individuals, who turned out to work for the UN, approached him and offered to help him apply for a place in a UN program for conditional refugees. The program would then assign him to a European country based on criteria chosen by the program, not by him. After receiving immediate acceptance into the UN refugee program, he was taken to Athens, Greece, by ferry. In Athens, he visited a UN office, was granted conditional refugee status, and was selected to be part of the Portuguese program, which welcomed and promised to support many refugees. Shortly before this, perhaps a few months earlier, in an unexpected and surprising turn of events, he came across a news article in Turkish, published in a Turkish journal, stating that Portugal would be welcoming 10,000 refugees. However, he could not recall the name of the journal or the exact date he read it. Despite searching in Turkish, I could not find any reference to this article.

After flying from Athens to Lisbon, he immediately went to the Portuguese Red Cross in Évora, where he was provided with accommodation and began the process of obtaining refugee status in Portugal. A few months after his arrival, after settling and realizing he was finally in a safe place, he wished to continue his studies. He searched on-line for academic opportunities that could support him and discovered the Global Platform for Syrian Students' scholarship program, which at the time had no open calls but was accepting applications from Syrian student refugees residing in Portugal. Therefore, he applied for the scholarship program. Twelve months after arriving in Portugal, he was accepted and became a student while still holding refugee status.

In the context of irregular migration, Massey (2005) challenges traditional notions of space as a static background, suggesting instead that (migration) place — when operating at the scale of migration — is relational, circumstantial, and constructed through power structures, both in opposition and in convergence with migrant attempts to navigate these places. This perspective is particularly relevant when analyzing irregular migration, which consists of abrupt time-intervals and near-death situations, as it re-imagines the complex movement process from Syria to Europe not as a linear progression but as a complex relationship of environments — momentary and immediate — shaped by various forces, consequences, and circumstances. Lewin's (1936) concept of momentary spaces complements this view, suggesting that these transient, shifting moments of space are crucial for understanding how migrants experience and react to their surroundings in real-time, caught in a dynamic interplay of survival and transition. Massey's concept of 'power-geometry' further expresses how different individuals experience and navigate these spaces differently, influenced by political implications and factors such as nationality, gender, and legal status (Massey, 2005, p. 100). In this context, Massey states:

> One way of seeing 'places' is as on the surface of maps [...]. But to escape from an imagination of space as a surface is to abandon also that view of place. If space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. (Massey, 2005, p. 130)

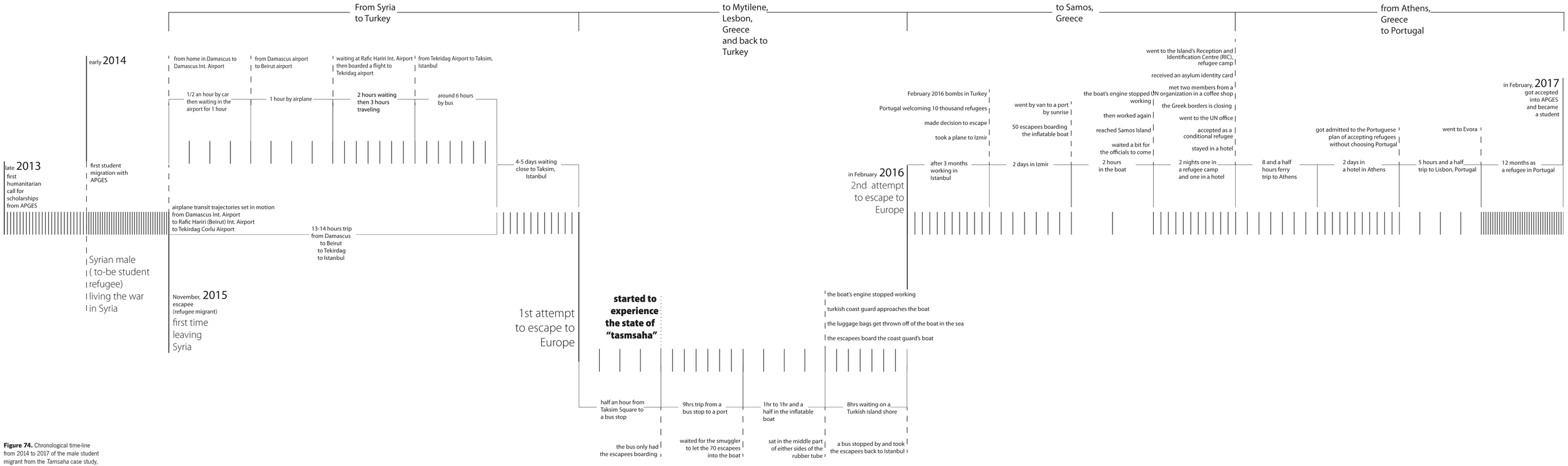


Figure 74. Chronological time-line from 2014 to 2017 of the male student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study, showing the time-intervals from his departure from Syria to each place of transit until reaching Portugal.

ii.v.v. *Shantata* شنططة

The Global Migration Data Portal, managed by the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), presents data through interactive maps. However, much of the information on the portal remains unspecified. Although subcategories exist to organize and categorize various aspects of migration, many entries lack detailed data, resulting in unregistered information and empty fields. In contrast, the Refugee Data Finder and Operational Data Portal (ODP) by UNHCR provide figures linked to individual migrants, including demographic details of migrant populations and information about host countries. Nevertheless, these data platforms do not include student migrants — those studying abroad and considered displaced for an indefinite period. Despite forming a distinct category within today's relevant events and crises, these individuals remain absent from such datasets, leaving their experiences of displacement and circumstances unrepresented and undocumented.

ii.ii.e.i. for the displaced

According to Ferris and Kirişci's *The consequences of chaos: Syria's humanitarian crisis and the failure to protect* (2016), the Syrian migration crisis evolved into a displacement crisis. The ongoing war has become protracted, exacerbating the country's environmental, financial, and political conditions, and rendering the situation increasingly complex and deteriorated, while placing people's lives in continual jeopardy. Ferris and Kirişci (2016) examine the scale of the Syrian displacement crisis in relation to overwhelming (mammoth) responsibilities and (inadequacies) limitations involved in protecting and assisting refugees both within and beyond Syria's borders. The core issue with displacement in neighboring countries lies in the continued suffering of Syrians due to the persistence of the war. Ferris and Kirişci (2016) note that:

> The particular impact of the refugee flows on Syria's neighbors — Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey — is then considered with analysis of how these three countries have tried to cope with the situation in the face of inadequate burden sharing by the international community. (Ferris and Kirişci, 2016, p. 18)

The substantial demand placed on neighboring countries began to create regional problems, as they were unprepared to accommodate a mass influx of newcomers. Likewise, the European countries that accepted the flow of refugee applicants, as Al-Sabouni also notes, are "[...] struggling with problems due to mass immigration and the need to adapt to pressures that the infrastructure was not built to accommodate" (Al-Sabouni, 2016, p. 104). In this context, infrastructure refers to the physical and organizational structures and facilities necessary for the functioning of emergency systems and/or solutions. This includes buildings, utilities, communication networks, and other components related to humanitarian organizations that support economic and social activities — in this case, not only for the long-term integration of migrants but, more importantly, for addressing the immediate issue of displacement. The existing infrastructure was not designed to bear the pressures and demands brought by the current situation and the scale of migration, making it necessary to adapt infrastructure to meet migrants' needs.

In Al-Sabouni's memoir *The battle for home: The vision of a young architect in Syria* (2017), the author discusses Syria's internal conflict from a local and architectural perspective,

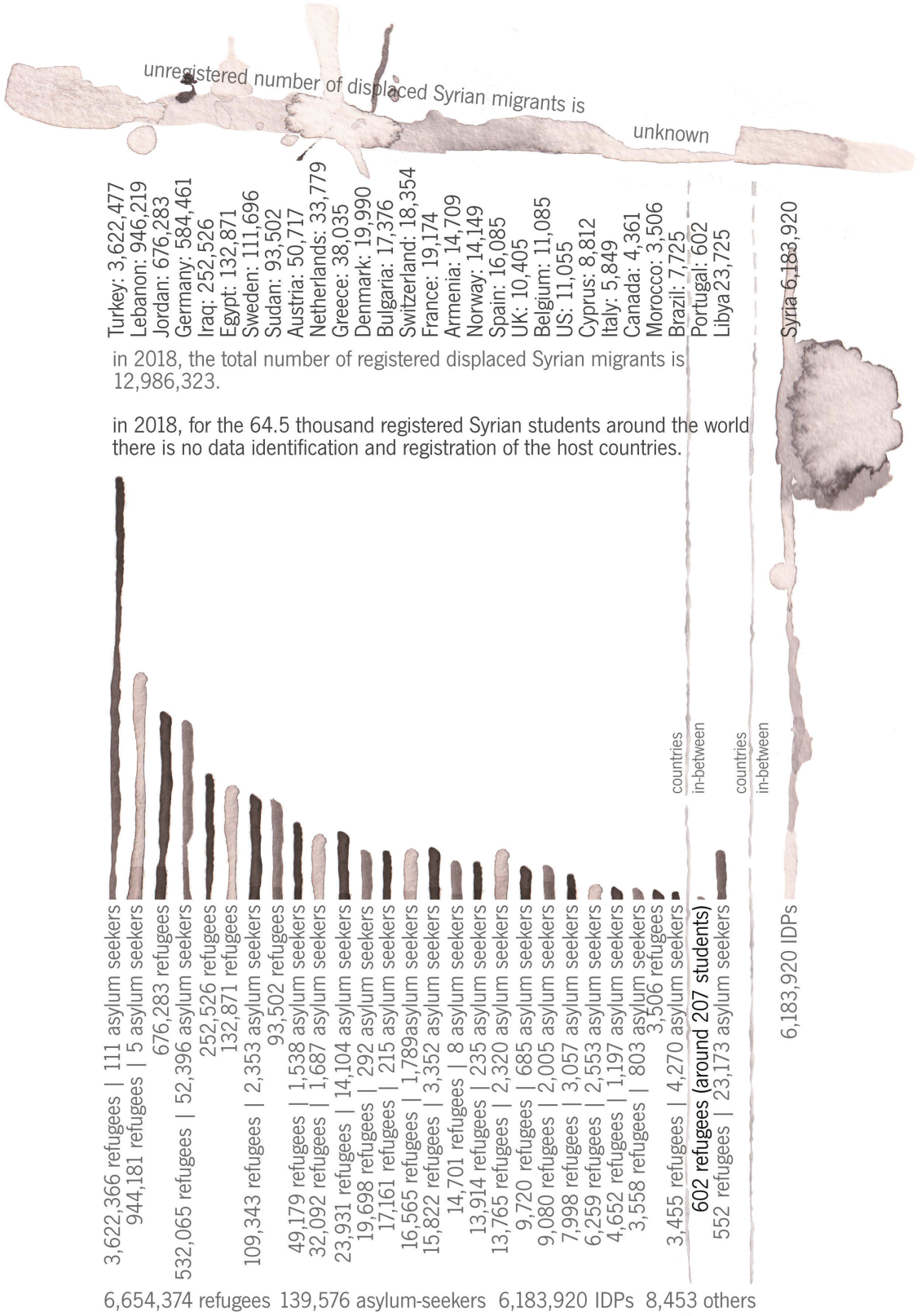


Figure 75. Diagram for the displaced, showing the number of unregistered displaced Syrian migrants compared to the registered displaced migrant population across 29 countries, including Syria. Data retrieved from APGES archival reports, the IOM Global Migration Data Portal, and the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder and Operational Data Portal.

interwoven with her personal experiences of living and working as an architect in a war-torn country. Al-Sabouni presents a subjective reflection alongside an analysis of the social and political factors contributing to the conflict, including how architecture and urbanism in times of war have both exacerbated and alleviated humanitarian consequences. The conflict has led to the widespread displacement of Syrians. This plight also affects the student population, whose studies have been disrupted by war, conflict, and both internal and external displacement. Despite this, humanitarian aid is often allocated selectively, based on age groups and primarily directed toward those in refugee camps — neglecting, in particular, those trapped inside Syria, such as individuals in besieged war zones, those living below the poverty line, or those facing repeated visa rejections. Ferris and Kirişci (2016) argue that the education of displaced individuals is intimately linked to their livelihoods: they are often forced to prioritize their families' survival over their studies, whether willingly or not (Ferris and Kirişci, 2016, p. 133). As Ferris and Kirişci (2016) highlight, "[...] there is also an opportunity to use this horrific human tragedy to introduce needed fundamental changes to our systems of global governance and humanitarian response" (Ferris and Kirişci, 2016, p. 141).

Despite the efforts of the APGES scholarship program, there are individual social problems associated with each student, beyond language and educational barriers. Yet, some of these social problems only arose after the student migrants left Syria. The most significant issue is the impact of leaving home and the subsequent adjustments — in other words, displacement. Displacement is a question that inevitably follows every Syrian migrant who leaves their home, prompting introspection about whether to stay and risk an unsalvageable future or venture into the unknown abroad. As Al-Sabouni addresses the reality of the current Syrian migration crisis, "Now, in the midst of a human crisis, [...] people are choosing between displacement and death [...]" (Al-Sabouni, 2016, p. 68). Along the migratory path, a migrant — especially one forcibly displaced — becomes someone who experiences both the search for refuge and the pursuit of stability. The question of displacement, in relation to the actions of humanitarian agencies and host governments, presents significant challenges that depend on surrounding factors and emerge through the migrant's experience. The uncertainty of the migrant's itinerary cannot be separated from their migratory path, meaning the significant challenges migrants encounter are shaped and determined by multiple, interrelated factors.

ii.ii.e.ii. Syrian-Lebanese land checkpoints

This case study presents a vivid recollection and current experience of displacement of a female Syrian student who migrated to Portugal. She is part of the fourth and final group of Syrian students to arrive in Portugal in 2018 through the APGES scholarship program. The dialogue took place over several sessions, each ending with the female student migrant asking for time to forget what she had been asked to recall and what she had agreed to share. To frame her story through time and events, including the recollections and obliterations of her memory, a chronological time-line (Figure 87) expresses the three phases of her migratory path. The first phase overlaps with the initial student group of APGES and the female student migrant's status during that period. In 2017, she learned about APGES and the new call for scholarships initiated in early 2017, with a submission deadline in September 2017. The female student migrant comes from Lattakia, a city in northern Syria, located in the coastal zone bordering Türkiye to the south. In April 2017, she applied to the Global Platform for Syrian Students' fourth and final emergency call for scholarships.

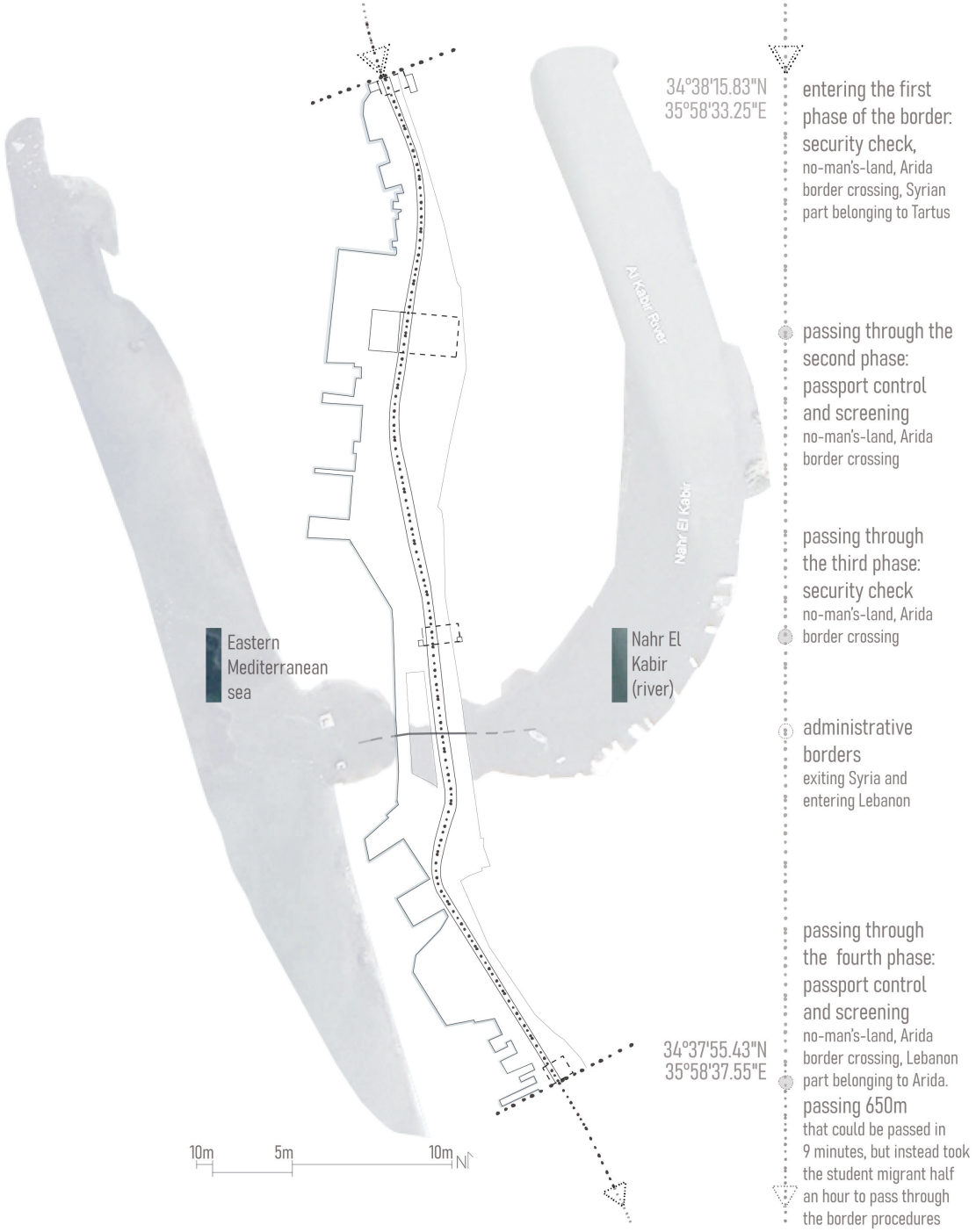
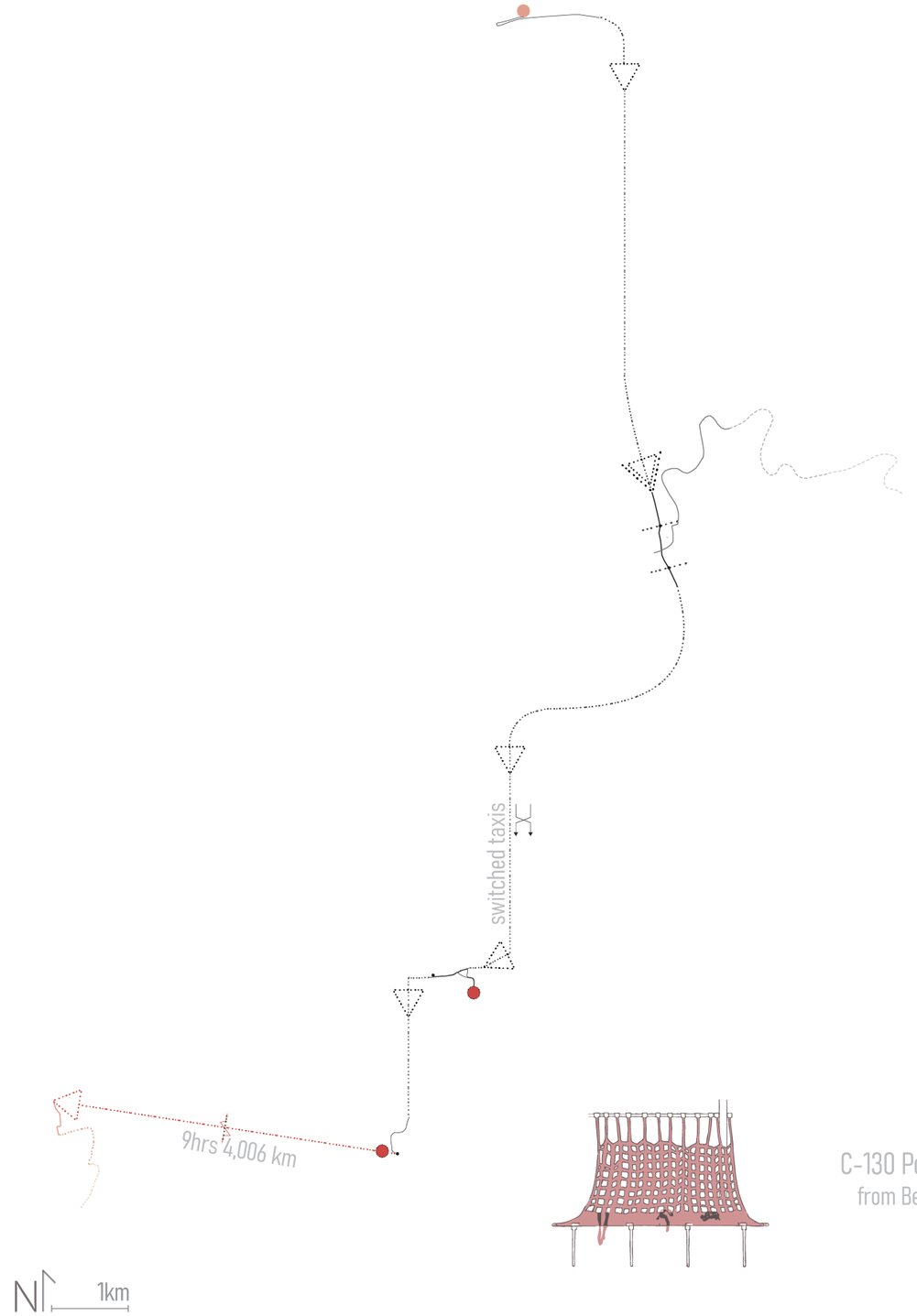


Figure 76. Map of the Arida border crossing, located along Syria's western administrative border with northern Lebanon, within the no-man's-land buffer zone between both countries' checkpoints, which the student migrant from the *Shantata* case study traversed after leaving her home in Lattakia.

During that time, she was unemployed, but prior to that, she had an internship that covered only enough money for transportation. She graduated with a bachelor's degree during the war's most intense period. The quality of education deteriorated due to many factors, such as living conditions and the economic crisis, and she felt that her war experiences were more memorable and stood out more than all the knowledge she attempted to absorb, attain, and comprehend. She earned her bachelor's degree by studying through many nights without electricity, relying on a rechargeable emergency LED light on one corner of her desk and, countless times, on her mobile flashlight when the LED's battery no longer worked. As there was no electricity at her home, there was no working heating source, either at home or at the university, during the harsh winters. She recalls that the situation as a whole was extremely tiresome, not only because of the effort she put into her academic years, but also due to the reality of war. This reality led to the deliberate cutting of electricity and disruptions to other daily necessities. According to her, between 2011 and 2018, the electricity would initially come on for two hours, then be cut for three hours, at best. It was usually followed by a rationing system of three hours on and three hours off. Eventually, the situation worsened, with only two hours on and four hours off, and at times, just one hour on and five hours off. Of course, in many other regions of Syria, the situation was even worse.

All hopes of escaping this reality came to fruition when, not long after applying for the emergency call, the female student migrant received a partial acceptance letter in September 2017. This was a first-phase acceptance from the APGES scholarship program, and she was informed to wait for further notice. In February 2018, after six months had passed, she received confirmation of her acceptance into the fourth call for academic scholarships. The migratory trip was supposed to begin in April 2018 but was postponed to the 25th of May, 2018. It was then that her migration was initiated, marking her first time ever leaving Syria. To this, the chronological time-line's second phase approaches a national border-related context, specifically the Syrian Arida border crossing (Figure 76) when exiting the country, and a neighboring border-related context, namely the Rafic Hariri International Airport, upon arriving at another no-man's land. The second phase also marks the transition point when the student migrant joined the APGES scholarship program in the fourth call. The fourth migratory group was asked to arrive a day before the scheduled flight to Beirut, Lebanon, to have their passports stamped. On a sunny morning, the 24th of May, 2018, the female student migrant left her home in Lattakia, Syria, and, for the first time, traveled alone in a taxi, taking the highway that overlooks the eastern Mediterranean Sea for about an hour and a half until reaching the Arida border crossing. At the border checkpoint, she spent half an hour having her luggage scanned, inspected, and verifying the reason for leaving Syria and staying for a short time in Lebanon. With both APGES' invitation letter and the migrant's bachelor's certificate, the border crossing was facilitated. After crossing the border, the taxi continued into northern Lebanon and then headed south to Beirut, still overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. The taxi dropped the female student migrant just before reaching Beirut, as Syrian taxis are not allowed to operate within Beirut. After changing taxis (Figure 77), she continued her migratory path to the Tulip Hotel in Beirut, where she stayed for the night. Once she had left her luggage in the reserved room, she went to the last floor of the Sofitel Hotel, just a few minutes away on foot, to have her passport stamped and meet the student group from the fourth call, as well as some board members of the APGES scholarship program. Afterwards, she returned to the hotel room.

living uncertainty and pre-displacement experience until reaching the military aircraft



accommodations - temporary places of habitation experiencing "shantata"

traveled in a vehicle at a speed of 112 km/h + waiting time spent at places after leaving home

$d_w=(s_w.t_w)e_w$

The female migrant's somewhere home,
Lattakia, Syria

around 1 year and 3 months (10,920 hrs)
◕ km of waiting

Leaving the female migrant's home-country, no-man's-land, Arida, Syria and Lebanon

1 hr 33 min + half an hour
115 km + ◕ km of waiting

Tulip Hotel,
Beirut, Lebanon

1 hr 48 min + around a day (24 hrs)
111 km + ◕ km of waiting

C-130 Portuguese military aircraft,
from Beirut Lebanon to Lisbon, Porutgal

22 min + 3 hrs
19.3 km + ◕ km of waiting

100 km

Figure 77.
Diagram of the female student migrant's pre-displacement migratory path in the *Shantata* case study, from departing Syria to arriving at Rafic Hariri International Airport to board the military aircraft.

ii.ii.e.iii. Rafic Hariri International Airport: neighboring border-related contexts

The following day, she took a taxi to Rafic Hariri International Airport, where she was scheduled to meet the student group and the accompanying board members of the APGES scholarship program. Upon arriving at the airport (Figure 78), she entered through the main gate and waited for her colleagues to arrive. After meeting the student migrants at a location parallel to the airport's entry gate, alongside one of the board members of the APGES scholarship program, the female student migrant went back to retrieve her cabin trolley, which had remained by the seat where she had been sitting while waiting for the others to arrive. She then lined up with the group and proceeded to the first security checkpoint, where luggage was scanned, before heading directly to the airline's counters, where they deposited their luggage at the drop-off for check-in. They then passed through another security checkpoint for passport control and stamping. This system of double security and in-person luggage scanning is also experienced at the airport in Damascus. It stems from political tensions, strict border controls, and is designed to ensure thorough screening at both the luggage and personal levels. The procedure is part of heightened security measures aimed at guaranteeing complete verification that the individual crossing has a valid pass to transit and poses no security risks.

Fortunately, her checkpoint crossing was neither delayed nor interrupted by the airport employees, and everything proceeded smoothly. However, the spacing between her footsteps became shorter due to the long queue ahead of her while passing through security. Once cleared, the student migrant's steps became faster and longer. She did not mention, at any point, any specific distance covered or describe any spatial experience that could characterize the transition from the second security checkpoint to the next phase. In fact, in her migratory experience, distance was relative at the airport. The spaces she described within the airport were defined by the points where each event took place. Given that airports are typically designed to accommodate large numbers of individuals, this helped in understanding the sequence of events and their role in interrupting, controlling, and organizing the movement of people. However, even though the representation in Figure 78 may not align or fully correspond with the floor plan(s) of Rafic Hariri International Airport, which is unavailable to the public, nor with the fire escape plan, the oral history and the student migrant's recollection of this no-man's-land provide enough context to represent the plan, even partially, based on speculation and the drawings the female student provided. When asked if any photographs had been taken at the airport, she explained that she did not have any, but her colleagues did, and instead provided a schematic plan. This drawing was translated into Figure 78, which conveys the walking order, spacings, spatial configuration and function, and the formation created by her movement, as well as the scale of the airport as perceived through her pacing.

After leaving the intensely militarized security zone, the students proceeded to their designated gate, where they sat and waited for some time. Eventually, a board member arrived to inform them that it was time to proceed. They then formed a queue and, after leaving the airport building, the group boarded a shuttle that took them directly to the area where the Portuguese C-130 military cargo aircraft was parked on the tarmac of Rafic Hariri International Airport. The aircraft's rear cargo exit was opened, signaling the next phase of their migration. This moment marked a shift from the highly controlled airport environment to the start of their flight, under the supervision of military personnel.

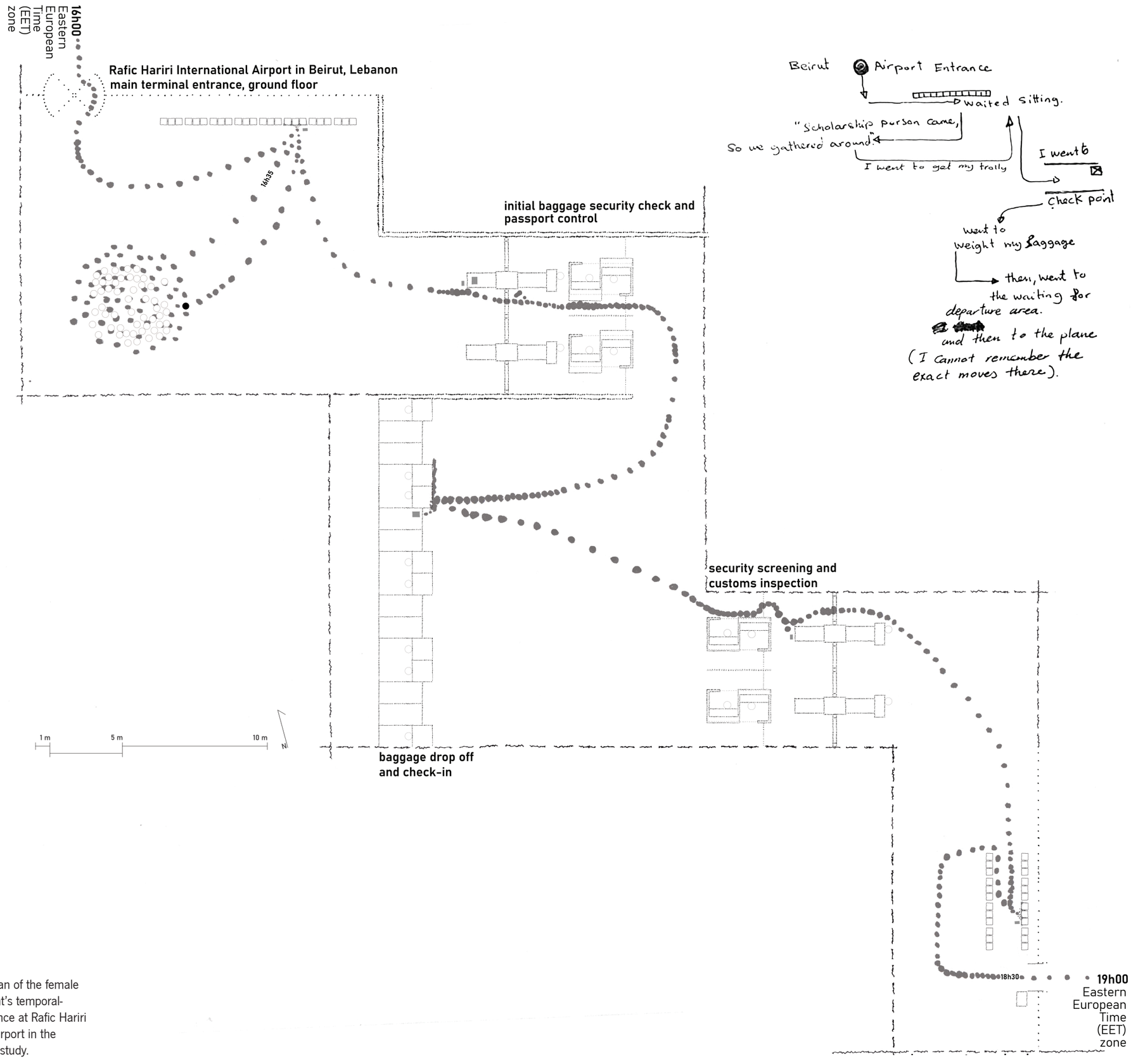


Figure 78.
Recollection plan of the female student migrant's temporal-spatial experience at Rafic Hariri International Airport in the *Shantata* case study.

Figure 79. Image of the C-130H Portuguese cargo aircraft parked on the tarmac of Rafic Hariri International Airport, with the Syrian students from the fourth and final student migratory flow from APGES entering the rear of the aircraft while the luggage was being packed into the large-netted container.

Source: image from a colleague of the female student migrant.

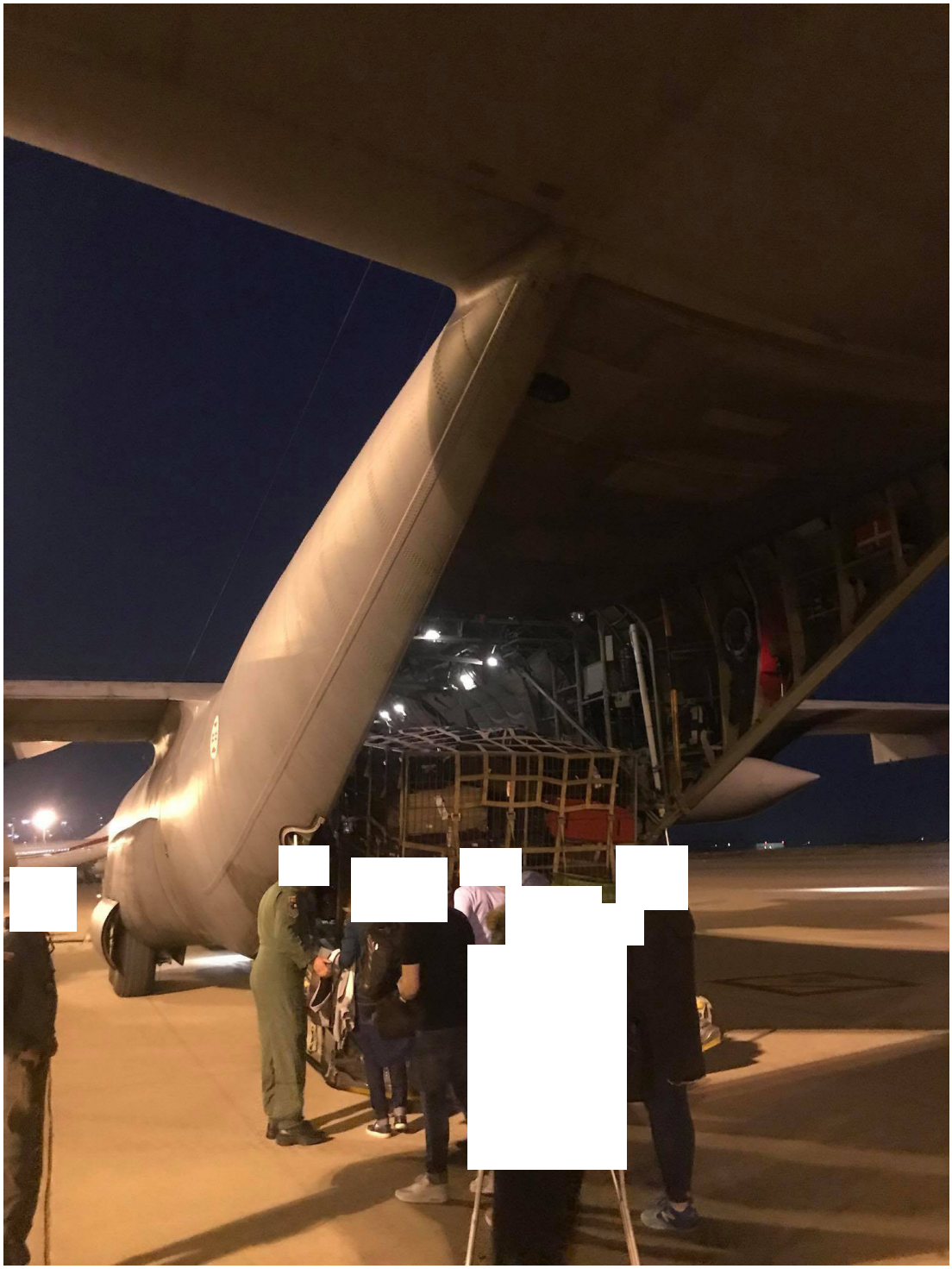




Figure 80.
Image of the Syrian students from the fourth and final student migratory flow from APGES in the shuttle, looking at the C-130 Portuguese cargo aircraft parked on the tarmac of Rafic Hariri International Airport.

Source: images from a colleague of the female student migrant.

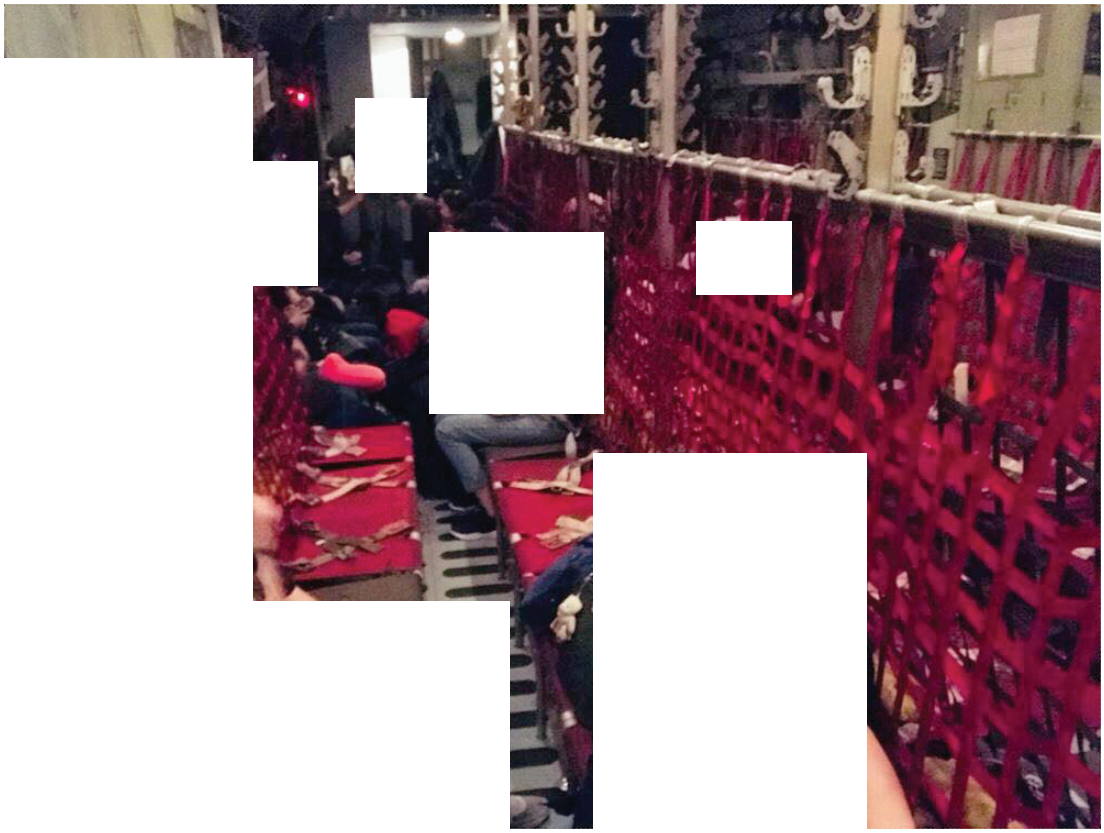


Figure 81.
Image of the Syrian students from the fourth migratory flow from APGES inside the C-130 Portuguese cargo aircraft after seating themselves on the double-folded red-netted seats.

Source: images from a colleague of the female student migrant.

ii.ii.e.iv. Military cargo aircraft C-130

The airborne context encounter began after all the students from the fourth call gathered near the departure gate and then boarded a shuttle that transported them to the C-130 military transport aircraft, a plane operated by the Portuguese Força Aérea (Portuguese Air Force), parked on the tarmac of Rafic Hariri International Airport. Upon their arrival at the aircraft, the accompanying Portuguese military personnel had already lowered the loading ramp to begin organizing the students' luggage. The setting sun cast long shadows across the tarmac as the students waited for their names to be called individually before boarding the plane.

Once her name was called, the student migrant approached the military aircraft (Figure 82), handed over her luggage, and walked up the ramp into the plane's rear section. She selected a seat near the middle of the aircraft, along the left side of the back-to-back central row of red, double-folded netted seats. The seating arrangement, which she described as simple and functional, formed a pattern she would later remember in vivid detail. From her chosen spot (Figure 83), she could take in the entirety of the aircraft's interior, noting its utilitarian design and lack of personal space. It was an environment distinctly different from a commercial passenger flight. Those, she had only seen described in television shows and books — never in her own lived experience. In other words, her first encounter with an airborne context was through the C-130 H military cargo aircraft.

As each student found their place, the military cargo aircraft prepared for departure. The C-130 took off, marking not only the fourth migratory path for Syrian students but also the second group to cross the Mediterranean in a military cargo aircraft bound directly for Lisbon, Portugal. Inside the C-130, the atmosphere remained constant — metallic walls, the shuffling of non-muted and muted sounds from the aircraft, and the steady hum of its engines. The environment, confined and unchanging, provided little distraction for the student migrant during the flight. For the next nine hours, she remained seated in her designated spot, her movements limited by the conditions of the military plane. The passage of time merged with the monotony of the space, defined only by the physical discomfort of the rigid seating and the anticipation of what awaited her in Portugal. Finally, as the plane descended for landing, the long flight across the Mediterranean came to an end, marking the start of a new chapter in her migratory path.

ii.ii.e.v. Figo Maduro military terminal

The third phase of the chronological timeline begins upon the arrival of the C-130 transport aircraft at the tarmac of Aeródromo de Trânsito n.° 1 (AT1), a Portuguese military terminal in Figo Maduro, just before dawn. The aircraft descended through the dim morning light and landed at the terminal, marking the students' arrival in Portugal. Once the plane came to a stop, the students disembarked from the Portuguese C-130 military cargo aircraft via a side air-stair, stepping onto Portuguese soil for the first time. The red-netted, double-folded seat lingered as a reminder of the student migrant's first-ever flight, leaving a trail as it followed her path while the students were immediately directed toward a shuttle that took them to the terminal's single-story building.

After alighting from the shuttle, the students entered a queue and moved together into the confined, square-shaped space designated for efficient processing inside the terminal, similar

Figure 82. Section of the C-130 Portuguese cargo aircraft showing the interior, where the student migrant from the fourth migratory flow of APGES has seated on one of the double-folded red-netted seats. C-130 Portuguese military aircraft in the airport of Rafic Al Hariri International Airport's tarmac, photos taken on the 25th of May 2018 with others from the 1st call on the 28th on February 28th, 2014.

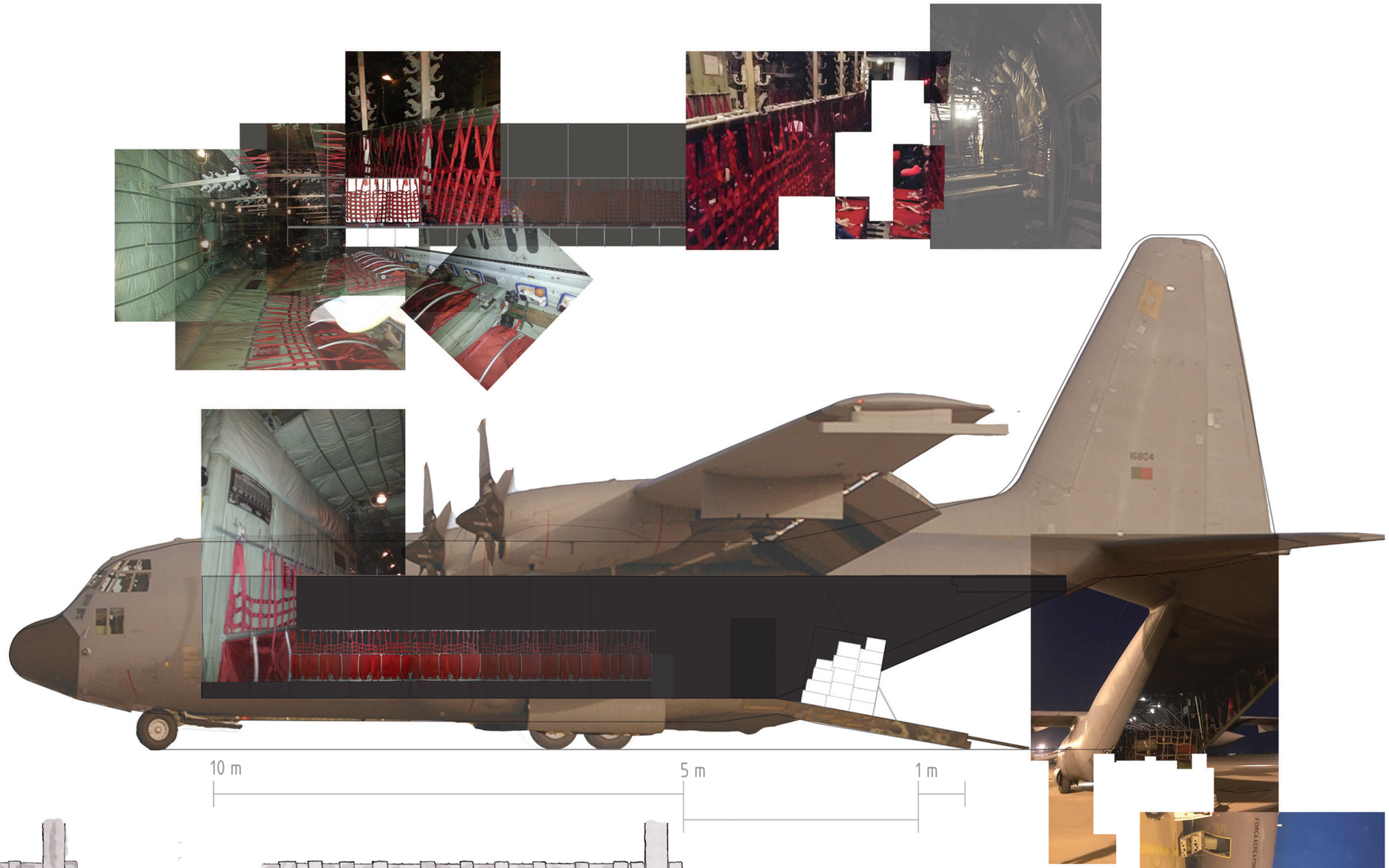
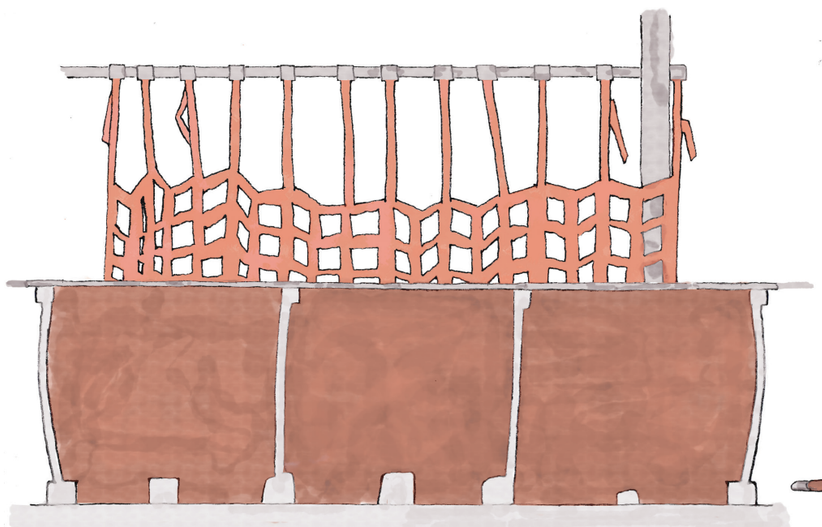
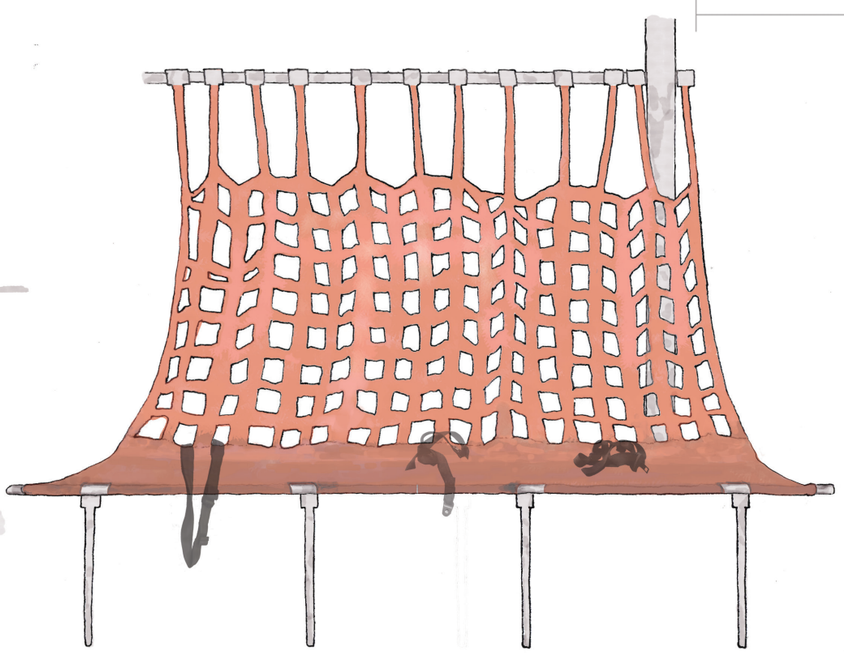
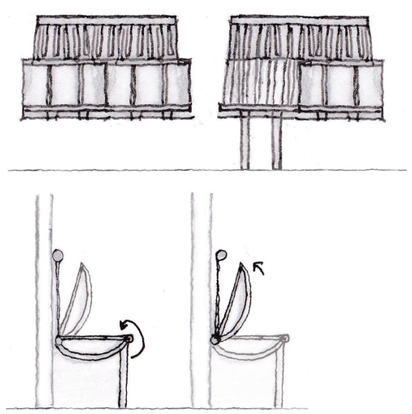


Figure 83. Double-folded, red-netted seats in the C-130 Portuguese military cargo aircraft, folded and unfolded in two distinct phases that require manual steps for unfolding.









to that of the first group, as the description aligns with the space for the first group. The student migrant also provided a schematic plan of the military terminal (Figure 84), conveying her spatial experience within a foreign border context. The student migrant recalled wandering around the terminal, uncertain of the directions, as she searched for a way to charge her phone while waiting for the next step, hoping to leave and rest. Then, each student was called by name and proceeded through the space in a manner that mirrored their entry onto the aircraft — organized and methodical. After completing this step, the students exited through the building's opposite side, where their luggage had been placed on a stand for collection. The process emphasized the transition from one controlled migratory phase to another, moving from the military context of their transport to the civilian-oriented accommodations awaiting them.

Once outside the terminal, the group was split into two buses, organized to transport them to their temporary lodging, after briefly stopping at a hotel near Santa Maria Hospital in Lisbon to meet other board members and students from the APGES scholarship program. The early morning bus tour through the city streets introduced the students to an unfamiliar yet promising environment. Upon arriving at the hotel, many were met by siblings, cousins, or friends who had previously arrived in Portugal through the same APGES scholarship program. These moments of reunion, filled with relief and familiarity, provided an emotional anchor after the long migration itinerary and marked the first step toward integrating into their new surroundings. However, the female student migrant did not meet anyone related to her, as she was the first among her family members to leave Syria. She did, however, recognize one person in the crowd — a teaching assistant from her university in Syria. He had managed to bring his partner, whom he had recently married from a distance, to Portugal through the same scholarship program, and saw her in person as his spouse for the first time that day.

But for the female student, there was no one waiting. Her arrival signified a critical juncture in her migration — one marked by solitude and new beginnings. After leaving the hotel, her path continued, blending her academic pursuits with the broader narrative of displacement and resettlement. The migratory path through Portugal, beginning at Figo Maduro and extending beyond, became a convergence point where her migration and displacement intertwined, shaping her unfolding story in a new land. This phase not only connected her to the shared experience of APGES students but also distinguished her individual trajectory within the broader migratory framework of displacement. Between her solitude and displacement lay a space of challenges — uncertainty, waiting, and the process of integrating into a new environment — often marked by emotional, social, and spatial adaptation shifts.

ii.ii.e.vi. Displacement

Upon their arrival and initial relocation, the students from the fourth call were given the opportunity to focus exclusively on learning the Portuguese language during their first semester in Portugal, as this was one of the objectives of the APGES scholarship program. It facilitated a way to start integrating with Portuguese society and academia. However, it coincided with their shifting accommodations. The female student migrant changed accommodations seven times in a short period, moving between temporary residences provided by the scholarship program and the Portuguese government as part of their emergency efforts to host a large number of students and ensure that all necessities were

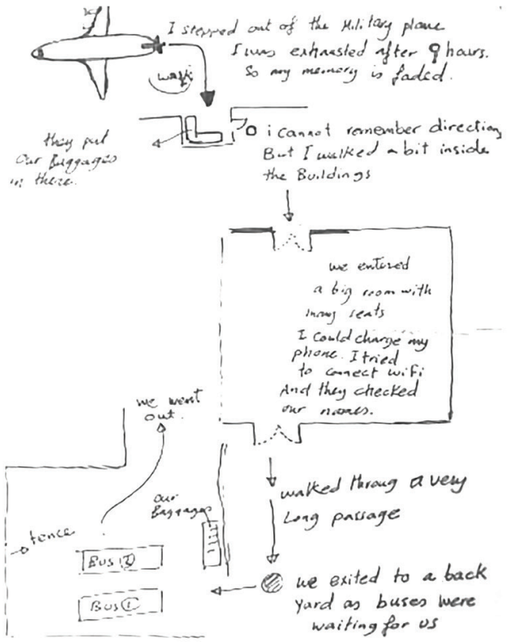
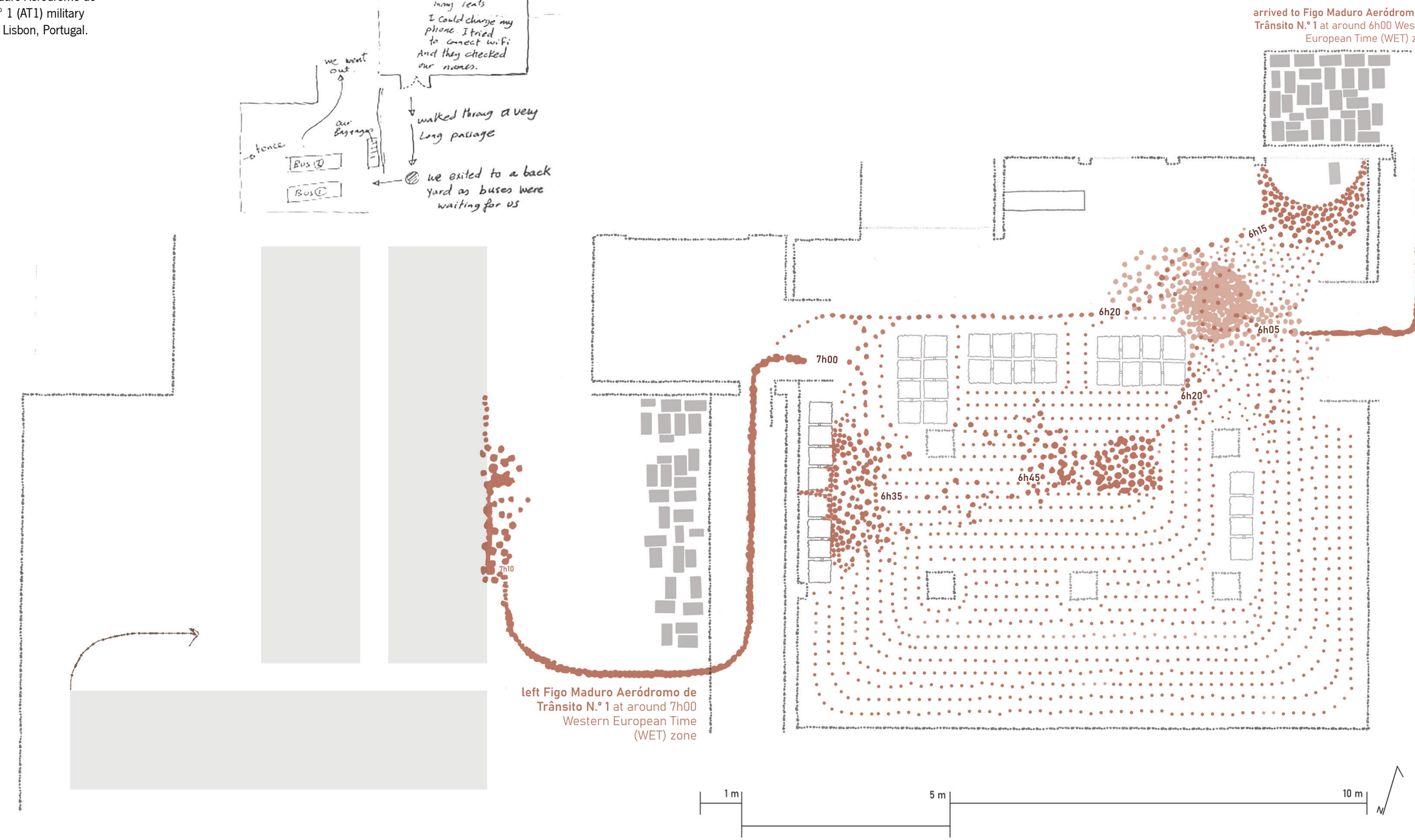


Figure 84. Recollection plan of the temporal-spatial experience of the female student migrant from the Shantata case study, in Figo Maduro Aeródromo de Trânsito n.° 1 (AT1) military terminal in Lisbon, Portugal.



provided. These accommodations, managed by various entities, required her to share rooms or apartments with one or more individuals from the fourth migration flow. This continuous unfamiliarity with the places and people, both among student migrants and others, was a factor that challenged and intensified her experience of displacement over time. She found herself with fewer student colleagues accompanying her on her displacement path, after leaving Lisbon for the first time and changing accommodations several times.

After leaving the meeting point at Sana Malhoa Hotel, all the student migrants went to their first accommodation, Academia Militar (Military Academy) in Lisbon, where they stayed for one month with student candidates studying at the academy. After that, the students moved within the same city to a nursing student accommodation at Residência Escolar da Escola Superior de Enfermagem de Lisboa (ESEL Residence of the School of Nursing of Lisbon), where they stayed for one month with nursing students. Later, part of the students left Lisbon and went north to the city of Guimarães to participate in a two-week workshop at the School of Architecture at the University of Minho, where they stayed at Residências Universitárias de Azurém (Azurém University Residences). Once the workshop was finished, the students returned to Lisbon but changed accommodations, staying at IPL - Residência de Estudantes do Serviço de Ação Social Maria Beatriz (IPL - Student Residence of the Maria Beatriz Social Action Service), near the Chelas subway station, for one month, with students from the Polytechnic Institute.

At this point, the students knew whether they had already secured residential openings near their universities' campuses. However, the female student continued to be part of the ongoing group of students who had not obtained residential vacancies. The group then moved to Coimbra, where they stayed for one week at Residências São Martinho (São Martinho Residences) with other university students. Afterward, each student went to the city where they would begin their studies, except for the female student and a few others who remained behind. She, along with her colleagues, moved to Porto and stayed at Casa Diocesana - Seminário de Vilar (Diocesan House - Vilar Seminary) for about two months with other students and seminarians.

During this waiting period, the female student migrant received notification that she would be moving to her final point of relocation in Vila Nova de Gaia. She would share an apartment with her female colleagues from the same group, where she would have her own room. From early November until today, that room became her temporary accommodation. She refused to describe the apartment or her room in a draft drawing but shared general descriptions in her narrative: a narrow kitchen with no living area, a shared bathroom next to a bedroom that is not hers, and a plus-one. She stressed that, since she had not yet moved out of the room, she could not spatially describe it. Over the next six months (to be precise, five months and three weeks), she experienced a continued and distinct phase of displacement within her series of displacements. However, from the moment she arrived in that room, she realized her sense of displacement persisted as she awaited a place to call home.

In recalling these temporary places of habitation, her description of each accommodation did not focus on the interior or her spatial occupation of it, although a few photos of her previous accommodations are shared in Figure 86. Rather, it was a description of her waiting

migratory path of displacement until reaching the for-now accommodation

accommodations - temporary places of habitation experiencing "shantata"

traveled in a vehicle at a speed of 112 km/h + waiting time spent at a place of accommodation

$d_w=(s_w.t_w)e_w$

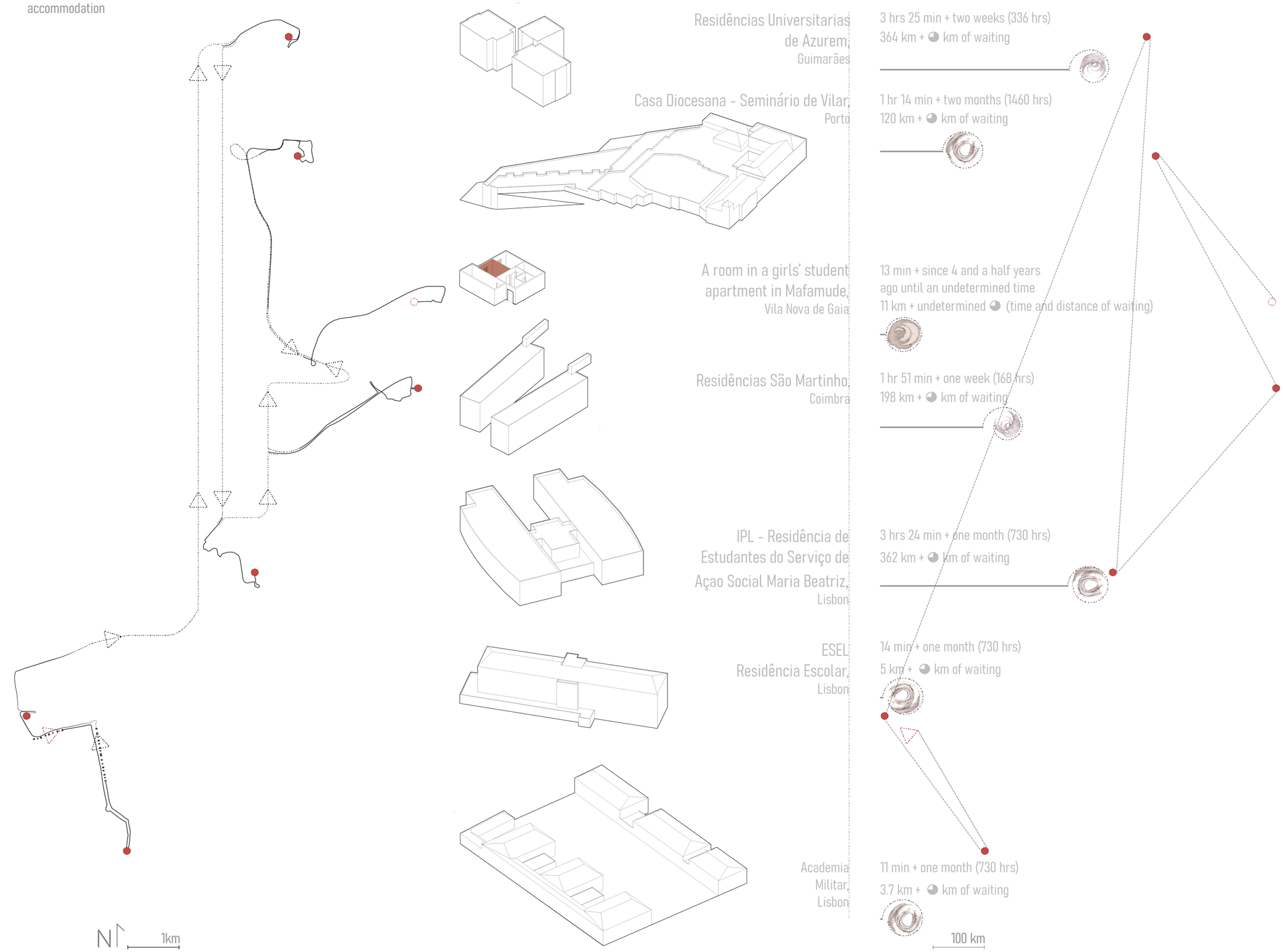


Figure 85. Diagram for the instances of waiting in the temporary places of habitation in the *Shantata* case study.

experiences, along with the duration of time spent in each place. The female student migrant's experience is framed within time-space, where place and its location are situated in-between, as they take precedence in the narrative. The migratory experience, both in pre-displacement and displacement along the migratory path and experience of *Shantata*, is marked by points, each representing a place that functions as a passage (as seen in Figures 78 and 85). In Figure 85, each accommodation represents a stop along her path, where she performs her quotidian routine, which repeats but changes location after a certain duration, highlighting the continuous presence of displacement throughout her migratory experience. When describing these waiting instances, she emphasizes being forced to confront these memories, as they are brought to the forefront when recalling the movement between different places, the distance covered, and the time spent within them. She cannot undo these memories, nor can she un-live them. This is part of her ongoing migratory path — the search for home and, more importantly, the feeling of being settled, in a place with which she can familiarize herself and identify; a place that may resemble home and offer some semblance of stability.

When she described her migratory experience, she said, *Shantata*: [*Shantata* written in Arabic as: شنططة: (noun); from the informal Syrian Arabic dialect word تشنططت, pronounced as *t'shantatet* that is a: verb form; first-person; informal Syrian Arabic dialect. It means: to struggle in moving from one place to another, while being away from home. This can apply within a city, between cities, or between countries and is often said with the feeling of being tired from the act of moving. The noun form, *Shantata* شنططة is a venting expression frequently used in dialogue with the female student migrant, often phrased in a rhetorical question, as in شو هالشنططة؟, (meaning "What is this shantata?"). It serves as a means of catharsis, allowing for the temporary expression and release of emotions stemming from displacement, while simultaneously yearning for stability.] In her experience, living with uncertainty since waiting for the scholarship became equated with the expression "Shantata," as it conveys the extension of the unknown in being displaced. At the same time, it highlights how aspects of displacement are closely tied to visual and textual language, expression, and representation.

Although the female student is still in the process of being displaced — both emotionally and physically — she holds on to hope of making it through. There are silver linings within her path of displacement. One of them is not returning home — since she cannot — but rather reaching a better conclusion to her prolonged waiting. Through the mapping of her displacement, waiting emerges as an ever-present state in the student migrant's path. This state of waiting is measured by the flow of time spent in each temporary place of habitation. In relation to distance, the migrant's position in time does not change; in other words, each place has a fixed location, but waiting is progressive and shifts with the change of locations..

Within displacement, the path traversed to arrive at each place is measured by distance. But what about measuring the distance of waiting — not just the time of waiting? What if displacement is more than just a lived feeling — what if it is also a means to measure waiting through the representation of maps? To deconstruct this further, in an equation: the distance of waiting within one temporary place of habitation is equal to the speed of waiting (which is equal to one, as it runs parallel to time), multiplied by the time of waiting spent in each place, both of which are then multiplied by an unknown variable — namely, the lived and/or recalled

Academia Militar
38¹43'35.36"N
(RESAS-MB)
Residência
38¹45'25.54"N
Sana
Malhoa
Hotel
38¹44'44.59"N

Seminario de
Vilar
41¹ 8'59.39"N

Azurém
Residence,
Guimaraes
41¹27'9.59"N

ESEL Residência
38¹44'57.23"N

room in
Mafamude, Vila
Nova de Gaia
41¹ 7'30.02"N

Residencias
São Martinho,
Coimbra
40¹12'45.20"N

Figo Maduro Terminal,
Lisbon, Portugal
33¹49'34.53"N

Sofitel Hotel
33¹53'12.96"N
Tulip Hotel
33¹53'7.62"N
Rafic Hariri
International
Airport
33¹49'33.72"N

Arida border
crossing
34¹38'10.99"N

migrant's home
in Lattakia, Syria
35¹31'34.43"N

8¹17'11.30"W

8¹36'20.47"W
8¹37'42.64"W

8¹27'20.84"W



then moved

between

seven



accomodations

during

around



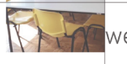
five

months



and

three



weeks

9¹ 7'58.29"W
9¹ 9'47.24"W
9¹ 9'35.92"W
9¹ 8'26.14"W
9¹ 7'5.08"W

arrived in Lisbon,
Portugal on the 26th
of May, 2018

the female student migrant spent 9 hours in a C-130 Portuguese military aircraft for a flight distance of around 4,005,716 m

35¹48'2.55"E

Left Lattakia,
Syria
on the 24th
of May, 2018

35¹58'33.95"E

35¹31'2.51"E
35¹31'23.42"E

35¹29'33.15"E

left Beirut,
Lebanon
on the 25th of May, 2018

150 km
100 km
50 km

N

50 km
100 km
150 km

Figure 86.
Distorted map of the migratory path and experience of the female student migrant from the *Shantata* case study. The map represents the displacement of the female student's migration path from Lattakia, Syria to Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal.

experience of waiting. This can be expressed as: $d_w = (s_w \times t_w) \times e_w$ (see Figures 78 and 85). The female student migrant has lived — and continues to live — instances of waiting; each instance becomes either sparser or denser in relation to time and in comparison to each sojourned place. But in her for-now accommodation, the spiral of waiting is becoming denser over time. It begins at a fixed central point, symbolizing her time of arrival, and spirals outward, forming a curve that never intersects the starting point. It will only come to a halt when the female migrant eventually moves out and, one day, finds home. That is to say, the conclusion presented suggests that a solution to this issue of displacement is elusive. However, the absence of a solution does not diminish the importance of understanding this path. Instead, it interrogates the uncertainty lived within the context of displacement in individual experiences.

The timeline (in Figure 87) establishes the relationship between time, space, and place, emphasizing that her migratory path did not end upon arriving in Portugal but continues. The four-year-plus segment is marked as an undetermined final time-interval, indicating the last moment I had contact with the student migrant, attempted to gather information, and initiated a dialogue with her. It also marks the last time I was notified that she still remained in that temporary, for-now accommodation. Because this place of habitation is temporary, the term associates habitation with a time-interval of lived experiences in a migratory place — one that is expected to end and give way to another. Although the migrant's temporary place of habitation may serve as a refuge, for this migrant it may never be referred to as 'home.' This shrinking of the extended time-interval reflects the ongoing and prolonged adaptation period of the student migrant. She emphasizes that once she left home, 'home' could not be found anywhere overseas, nor would it remain the same if she ever returned. Experiencing survival displacement in the *Shantata* case study affected her adaptation and resettlement process. With home unrecognized, she continues to wait, persisting in the experience of *t'shantatet*.

Similar to this notion, Astolfo and Boano in "The imperfect ethics of hospitality: Engaging with the politics of care and refugees' dwelling practices in the Italian urban context" (2020) discuss migrant refugees' struggle to find a sense of home within displacement, stating:

> Where do refugees find home? – it seems to us that many attributes of home such as privacy, safety and security are found outside the house; and discomfort is sometimes felt inside the house, when refugees feel homeless at home. We could argue that for people on the move, rather than home being a fixed place it is a condition: the experience of being at home in the world. (Astolfo and Boano, 2020, p. 472)

Astolfo and Boano's (2020) question resonates with the female student migrant's trajectory, in which home remains an unresolved feeling and a condition perpetually deferred. This reframing complicates any notion of resettlement as a fixed destination and underscores the instability of so-called refuge when the sense of home continues to elude those in displacement. The *Intima'a* case of belonging, which opens the series of case studies, and the *Shantata* case of displacement, which closes them, both raise the subject of home — not as a resolved concept, but as one that continues to branch outward, inviting further exploration.

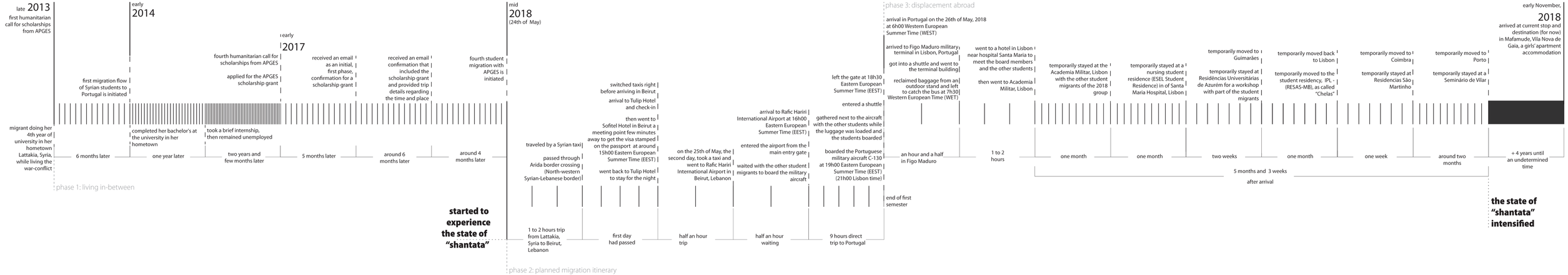


Figure 87. Chronological time-line of the female student's migration — from the *Shantata* case study — to Portugal, following the fourth emergency call of APGES. The time-line unfolds into three phases with dilation and shrinking of time: phase one living in-between, the second as the migration itinerary, and the third as displacement, which remains ongoing, with an unknown end date after late 2018.

part iii.

Architecture for migrant auto-ethnography

Architecture for migrant auto-ethnography is the third part of the thesis, which is simultaneously involved with and affected by the structure of this thesis, considers how migration can be performed, documented, and situated by knowledge shaped through historical events and conditions. It sets a critical engagement with the intersections of representation, movement, and architecture from an auto-ethnographic methodology. This part folds into the performance-based research in practice, emphasizing the role of the researcher as a migrant in auto-ethnography. In this transition, representation becomes a product of active performance, whether shared with the public, implemented in fieldwork, or reflected upon through constellations of events. This part, consisting of three chapters, engages with the processes of performance, site-based path study, and auto-reflections on findings.

The first chapter, **performance as path representation**, explores performance as a method for mapping and representing migration. This research begins with the performative use of objects to embody and trace two migratory paths and experiences related to displacement and emotional numbness from the student migrant case studies, through personification. It then unfolds into an exhibition work that interconnects with a performance focusing on one of the case studies, highlighting the potential of reuse in the context of war ruins. The chapter considers theatrical performance as a tool to represent and map lived migratory experiences within the framework of an exhibition, which serves as the stage for the performance. It also examines how objects, along with the performer's (researcher's) voice, serve as mediators of representation, personifying the migratory paths and experiences of student migrants.

The second chapter, **a reverse narrative: site visit**, shifts the position of critical ethnography. Instead of solely describing migrant narratives through representation, the researcher — now positioned as a migrant — undertakes a visit from Portugal to Samos, Greece, a site that previously hosted the first indication of a migrant reception and identification (detention) centre, which is currently being dismantled (1st - 3rd of July, 2024) and now holds traces of forced displacement. This chapter engages with photography, path findings, lived experiences, and site-specific observations to examine the remnants of the survival mechanisms that confined migrants. These are the individuals who continued their escape or were transferred to the active detention camp in Samos. Through these encounters, the research reflects on movement, containment, and the ways in which space bears witness to displacement.

The third and final chapter, **past events in the learning and creative process**, examines past events in the learning and creative process, as well as in the representation process, unveiling the knowledge gained from findings through both academic and non-academic activities and colloquium events that relate directly and indirectly to the thesis structure. It explores the knowledge produced through academic events, including colloquium discussions and participations that contributed to the thesis, alongside non-academic activities, such as personal experiences and travel. These events include, among others, investigative work on Syria and migration conducted by the researcher, vessel incident reports from Sea-Watch, and conversations and encounters with psychologists. These engagements inform the research structure and reflect the evolving understanding of migrant experiences, while ethically evaluating the impact of words, choices, and language in the research.

chapter **iii.i.**

_ Performance as a path representation

Building on the auto-ethnographic practice and its intersection with inter-subjectivity, both influenced by key bibliographic references, namely Heider (1975) and Abrams (2010), **performance as a path representation** explores the intersection of mapping, performance, and material memory through an auto-ethnographic lens of migration narratives. This analysis focuses on two case studies — *Shantata* and *Tanmeel* — to develop a method of path personification. Based on Ingold's (2007, 2015) conceptualization of the line as a lived and evolving trajectory, the performances transform migratory paths and experiences into embodied representations, where the theatrical performance becomes a medium for storytelling. The chapter introduces performance as a tool for mapping displacement, emphasizing that it is not merely a visual or textual representation but an experiential process that captures the flow of migratory paths and experiences. By engaging with the stories of Syrian student migrants, the performances translate personal histories into shared public discourses, reaching different types of audiences and moving beyond static cartographic representations. This non-conventional approach relates to Anzaldúa's (1987) idea that the writer is a shape-changer when invoking art through performance (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 66). She emphasizes these performances through the use of objects, stating: "[...] 'stories' are acts encapsulated in time, 'enacted' every time they are spoken aloud or read silently. I like to think of them as performances and not as inert and 'dead' objects [...]" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 66).

Connecting auto-ethnography to theatrical performance was a step already taken by Heider in "What do people do? Dani auto-ethnography" (1975), where he highlighted the performative dimension of ethnographic practice. Heider foregrounded the idea that ethnography could move beyond written accounts, embracing visual and embodied forms of storytelling that resonate with the logic of performance, in which personal narrative becomes a critical site of inquiry and resistance. While Foucault's questioning of authority (1969) calls into question the authority and centrality of the author, Heider's formulation of auto-ethnography invites a strategic return to the authorial self — not as a source of unmediated truth, but as a situated, constructed, and activist presence within the research process. Similarly, in "And Europe said, let there be in borders: Autoethnographic reflections on border crossings and violence" (2020), Kizito presents a statement on activating auto-ethnography as a political act, expressing "[...] I want to show how autoethnography can effectively illuminate border discourses by linking the personal to the political" (Kizito, 2020, p. 100). Here, the idea of auto-ethnography is framed by Kizito as a means to disrupt dominant narratives of borders and displacement by positioning personal experience as a legitimate and potent site of knowledge production. Through this positionality, the auto-ethnographic voice becomes both a mode of resistance and a tool for reconfiguring how border violence is narrated and understood, much like theatrical performance serves as a medium for telling migration stories.



Figure 88: The performer (researcher) with the object representation of the path and face mask for the performance of path personification in the *Shantata* case study in "Uncertain Landscapes" (2023).

iii.i.a. Mapping with objects: path personification

The integration of objects — such as a red netted seat from a military cargo aircraft and the yellow taxi — materializes the passage of time and space between places and territories, emphasizing how objects can serve as repositories of memory, bridging the personal and collective dimensions of displacement and lived experiences. The role of language in these performances also reflects the complexities of integration, as each case study is performed in a language shaped by its audience and context, highlighting both the struggle inherent in linguistic adaptation and the necessity of it in the migrant experience, as well as the international expansion of these migration stories across languages to be understood in both the audience's and the migrants' mother tongues and spoken languages.

In this thesis, I created two performances. Although I consider all the oral communications (presentations) I have made to be a form of performance, these two, rooted in artistic practice, enabled a closer engagement with path studies, with the specific case studies they were developed for, and with the public. The idea of theatrically performing emerged from the question of how this performance-based research could expand to share these stories with a wider audience through a different form of representation — beyond the visual and textual methods I had been using to further expand learning and creative methods. It was, in fact, a challenge I wished I could have extended to all the case studies. But that would have required more time, more opportunities for such performances to take place, and more emotional effort. This idea was only implemented at the end of 2023, when I participated in the international conference "Uncertain landscapes: Beyond transdisciplinary approaches" with the paper titled "Representing uncertainty within a lived experience in temporary emergency solutions: Mapping displacement as a process to measure waiting in a Syrian student migration to Portugal," which focused on the case study of *Shantata*. The performance began after the presentation of the case study was over, marked by a transition questioning 'the measurement of waiting,' leading to a moment when I stood, unannounced, to begin the performance, put on the white mask, and announced the start of the act — expressing the three phases of the migratory path and experience by personifying the path of *Shantata*. This first attempt served as a test to see whether my theatrical performance could effectively convey the intended representation. It became a method of mapping — performance as a means of path representation.

For this performance, I created a white mask to hide my face using white cardboard, a recycled tissue roll, and an elastic band to hold the mask in place between my forehead and the back of my head. I hid my face with a white rectangle, as I have done with all the faces shown in the images of the student migrants, APGES board members, and Portuguese Air Force military soldiers. When I blocked the view of my face during the performance, the audience — in this case, the other participants — could see the rest of me, my hands holding an object, and could hear my voice as I began the three acts and personified the path. The object mediated the mapping of the three phases within the three acts of the student migrant's migratory path and experience and translated the stage directions and the performance script. It was crafted using crepe paper to facilitate twisting and stretching the object during the performance. The object is red, resembling the trail left by the red netted seat of the military cargo aircraft. Although the color red did not appear in the student migrant's recollections before this encounter with the red netted seat, it became a symbolic





Figure 89 and 90: Object representation of the path and face mask used for the *Shantata* case study performance of path personification at the International Conference of Uncertain Landscapes (2023).

color representing her migratory path and experience. It is divided into three segments: the first, a line with notes that express the events that happened since 2017, with flashbacks on how the student migrant's education was consequentially affected by the humanitarian crisis of war and the inevitable infrastructural collapse; the second, a netted mesh resembling part of the double-folded red netted seat that the student migrant had chosen during her nine-hour flight in the Portuguese C-130 military cargo aircraft from Lebanon to Portugal.

ACT I:

(on foot with the mask on, say "Act one," then kneel on the floor and put the object on the floor)

I am a path; I am a path
Created in early 2017
By hope, by the granted hope of a Syrian female, whose higher education was jeopardized for five consecutive years in a war zone.
A mobile flashlight, alongside a barely rechargeable led light, used alternatively to study,
passing this
relentless time,
Waiting, after waiting, I am a path, set in motion only after waiting a year and 3 months at her home in Northern Syria, to progress,
a path she untraversed until this day.

(stand up and unroll the first segment of the object, mark the end of the first act)

ACT II:

(stand in front of the chair, say "Act two," then sit down on the chair)

To the south, I descend in a Syrian taxi, always adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea.
to Beirut, Lebanon, I arrive, switch taxis, and then after 226 km, I wait around 26 hours at where I stop to wait again with a visa stamped,
To the south west, I move 19km to the International Airport of Rafic Hariri, where I no longer am part of a taxi vehicle, I wait, she waits, three hours and a half, until the gate opens.
For once, time seems to move faster, and waiting seems to get shorter.
On the 25th of May 2018, I became part of a C-180 Portuguese military cargo aircraft, a second migratory flow of its kind, carrying 53 Syrian students on board.

(unroll the yarn)

Part of the double folded, red netted seat,
I became, like all the other seats that are around her. For nine hours straight and around 4,005.716 kilometers, I progressed, flying over the Mediterranean, for it to be the last time that she sees home, and for it to be a first time to step out of Syria.

(second part ends)

ACT III

(stand up, go next to the chair and say, "Act three")

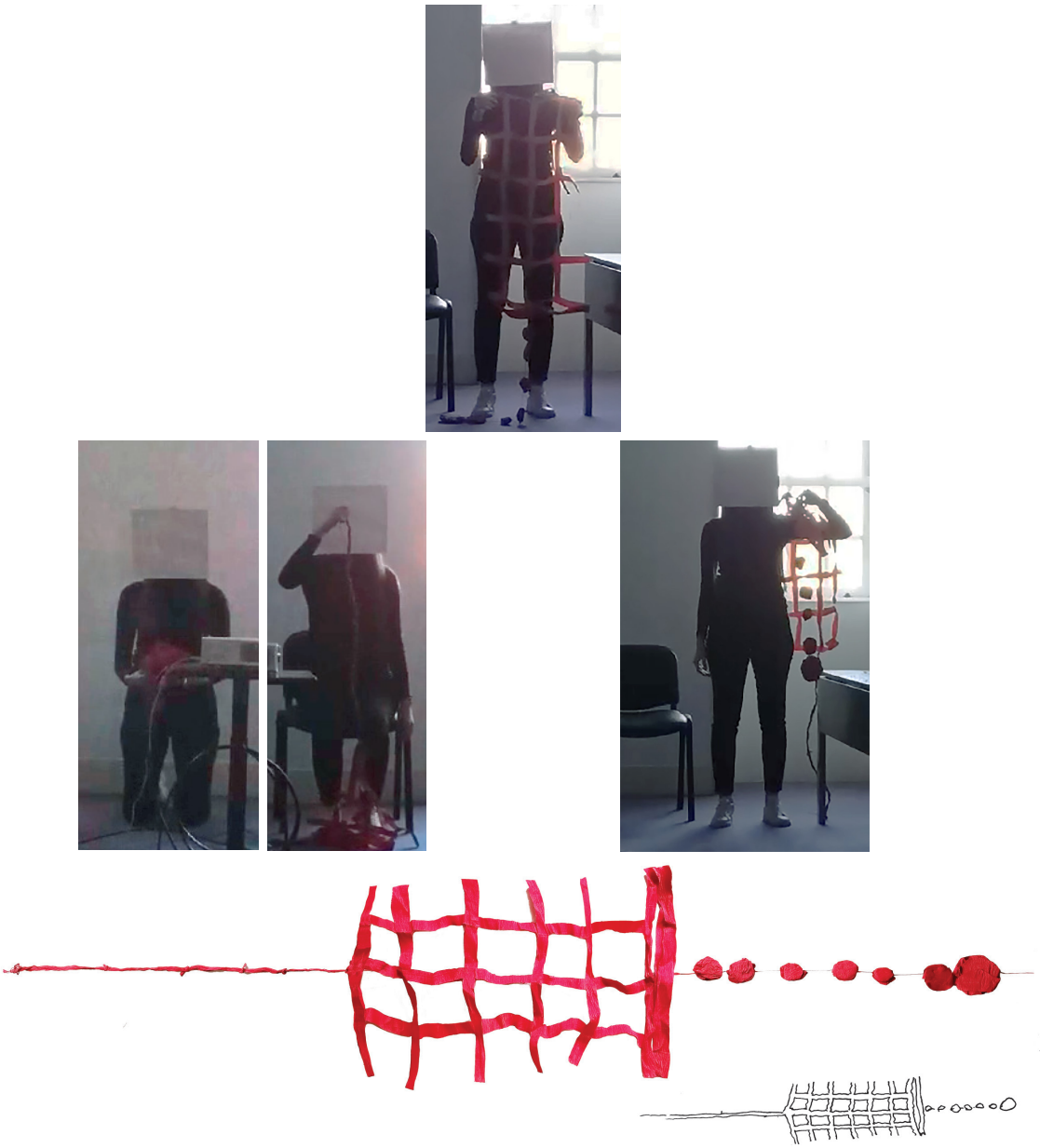
I wait. She waits. We land, at the tarmac of Figo Maduro in Lisbon, Portugal.
The red netted seat then disintegrates.

(pulls the yarn; last part)

Across Portugal, I temporarily move to 6 different accommodations during five months and three weeks, covering a distance of around 1,064 km, until I arrive to her seventh for-now accommodation, where displacement, to this day continues to be lived.

Her path of displacement, I am.
or, in informal Syrian Arabic, the experience of *shantata*.
Waiting, I persist, until she moves out and puts a dot on my line – no longer remains displaced.

(lay the object on the floor; end of ACT III)



Figures 91 and 92: Photo-stills from the three acts of the *Shantata* case study performance at the international conference of "Uncertain Landscapes" (2023). The photo-stills are accompanied by the object used, which consists of three phases of the student migrant's migratory path and experience.

Language in performance

The two performances, which present two of the case studies, address language as a central element in introducing the objectives of this experiment and the experience of performance. The first performance, which presents the case study of *Shantata*, uses English to describe and represent the case study, with one Arabic word, "Shantata" شنططة, appearing near the end to serve as a reminder of the path's origin. This performance took place during the international conference 'Uncertain landscapes: Beyond transdisciplinary approaches' (late 2023) for an audience of international participants, researchers, and staff. This context influenced the choice of language and its preparation.

In the second performance, presenting the case study of *Tanmeel*, I used Portuguese, with the exception of one word, "*N*amalet," نملت which also closes the performance. The choice of language was also determined by the audience, which was entirely Portuguese, during my parallel exhibition *O percurso do Namalet: Mapear para a urgência de reutilização no contexto de ruínas da guerra* (*The path of Namalet: Mapping for the urgency of reusing in the context of war ruins*), along with the exhibition in which I participated, "REPOSIÇÃO" | *Peças desgarradas: A origem dos materiais* ("RE-EXHIBITION" | *Stray pieces: The origin of materials*). The choice of language was also motivated by my desire to challenge myself to share the story-map of this case study in a language spoken by those familiar with the small Syrian population in Portugal and the story of Jorge Sampaio's achievements in the APGES scholarship program. This challenge stems from the primary struggle of language learning and integration into Portuguese society, which I have always found difficult but worthwhile. The process of integration, when one is conditioned to learn the language of the host country, is a struggle. It is an extra effort that many migrants choose (and, in many circumstances, are obliged) to make in order to ease their lives. Expressing oneself in the language of the locals brings immediate proximity to understanding the subject and its context. Many of the colloquium events, presentations, and seminars that took place during the duration of this thesis were conducted in both English and Portuguese. The advantage of knowing how to read and speak all three languages facilitated the translation of emotional expressions..

The performance is structured as a theatrical piece, divided into three acts. It explores the interplay between time, space, and identity, through images of destruction, displacement, and memory. For this performance, a poster was used to notify the public about the event. As the performer, I prepared to describe a specific setting, wearing a white mask, to map the path of the male student migrant from the *Tanmeel* case study, who passed through the devastation of war. To design this setting, I first had to understand the fragments of the path within the three acts. The first act outlines a path of survival migration, beginning somewhere in the outskirts of Damascus, Syria, and culminating in Portugal. In the second act, the path unfolds through an escape marked by roadblocks, confusion, and the overwhelming destruction of familiar yet unfamiliar places. As the path moves westward and eventually reaches Portugal, the narrative shifts to an emotional state of numbness, symbolized by the term *Namalet*, in informal Syrian Arabic—though this feeling was present from the initial phase of migration. The migration becomes a series of knots, representing emotional and psychological scars (healed wounds) carried along the way, while also leaving room for transformation and the possibility of return to a re-imagined place of origin. The performance closes following the third act and the laying down of a symbolic object, signaling both an end and the potential for healing and



Figure 93: Poster for performance and exhibition of the *Tanmeel* case study (2024).

future change.

In “Cicatrizes e feridas: A ficção contemporânea perante o passado” (“Scars and wounds: Contemporary fiction facing the past”) (2013), Bebiano raises questions about how fiction can be used as a tool to engage with and potentially heal the wounds of a violent past, acknowledging the complexity of representing such histories without glorifying or silencing the violence. In “A arte secreta do ator: Dicionário de antropologia teatral” (“The secret art of the actor: Dictionary of theatrical anthropology”) (2010), Barba uses the metaphor of wounds and scars to describe the layers of personal and collective history that shape both individuals and theater itself. He suggests that humans carry within them numerous stories, much like archaeological layers. These stories — including pain, experiences, and memories — can be uncovered through introspection and theatrical practice. Comparing this process to exploring a hidden cave or peeling back the layers of a fresco, he emphasizes that some wounds are visible, while others remain buried, waiting to be discovered. The actor must confront these inner scars, bringing them to light and transforming them into artistic expression. However, Barba also warns that not everything should be discarded or revealed too hastily — some wounds still hold secrets that must be respected. In a broader sense, this reflects the role of theater as a space where personal and historical traumas can be processed, shared, and given meaning. This idea is also explored and implemented through theater by Skeiker in *Syrian refugees, applied theater, workshop facilitation, and stories: While they were waiting* (2021).

In this performance, the object used consists of a different material: a recycled white bed sheet, chosen to ensure that the elements carried — and later released — within the object could be held without tearing, unlike the crepe paper, which might rip under the weight. The cotton fabric of the bed sheet is more flexible than crepe paper, facilitating the transition from one act to another. The object is yellow, emphasizing the trail left by the Saipa Saba taxi, and is composed of three concentric circles, unwrapped one after the other to correspond to the three acts of the performance and the three phases of the migratory path and experience of the *Tanmeel* case study. These circles are in three different sizes, from largest to smallest, moving from the outermost to the innermost layer. The outer circle carries olive tree branches, the second contains rubble gathered from demolition sites, and the innermost circle includes a knotted line of fabric. When fully unwrapped, this line of fabric extends beyond the combined length of the three overlapping circles.

As in the first performance, I used the same white mask to cover my face, and on the 3rd of May, 2024 I personified the path of *Namalet*, the verb form associated with the *Tanmeel* case study:

Portuguese (used in the performance):	English (translated after the performance):
ATO I	ACT I
(A pé, com a máscara colocada, diz “Ato Um”, depois segura o objeto com as mãos a dobrar-se perpendicularmente para fora)	(On foot, with the mask on, say “Act One,” then hold the object with hands bending perpendicularly outward)
Eu sou o percurso;	I am the path;
eu sou o percurso.	I am the path.
Criado numa manhã de sábado em setembro de 2015,	Created on the Saturday morning in September 2015,



Figure 94: The performer (researcher) with the object representing the path and a face mask for the path personification performance in the *Tanmeel* case study (2024).

sem um nome.
(pausa)

Em algum lugar numa área no sul da Síria chamada Ghouta Oriental,
agrícola, com muitas oliveiras, citrinos, e mais oliveiras
(o primeiro círculo cai; folhas e ramos caem; fim do ATO I)
ATO II
(diz "Ato Dois")
Em algum lugar na Ghouta oriental
um ponto de localização foi marcado, em algum lugar,
naquele lugar que um dia foi chamado por lar.
De lá, avancei num táxi amarelado de Saipa Saba,
para fugir de uma guerra perpétua e de um futuro
obscuro desprovido de realizações no conhecimento.

Para fugir de um lugar, onde se aprende,
adaptativamente, a identificar por som tipos de
armamentos e jatos militares.
Bloqueios — mais bloqueios militares.
Numa rota errada vi-me, a passar por um lugar
desconhecido,
O tempo diluiu-se, por 15 minutos.
Hastes e cabos suspensos, formas não identificáveis,
afundando por toda a parte, abandonadas, ruínas de
guerra.
(o segundo círculo cai; os escombros caem; fim do ATO II)

ATO III
(diz "Ato Três")
Eu fugi...
(pausa)
mas tornei-me *namalet*,
Ou em árabe informal sírio para o sentimento contínuo
de ser emocionalmente dormente.
Então o tempo começou a encolher.
Para o oeste avancei, 126 km
Depois, pelo meio de Mediterrâneo, voei por 4220 km
Até chegar a Portugal e marcar o outro ponto de
localização.
Onde os traços do Saipa Saba seguem,
A criar nós — uma extensão dessa memória de evento.
(o terceiro círculo cai; o percurso com nós se
desenrola)
Mas onde há espaço para aprender, para manifestar,
sobre reutilização,
Depois disso, talvez um dia ele possa voltar a esse
lugar e não mais permanecer dormente.
(coloque o objeto no chão; fim do ATO III)

without a name.
(pause)

Somewhere in an area in the south of Syria called
Eastern Ghouta,
agricultural, with many olive trees, citruses, and more
olive trees
(drop the first circle; olive trees and branches fall; end
of ACT I)
ACT II
(say "Act Two,")
Somewhere in the eastern Ghouta
a location point was marked,
somewhere,
in that somewhere-place that once was called home.
From there I progressed in a yellow Saipa Saba taxi,
to escape a perpetual war and an obscure future
devoid of knowledge attainment.

To escape a somewhere-place, where one adaptively
learns to identify by sound types of military weaponry
and fighter jets.
Roadblocks — more military roadblocks.
On a wrong route, I saw myself passing by an
unrecognizable somewhere-place.
The time diluted, within these 15 minutes.
Hanging rods and cables, unidentifiable forms, sinking
all around, abandoned, war ruins.
(drop the second circle; rubble falls; end of ACT II)

ACT III
(say "Act Three,")
I escaped...
(pause)
but I became *namelet*,
Or in informal Syrian Arabic for the continuous feeling
of emotional numbess.
Then time started to shrink.
To the west I move, 126 km
Then across the Mediterranean, I flied for 4220 km.
Until I arrive to Portugal and mark the other location
point.
Where the traces of the Saipa Saba follow, Creating
knots — an extension of that event-memory.
(drop the third circle; the path with knots unfolds)
But where there is space to learn, to manifest,
about reutilization.
After that perhaps, one day he might return to that
somewhere-place and no longer remain numb.
(lay the object on the floor; end of ACT III)



Figure 95: Photo-stills from the three acts of the path personification performance in the *Tanmeel* case study (2024).

Performance as an archive of migration

To begin unpacking the archival material of these performances, the objects used correspond to the process of representing path studies — a process that Ingold explores by addressing the meaning of gestures in relation to lines, understood as movements through their formation and interconnection. In *Lines: A brief history* (2007), he distinguishes between different types of lines — traced, woven, and knotted — each corresponding to a particular way of engaging with the world. The gesture of knotting, as he elaborates in *The life of lines* (2015), is a dynamic act that brings together tensions and frictions, producing knots as emergent outcomes of movement. The knots used in both objects (Figures 89 and 96) in the two performances align with Ingold's definition: "There can, of course, be no knots without the performance of knotting: we should therefore commence with the verb 'to knot' and view knotting as an activity of which 'knots' are the emergent outcomes. Thus conceived, knotting is about how contrary forces of tension and friction, as in pulling [...]" (Ingold, 2015, p. 18). In each migratory path, knots do not merely articulate fixed points; rather, they integrate different types of lines, bringing them together to form connections. They create unions, as they are part of an individual's story while also being interwoven with the collective experience of migration (Ingold, 2015, p. 24).

The performance becomes a form of spatial storytelling, where movement actively constructs meaning rather than merely tracing a pre-existing route. Since mapping is a socio-political act, performing the migratory path and experience also becomes socio-political. The performances in this chapter build upon experiential practices by embodying migratory paths, transforming them from abstract lines into lived and enacted stories. Ingold's notion of the line challenges the traditional Cartesian view of mapping as fixed and absolute and resonates with the idea that migratory paths contain not only routes but also narratives embedded in material, space, and experience (Ingold, 2015, p. 102). This aligns with Massey's critique in *For space* (2005), in which she argues against static spatial representations, instead conceptualizing space as a product of interrelations and movement — a view that highlights the potential of performative mapping within migration studies. To apply this, Massey emphasizes the need to set a scene for representation, stating that "What is at issue, in the production of representations, is not the spatialisation of time (understood as the rendering of time as space), but the representation of time-space" (Massey, 2005, p. 27). This corresponds to the approach of this thesis, which views and represents time and space as inseparable, capturing their ongoing, interconnected, and relational state — including what lies in between.



Figure 96: Object used to unfold the three acts of the performance of path personification in the *Tanmeel* case study (2024).

iii.i.b. Exhibition: for the re-utilization of war-ruins

From late January to early February 2024, I was invited to participate in a workshop on non-conventional and artistic mapping on reuse, FÓRUM NADA NOVO: "Peças desgarradas: A origem dos materiais" (NO NEWS FORUM: "Stray pieces: The origin of materials"), organized by NADA NOVO, a Portugal-based architecture group that brings together artists, architects, and other professionals to explore the potential of reusing materials in Portugal. I participated both as an assistant, tutoring on mapping, and as a workshop participant. By the end of the workshop, we produced materials at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP), Porto, and the School of Architecture, Art and Design of the University of Minho (EAAD), Guimarães, which were exhibited at O INSTITUTO in Porto and later at the Garagem Avenida Art Gallery in Guimarães. During the workshop, I could not help but reflect on the *Tanmeel* path case study, the ruins the student migrant had passed during those 15 minutes, and the current state of these ruins. With the support of NADA NOVO, my reflections culminated in a parallel project that was exhibited during the second exhibition at Garagem Avenida Art Gallery in Guimarães. In this exhibition, for the first time over the years, I included the emotional state of the student migrant in the title.

I created a panel consisting of a map showing possible routes in the eastern outskirts of Damascus, including the Eastern Ghouta and Douma regions, and featuring the *Tanmeel* path. The panel included the migrant's house in that region — its doors, windows, and tessellating floor tiles, which he had not seen again since leaving Syria — contrasted with materials organized, stored, and cataloged at Portugal's Banco dos Materiais (Bank of Materials) in Porto. This institution, whose location is private, contains salvaged and collected architectural elements such as railings, doors, and road signs, which are considered and categorized as heritage. It also referenced MV Gestão de Resíduos (MV Waste Management), which has a waste recycling station with technologies for metal recycling and a second-hand shop with furniture and construction elements in Pevidém, as well as Armazém das Oportunidades (Warehouse of Opportunities) in Barcelos, which had the "danger of entry" sign and consists of a large, chaotically arranged warehouse — constantly reorganized — filled with second-hand and new objects considered out of trend, mainly furniture, construction materials, clothing, and sewing items. This work juxtaposes the ruins of Syria — left behind, unsorted, unassessed, unarchived, undocumented, and unstored — with the organized material banks in Portugal. It is a manifesto calling for the reutilization and proper storage of construction materials left after war attacks, damage, and destruction, highlighting the potential to rebuild if technological and logistical capacities were available to re-utilize these resources.

From rebuilding to reuse

The destruction caused by war in all Syrian regions is not perceived by Syrians merely as ruins, but as part of their history. This history requires registration, documentation, and a platform to be shared, acknowledged, and recognized. The ruins, along with the forced displacements, loss of lives, and massacres that occurred, reflect the consequences of the conflict — including the unacknowledged harm inflicted by the Al-Assad regime, its alliances, and militias, and their nonrecognition and complete denial of these inflictions. This is particularly evident in areas like Eastern Ghouta, Douma, Joubar, and Yarmouk, where cities and villages have been completely dismantled. These are histories of stories without roofs — literal roofless houses and residential zones, as well as the metaphorical state of

displacement. They extend through physical destruction and encompass the lived experiences of those who endured them.

The exhibition, serving as the stage for one of these performances, emphasizes the use of lines to articulate the experience of both the exhibition and the panel, suggesting a relational engagement with and around the panel. Between the ideas presented by Ingold (2007 and 2015) and Skeiker, the exhibition and performance reveal the intersection where stories can be told through these interactions in lines. From the focus on the case study to its connection with the surrounding elements and lines in the exhibition, this relationship highlights the potential of reuse in the context of war ruins in Syria. The comparison between the ruins of war-torn Syria and Portugal's structured material archives underscores the discrepancies in how destruction and reconstruction are approached. Echoing Bebiano's discussion of fiction's role in engaging with historical wounds, these performances use storytelling to mediate the emotional and historical realities of displacement, suggesting that mapping is not only a technical act but also a performative one. This chapter reflects on an embodied approach to mapping migration, where memory, performance, and material intertwine — expanding even further Corner's (1999) notion of the agency of mapping in representation.

Ingold's (2007) notion of the line remains an important element, also reintroduced in the exhibition. By representing the trail as a dotted line — which signifies a practice of transport (Ingold, 2007, p. 79) — the *Namalet* path exhibition explores the concept of point-to-point connection. This connection begins even before entering the exhibition, marked by an 'X' that directs attention to another map, part of the parallel exhibition *Peças desgarradas* by NADA NOVO — produced through a workshop. Behind this map is the exhibition of the path of *Namalet* (Figure 100), where the yellow line diverges into two directions: one leading to the exhibit label for informational guidance, and the other to the panel. After alternating between both, the line continues past the exhibit label and arrives at an as-found pile of discarded elements from a demolition site in Guimarães, consisting of a no entry ribbon, a dry tree branch, and construction rubble.

The line then makes a U-turn, leading behind the panel, where an interplay with the line unfolds. The line is inserted into the panel in two locations: in one, it remains static, forming a knot at the center; in the other, it is movable, with one end attached to the ceiling and the other to the ground. When pulled, the end tied to the rubble on the floor requires additional weight for support. This interaction metaphorically illustrates that as demolition increases, more space is needed to store the resulting rubble — yet the availability of such spaces diminishes without reutilization. This is a direct reference to Syria and the war ruins. The line then continues parallel to the panel, marking the space where the performance took place.

Figure 97 and 98: Screenshots of the displayed information on the NADA NOVO website. Retrieved from: https://nadanovo.org/

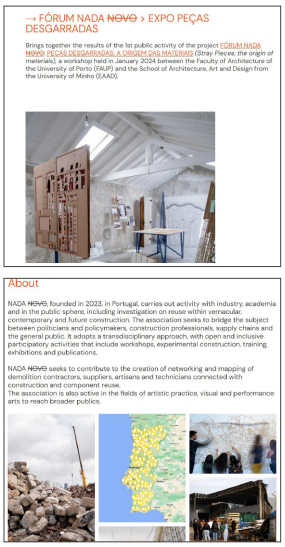
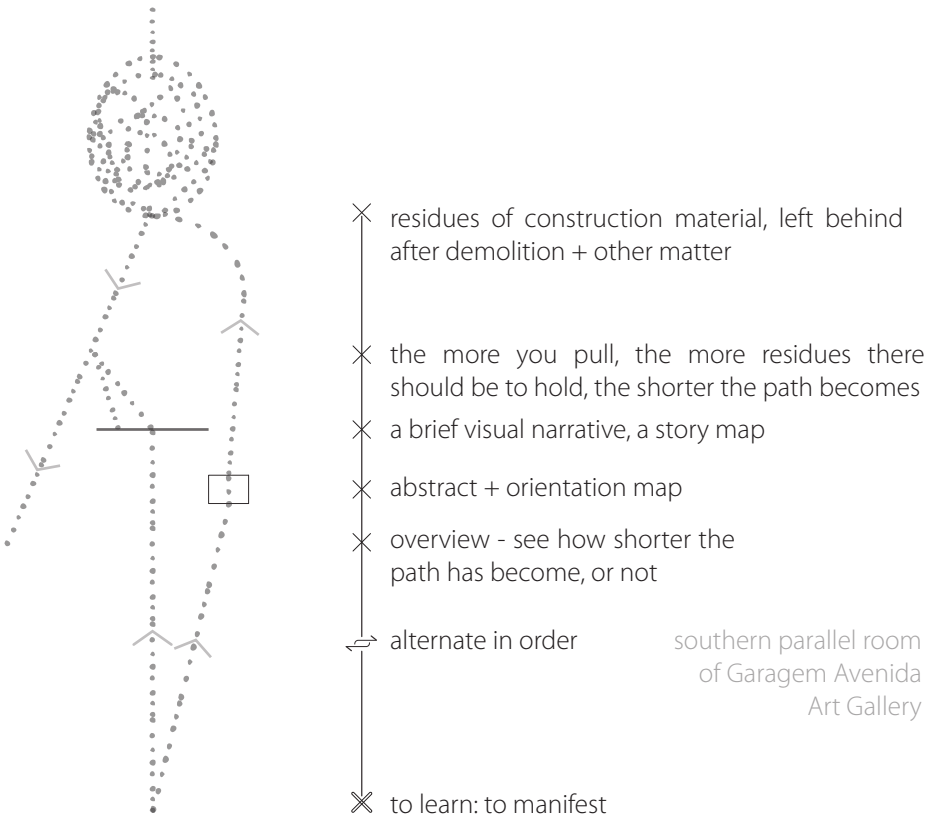
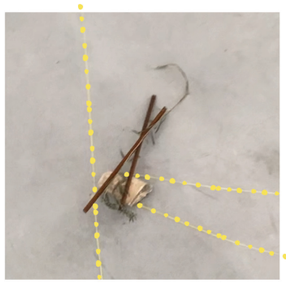


Figure 99: Scheme for the exhibition of *The path of Namalet*: movement and action map within the southern room of Garagem Avenida Art Gallery.









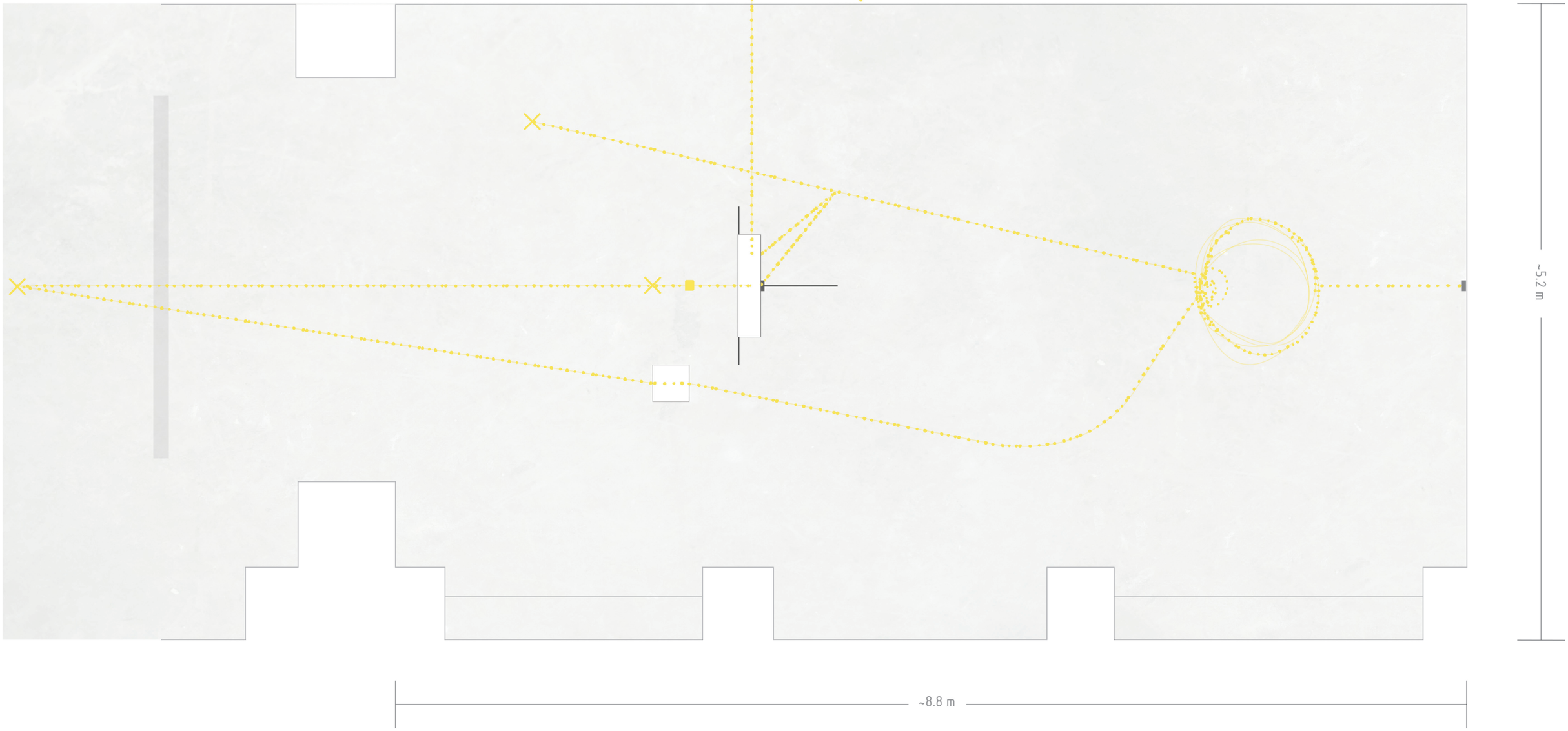
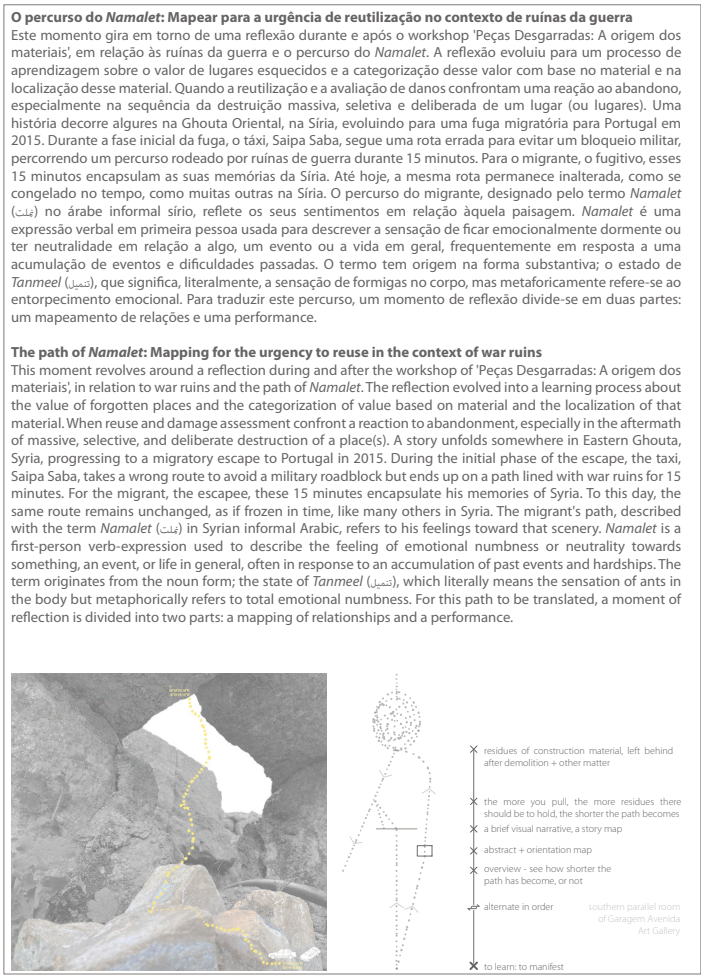


Figure 100: Plan for the exhibition of *The path of Namalet*: object arrangement within the southern room of Garagem Avenida Art Gallery.

Figure 101. The A4 exhibit label, which was lying in front of the poster on a 30 × 30 cm white box, contains a description of the poster, its surroundings on the *The path of Namalet* (first-person verb form of *tanmeel*), the relationship between them, and guidance on navigating the exhibition area.



O percurso do *Namalet*: Mapear para a urgência de reutilização no contexto de ruínas da guerra
Este momento gira em torno de uma reflexão durante e após o workshop 'Peças Desgarradas: A origem dos materiais', em relação às ruínas da guerra e o percurso do *Namalet*. A reflexão evoluiu para um processo de aprendizagem sobre o valor de lugares esquecidos e a categorização desse valor com base no material e na localização desse material. Quando a reutilização e a avaliação de danos confrontam uma reação ao abandono, especialmente na sequência da destruição massiva, seletiva e deliberada de um lugar (ou lugares). Uma história decorre algures na Ghouta Oriental, na Síria, evoluindo para uma fuga migratória para Portugal em 2015. Durante a fase inicial da fuga, o táxi, Saipa Saba, segue uma rota errada para evitar um bloqueio militar, percorrendo um percurso rodeado por ruínas de guerra durante 15 minutos. Para o migrante, o fugitivo, esses 15 minutos encapsulam as suas memórias da Síria. Até hoje, a mesma rota permanece inalterada, como se congelado no tempo, como muitas outras na Síria. O percurso do migrante, designado pelo termo *Namalet* (نملت) no árabe informal sírio, reflete os seus sentimentos em relação àquela paisagem. *Namalet* é uma expressão verbal em primeira pessoa usada para descrever a sensação de ficar emocionalmente dormente ou ter neutralidade em relação a algo, um evento ou a vida em geral, frequentemente em resposta a uma acumulação de eventos e dificuldades passadas. O termo tem origem na forma substantiva; o estado de *Tanmeel* (تنميل), que significa, literalmente, a sensação de formigas no corpo, mas metaforicamente refere-se ao entorpecimento emocional. Para traduzir este percurso, um momento de reflexão divide-se em duas partes: um mapeamento de relações e uma performance.

The path of *Namalet*: Mapping for the urgency to reuse in the context of war ruins
This moment revolves around a reflection during and after the workshop of 'Peças Desgarradas: A origem dos materiais', in relation to war ruins and the path of *Namalet*. The reflection evolved into a learning process about the value of forgotten places and the categorization of value based on material and the localization of that material. When reuse and damage assessment confront a reaction to abandonment, especially in the aftermath of massive, selective, and deliberate destruction of a place(s). A story unfolds somewhere in Eastern Ghouta, Syria, progressing to a migratory escape to Portugal in 2015. During the initial phase of the escape, the taxi, Saipa Saba, takes a wrong route to avoid a military roadblock but ends up on a path lined with war ruins for 15 minutes. For the migrant, the escapee, these 15 minutes encapsulate his memories of Syria. To this day, the same route remains unchanged, as if frozen in time, like many others in Syria. The migrant's path, described with the term *Namalet* (نملت) in Syrian informal Arabic, refers to his feelings toward that scenery. *Namalet* is a first-person verb-expression used to describe the feeling of emotional numbness or neutrality towards something, an event, or life in general, often in response to an accumulation of past events and hardships. The term originates from the noun form; the state of *Tanmeel* (تنميل), which literally means the sensation of ants in the body but metaphorically refers to total emotional numbness. For this path to be translated, a moment of reflection is divided into two parts: a mapping of relationships and a performance.

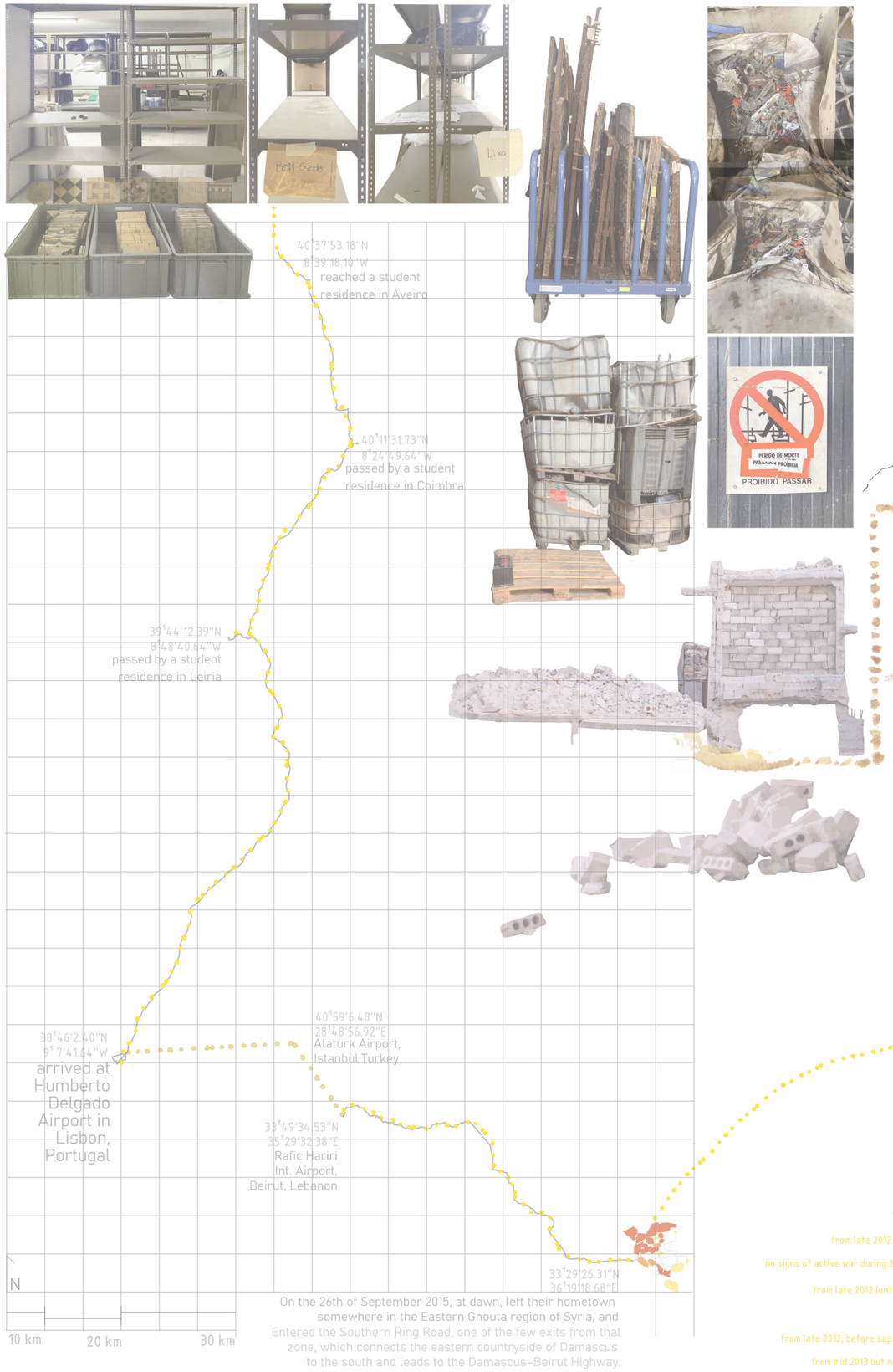
From the exhibit label:

[**The path of *Namalet*: Mapping for the urgency to reuse in the context of war ruins**

This moment revolves around a reflection during and after the workshop of "Peças Desgarradas: A origem dos materiais," in relation to war ruins and the path of *Namalet*. The reflection evolved into a learning process about the value of forgotten places and the categorization of value based on material and the localization of that material. When reuse and damage assessment confront a reaction to abandonment, especially in the aftermath of massive, selective, and deliberate destruction of a place(s). A story unfolds somewhere in Eastern Ghouta, Syria, progressing to a migratory escape to Portugal in 2015. During the initial phase of the escape, the taxi, Saba Saipa, takes a wrong route to avoid a military roadblock but ends up on a path lined with war ruins for 15 minutes. For the migrant, the escapee, these 15 minutes encapsulate his memories of Syria. To this day, the same route remains unchanged, as if frozen in time, like many others in Syria. The migrant's path, described with the term *Namalet* (نملت) in Syrian informal Arabic, refers to his feelings toward that scenery. *Namalet* is a first-person verb-expression used to describe the feeling of emotional numbness or neutrality towards something, an event, or life in general, often in response to an accumulation of past events and hardships. The term originates from the noun form; the state of *Tanmeel* (تنميل), which literally means the sensation of ants in the body but metaphorically refers to total emotional numbness. For this path to be translated, a moment of reflection is divided into two parts: a mapping of relationships and a performance.]







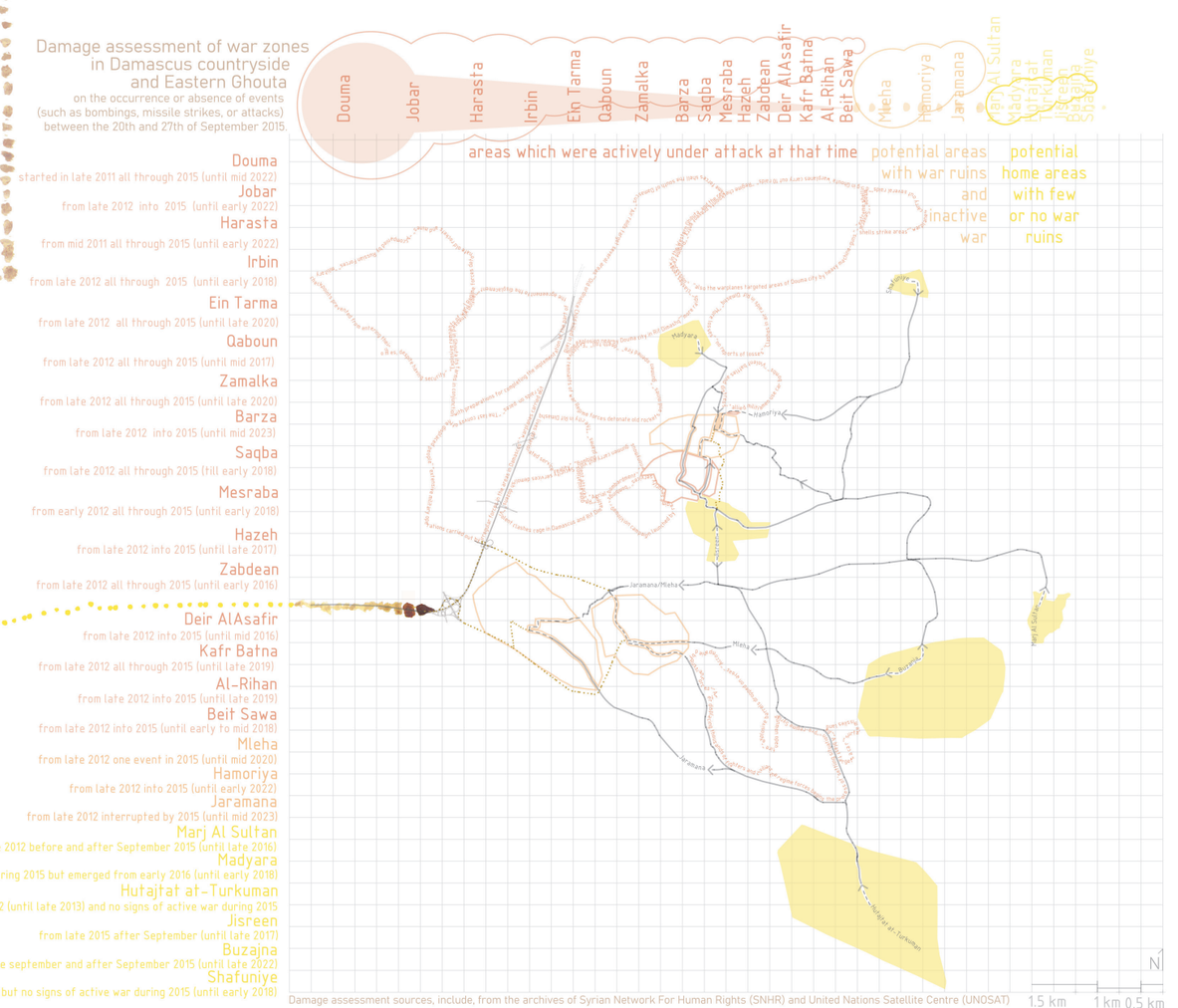


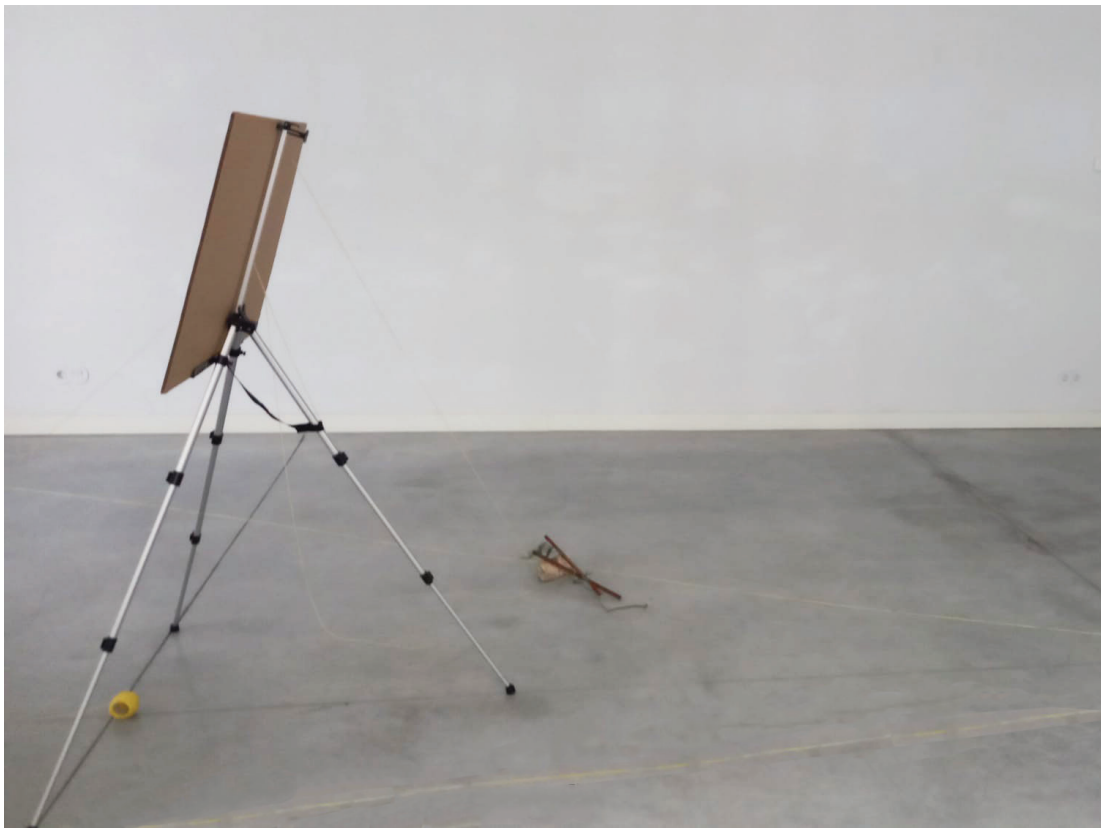
Figure 102. A panel used for an exhibition in a parallel intersecting exhibition, *Peças desgarradas*, at Garagem Avenida Art Gallery in Guimarães. The panel is a distorted map representing the *Tanmeel* case study, from the initiation of the migratory path to the student migrant's arrival in Portugal.

Figure 103 to 107. The A4 exhibit label, which was placed in front of the poster on a 30 × 30 cm white box, contains a description of the poster, its surroundings on *The Path of Namalet* (first-person verb form of Tanmeel), the relationship between them, and guidance on navigating the exhibition area.









chapter **iii.ii.**

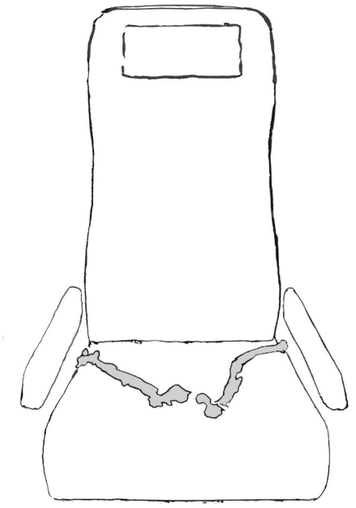
_A reverse narrative: site visit

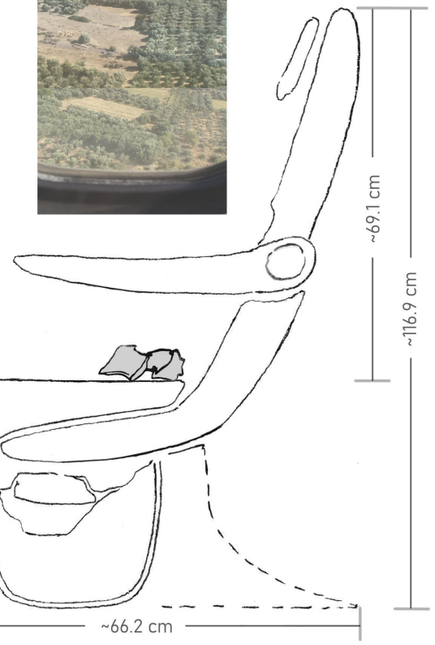
On the 30th of June, 2024, at 1h30 Western European Summer Time (WEST), at Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport (Porto), Portugal, I took a flight to Athens International Airport, Eleftherios Venizelos, through Olympic Air. Then, I caught a connecting flight to Samos through Aegean Airlines at 8h30 Eastern European Summer Time (EEST), arriving at Aristarchos of Samos Airport at 9h30 EEST, with a delay that began in Porto and continued in Athens until I arrived in Samos, sleep-deprived. Beyond that, I had an objective in mind — I had to meet Samos. I needed to understand a part of what Syria's escapees had gone through. I had to relate more to their experience. The first scene was an aerial view of Samos from my window seat as we flew over the Mediterranean, the Aegean Sea. Because I boarded the Olympic Air flight at night, I have no recollection of it. That is why I only represent Aegean Airlines' Airbus A321neo, which was the connecting flight (Figure 108). We passed many islands, none of which I recognized. Then, we approached Samos. From above, it was all green, but as the loud passenger airplane, Aegean Airlines' Airbus A321neo, shaken by strong wind turbulence, descended for landing, I could see the vegetation more clearly. A vast portion of the island appeared to be agricultural land. Though Samos is a mountainous island, many flat areas seemed dedicated to farming. I had no clear idea of what Samos would be like — its nature, its connection to the Aegean Sea, or how the Aegean differs from the larger body of the Mediterranean. From above, I could make out some trees. Olive fields stretched everywhere I looked. I recognized them well, because Syria is full of them. We share the same climate, the same region. I had never been so close to Syria in so many years. If I could assume a direct flight from Damascus Airport to Aristarchos of Samos Airport, calculated through trajectory path measurement on Google Earth Pro, it would be around 990 km — a flight of approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes.

After I scanned and carved into my memory all the landscapes we had passed over, we landed. Upon landing, the Samos fieldwork visit began, from 30.06 to 04.07, 2024. The first and last days are not fully considered, as the first was spent arranging transportation and assessing the possibility of site visits, and on the last, my flight was in the afternoon. Therefore, three full days in between were dedicated to completing my objectives for the mission. Though the five days were enough to spark the impulse to map again, a different story from a different perspective — not of a new Syrian migration, but about former (and ongoing) Syrian migration events and their traces. This recalls Ingold's emphasis on connecting lines, the drawing of them, the tracing of them, which become path studies, describing the world in stories that are being told. And here is my story of the reverse narrative, a mission I requested to undertake due to the urgency of analyzing lost traces and memories of Syrian irregular migrations — to talk about these traces of once lived experiences (Ingold, 2007, p. 2). The performance-based research of this thesis regards fieldwork as an essential and significant factor in understanding and relating more to Syrian migration through irregular escapes, quoting Ingold: "the text is remembered by reading it, the story by telling it, the journey by making it" (Ingold, 2015, p. 45).

The act of storytelling connects with Mignolo's (2000) idea of border-thinking, which recognizes that geographical borders also delimit language and translation. Engaging with this concept involves studying border contexts through creative action and inter-subjective discourse, where language is dissected and data is gathered in real time. This reflects the interplay between fieldwork and storytelling, both of which are forms of performance-based











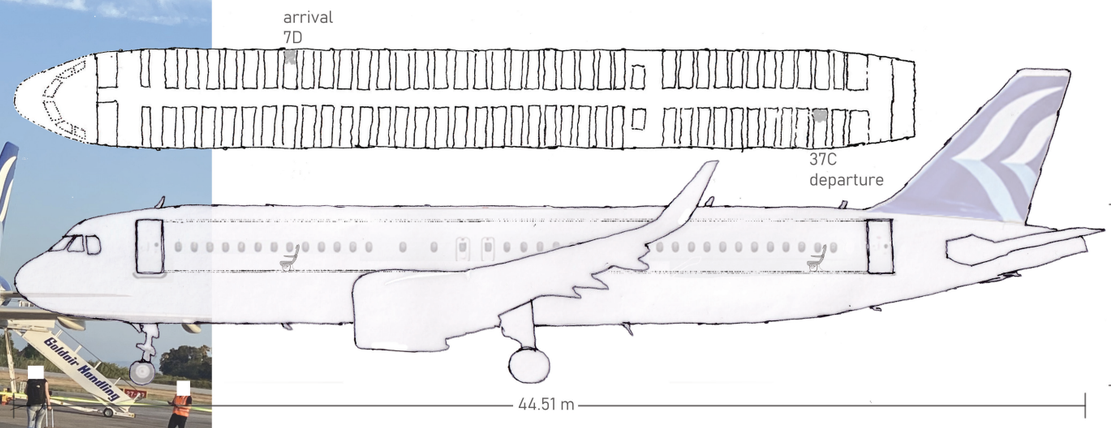


Figure 108. Montage of the Airbus A321neo in Aegean Airlines livery, used as a means of transportation after changing planes in Athens for the connecting flight to Samos, and again on the return flight from Samos to Athens, where I changed planes once more. On both flights, I was seated on opposite sides of the airplane and in different seating areas. The images in the montage were taken at the airport and just before boarding, shortly prior to departure.

research. Additionally, Bakhtin's (1975/1981) notion of dialogism reinforces this perspective through the researcher's interaction with the subject and the subject matter, framing it as a discourse that emphasizes the role of language in action and response. This also connects to Abrams' (2010) idea of inter-subjectivity, which persists and resonates even within fieldwork, acknowledging that oral history continues to influence and shape the discovery of what informs representation. In this sense, the fieldwork in Samos continued to integrate elements drawn and gained from the student migrants' narratives. Additionally, it embodied the inter-subjectivity co-constructed through collaborative engagement with them.

iii.ii.a. A (social) advantage

I am one of the few who came to Portugal and experienced a migratory path. I fully acknowledge this social advantage, a fact that has stayed with me ever since I received the acceptance email from the APGES scholarship. It is a feeling I am constantly reminded of. Yet, over the past 14 years, a weight has burdened me — stemming from the knowledge that my happiness and fulfillment in this academic path will never be complete until my country achieves its revolution, freedom, and stability, and is rebuilt from within. This thesis has evolved through several phases of my life, shaped by fragments of personal and historical events. First, there was the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck parts of Syria and Türkiye, the loss of two close family members in Syria, and, finally, the ongoing hope after the overthrow and downfall of the dictatorial regime in Syria, amidst genocides and war conflicts in neighboring countries.

The fact that I have not encountered physical hardships or risked my life during my migration to Portugal — such as being smuggled into the sea in a soon-to-be capsized inflatable boat, drifting into the unknown, wandering sleep-deprived through forests or deserts, starving or thirsty, nor being relocated and detained in a refugee detention center, seeking asylum, or being deported back to my country during war — immediately places me in an advantaged and very fortunate category of migrants. My objective for this fieldwork is to represent a case study and a narrative, emphasizing that I am still a migrant, but one with a social 'advantage,' as I had a financed mission — including flight tickets and hotel reservations—supported by Lab2PT. I boarded airplanes, landed in airports, held a Portuguese passport and a European citizen card, and was assimilated with the other passengers, treated equally with the same rights across Europe.

The fieldwork involved a mission that presents a reverse narrative compared to the case studies in this thesis, where the sea, land, and air itineraries began in Syria and end in Portugal. However, I did not return to Syria but traveled near enough—to a Greek island where many Syrians had passed, where some lost their lives attempting to escape, where others were detained for a time, and where some, because of this island, were granted asylum and conditional refugee status. For this reason, I conducted a short field visit to the Greek island of Samos to better understand the gaps and obliterated memories within the narrated story of the Syrian student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study. The reverse narrative could be considered a sixth case study, interwoven in opposite directions with the other narratives, but it also serves as an intersection between what a student mission itinerary can reveal about a refugee or irregular migration case study — a case study unfamiliar to my personal migratory path, experience, and event.

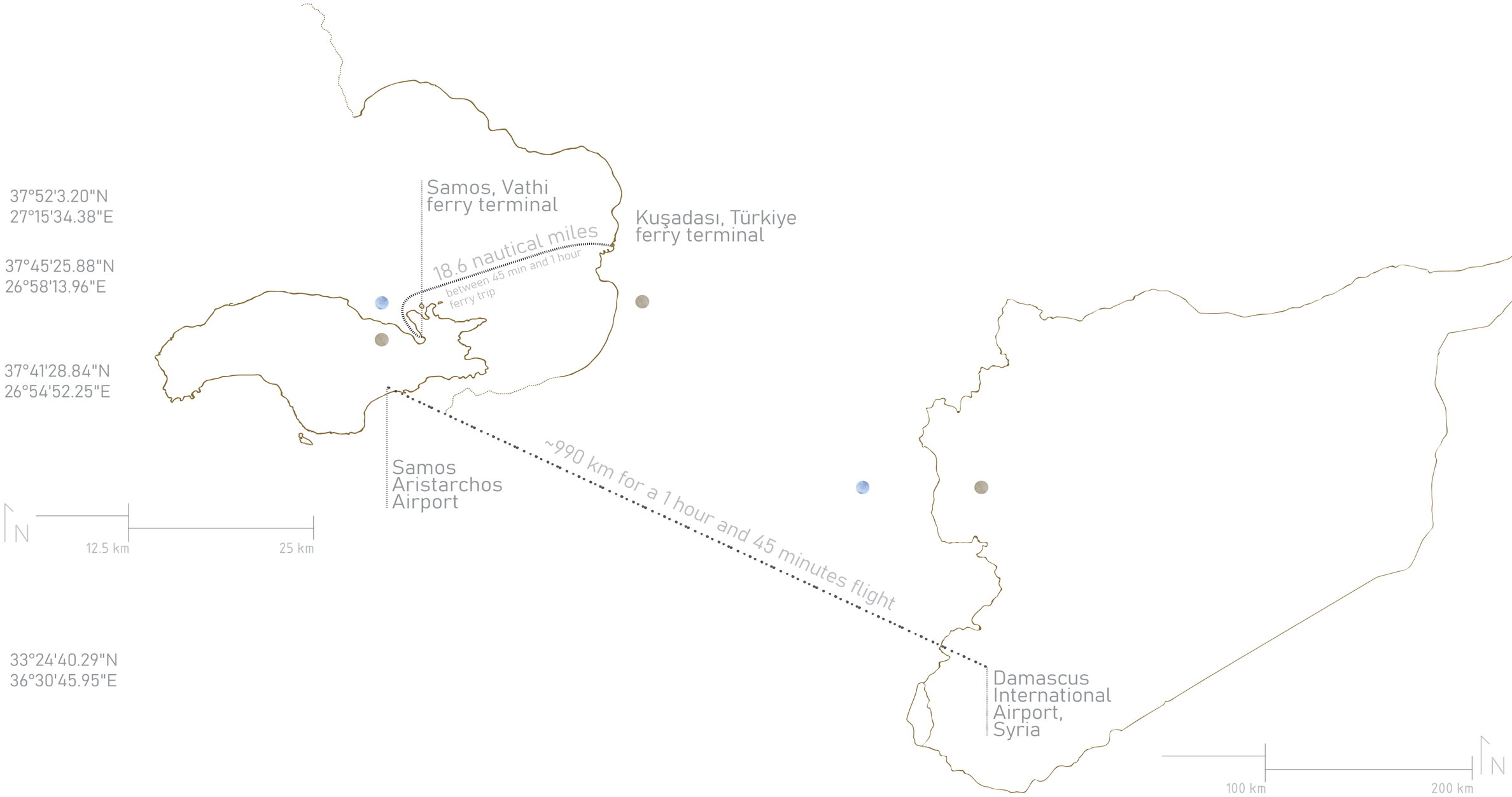


Figure 109. Map diagram comparing an imaginary direct flight from Damascus International Airport to Samos International Airport with the ferry route from Kuşadası, Türkiye, to the Samos Vathy ferry terminal — an existing route and means of transportation that Syrian escapees are not permitted to use to reach Samos. For these escapees, both routes and modes of transportation to Samos remain imaginary and unattainable.

Samos is a Greek island located within the Mediterranean water body of the eastern Aegean Sea, facing Türkiye to the east and south, making it closer to Türkiye than to mainland Greece. The distance from Kuşadası, Türkiye — the nearest port — to Samos, whether to Vathi or Pythagorio, is approximately 18.6 nautical miles. This ferry trip takes an estimated 45 minutes at a speed of 25 knots or about one hour at a speed of 18.5 knots after leaving the ferry terminal. In my case and narrative, the itinerary begins in Portugal and leads to a former refugee camp on the island of Samos, Greece. Initially, the plan was to visit the Al-Zaatari refugee camp in northern Jordan, located near the Syrian border. The Nasib (Syrian border) - Jabir (Jordanian border) crossing is the only western border that no student migration from APGES used to cross during their migration to Portugal. According to Human Rights Watch (2015), the Syrian-Jordanian border had endured multiple disruptions since 2012 and was considered an unsafe crossing. After the Syrian dictatorial regime recaptured the Syrian side of the border, the crossing remained closed until late 2018, according to Al Jazeera (2018). It was then closed again during the pandemic and only reopened in late 2021, functioning properly thereafter, according to the Operational Data Portal (ODP) (2022) of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).[64]

iii.ii.b. Fieldwork planning

However, due to current geopolitical risks and tensions, it was decided to explore a refugee camp within Europe rather than in the Middle East. This camp, located in Samos, is the only one that a student migrant from the Syrian student migrants in the case studies passed through and experienced. The fieldwork visit to this camp was essential for understanding the context of the missing information in the narrative of the *Tamsaha* case study, which involves his successful second escape attempt to Samos: 1. the possible shores that the male Syrian student migrant might have reached, though he ultimately landed on one specific shore; 2. the refugee camp where he stayed as an escapee at that time; 3. the coast guard stations where he was granted the *kharti* document; among other findings that were only discovered in-person during the fieldwork and after returning from it.

In this sense, the fieldwork visit to Samos was a mission aimed at speculating on the reality of refugees and refugee camps in Europe, as well as understanding the ongoing impact of NGOs focused on assisting asylum seekers, both during the time of the *Tamsaha* case study and in the present. When referring to speculation and speculative work, I mean basing the creative process on firsthand observations and recorded material, leading to suggested events that may have occurred and hypotheses of places that may have been traversed. To this end, this sub-chapter emphasizes the role of photography in the fieldwork visit. To support this, I brought my camera on the visit and took photos organized by categories that correspond to the flow of the narrative and that would serve both this sub-chapter specifically and the thesis in general. This site visit experience represents a commitment I made to the cause of the

64 .Al Jazeera: "Jordan and Syria agree to reopen Naseeb border crossing." Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/14/jordan-and-syria-agree-to-reopen-naseeb-border-crossing

.Human Rights Watch: "Jordan: Syrians Blocked, Stranded in Desert. Satellite Imagery Shows Hundreds in Remote Border Zone." Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/03/jordan-syrians-blocked-stranded-desert

.Operational Data Portal (ODP): Retrieved from: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90361

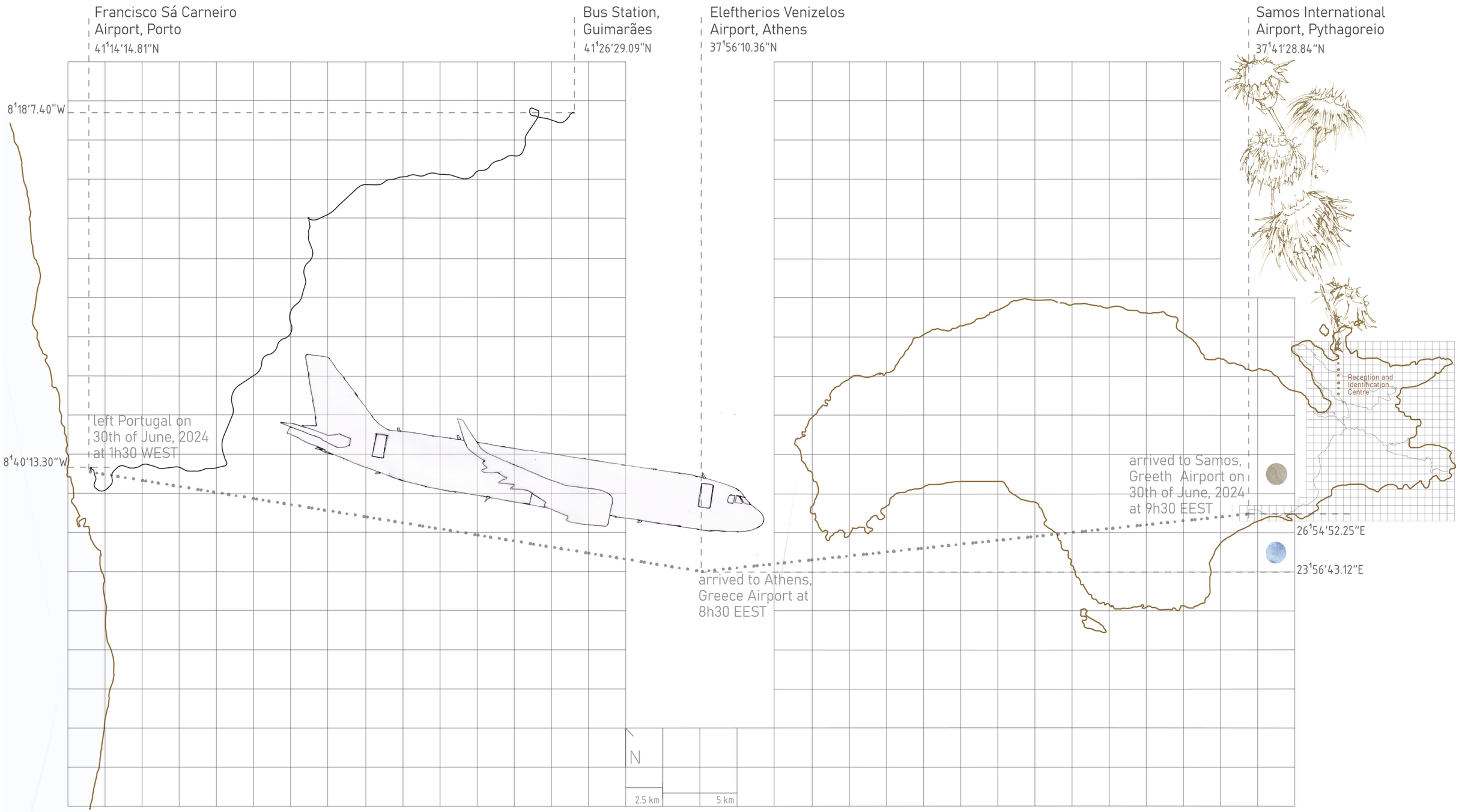


Figure 110. Distorted map of the reverse narrative representation from Guimarães, Portugal, to Samos, Greece, covering the period from 29th of June to 4th of July, 2024.

Syrian student migration crisis and, in broader terms, the Syrian migration crisis, while also contributing to the structure and case studies of this thesis. It diverges from the case studies in structural terms, not only because of the 2014–2018 time frame but also due to the reverse narrative. This is why it is placed in the third part of this thesis, which focuses on an auto-ethnographic methodology of storytelling and story mapping.

In Heider's concept of auto-ethnography in "What do people do? Dani auto-ethnography" (1975), he begins by questioning the practice of ethnography. Through an investigation into what people do, he arrives at the idea that the people Heider studies are producing their own map of the world (Heider, 1975, p. 9). Instead of positioning the ethnographer as an all-knowing figure who imposes their interpretations onto the subject, Heider emphasizes the idea that the subjects of ethnographic study are themselves creating and shaping their own narratives. What if the researcher is a migrant as well, on a mission to discover another migrant's story gaps? Auto-ethnography enables the researcher to critically examine their own migrant experience within larger cultural and social frameworks, integrating personal narrative with research analysis. By positioning oneself as both the researcher and the subject, it provides an understanding of the complexities surrounding migration, positionality, and path studies. This follows the approach established in the five case studies, turning personal experience into empirical data. In "And europe said, let there be borders: Autoethnographic reflections on border crossings and violence" (2020), Kizito also uses auto-ethnography but places the term 'critical' before it to challenge border policies in Africa (Kizito, 2020, p. 99). Drawing from his personal experiences, he uses auto-ethnography to explore the intersection of individual experiences with broader socio-political contexts.

To reflect on how auto-ethnography could challenge critical border presence, I had to choose a site through which to explore this idea in relation to the case study of this thesis concerning irregular migration. Initially, the objectives of this mission were to document conditions and narratives, as well as gather data from the Closed Control Access Centre of Samos (CCAC) and the Human Rights Legal Project office — or any NGO office assisting asylum seekers. However, two factors altered these objectives. Firstly, I received no response regarding assistance or access to the CCAC in Samos, nor was I offered any accompaniment or guidance for a visit. Moreover, the CCAC is not connected to the *Tamsaha* case study, as its establishment in Samos, Greece, in 2021 does not align with the time frame of the migratory flow in the case study. While the CCAC is an important refugee camp, it would require an entire chapter — if not a dedicated part of the thesis — due to its active status in detaining migrants. Additionally, photography is not permitted within the camp premises and most likely around it. Even if visits were granted, this would contradict the tools and objectives outlined in the fieldwork planning, which rely on visual observations, autonomous movement and experience in space, as well as recordings and photography.

My research began by reaching out to volunteer and humanitarian organizations in Samos to answer a fundamental question: who helped the student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study and partnered with a UN program to pave the way for him? Before traveling to Samos, I attempted to contact several humanitarian organizations via email and website contact forms. I prepared a set of questions, points, doubts, and requests to fill in the blanks of many unanswered aspects: the name of the organization that may have helped this refugee gain

conditional status, whether any organization assists asylum seekers, demographic data, and guidance for the field visit.

When I emailed possible NGOs in Samos that might have worked with Syrian escapees in 2016 regarding this information and potential assistance with the visits, many of my requests were rejected, while others were ignored. This seemed rigid and odd, especially considering I mentioned being a Red Cross volunteer. The humanitarian organizations I have worked with in Portugal, such as the Red Cross, have volunteers for such requests, as do many other organizations and collectives, including Humans Before Borders. The second issue was that none of these organizations responded to my requests to visit their offices, thus ruling out that objective. Additionally, these organizations denied any ability to provide information regarding the demographic data of student refugees who had been at the Reception and Identification Centre, later granted asylum, and were able to continue their studies elsewhere, emphasizing the confidentiality of the data.

As a result, I had to conduct my own research and, during my visit, manage my own orientation for site visits, fieldwork, and transportation, which added another layer of challenge and unfamiliarity to the surrounding environments. From a speculative aspect of the research, I initially thought that the Human Rights Legal Project was the only non-governmental organization (NGO) in Samos mediating between asylum seekers and governmental agencies, among others. However, after contacting several NGOs based in Samos, those who responded denied any connection to this case but suggested other humanitarian organizations and directed me to I Have Rights, as well as Avocats Sans Frontières (Lawyers Without Borders), which they confirmed were the only humanitarian organizations legally operating outside the CCAC and providing legal assistance in asylum cases.

It was through a similar project — either the Refugee Law Clinic Berlin, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), or perhaps both working jointly — that the student migrant from the Tamsaha case study was able to join a UN program and travel to Athens to obtain special refugee status, eventually making Portugal his host country for relocation and resettlement. According to *I Have Rights*, the Refugee Law Clinic Berlin was the organization operating when the student migrant was in Samos. Later, I Have Rights replaced it, as it had not yet been established at that time, which the Refugee Law Clinic Berlin confirms on its website.[65]

Of all the NGOs I contacted, I Have Rights was the only organization that took a few minutes for a Zoom call to share some of their knowledge about the refugee camps. According to them, they are not allowed access to the actual camp, the Closed Control Access Centre of Samos (CCAC). However, they mentioned that it had been a long time since they had last visited the former camp, RIC. RIC was the first refugee camp established in Samos and became a detention centre in March 2016, according to Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders).[66] It ceased operations between 2020 and 2021, when the CCAC project began. What is curious about the naming of the CCAC is the use of the term ‘closed,’

65 Refugee Law Clinic Berlin; “About Us.” Information retrieved from:: https://www.rlc-berlin.org/%C3%B-Cber-uns?lang=en

66 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) news: “EU Migration Crisis Update - June 2016.” Information retrieved from: https://www.msf.org/eu-migration-crisis-update-june-2016

emphasizing its role of detaining. These facilities, where individuals have no freedom of movement, are often for security, processing, or detention purposes. They are usually heavily guarded, and individuals are not allowed to leave without permission. However, RIC did not appear to function within the same system, despite being considered a refugee camp. It "was a former military base," according to I Have Rights, and was referred to as a detention centre by Médecins Sans Frontières. According to the I Have Rights collaborator, RIC was initially designed to accommodate around 600 individuals, but at its peak, it overflowed with over 7,000 people seeking refuge. This may be why Samos is known to be a refugee hotspot, like the other four Greek islands — Lesvos, Chios, Kos, and Leros — which are closer to Türkiye than to mainland Greece, according to I Have Rights.[67]

iii.ii.c. Fieldwork implementation

The night of the trip arrived — 29th of June, 2024 — from Guimarães to Porto, then on the 30th to Athens, and finally to Samos, accompanied by my partner. After landing on the tarmac of Samos airport, a simple, box-like structure that appeared to serve as a singular space, we checked the bus schedule. It seemed unusual, with very few listed departures. We decided to take a taxi, which brought us directly to Vathy, Samos, the city where we stayed for four nights, 24 minutes from the airport by car. After that, we searched for possible transportation options. Everywhere we went, we saw shops labeled 'rent a car' and 'rent a motorcycle.' I did not see a single bus, aside from one abandoned bus stop, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, a few kilometers from the airport. Local residents and tourists appeared to rely primarily on taxis and personal vehicles. Given this, we decided to rent a car.

On a clear blue morning the next day (1st of July, 2024), following my plan, we set out to explore the island and visit the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC). We first went to the car rental company to pick up the keys; it was a second-generation 2010 Suzuki Swift in indigo blue (Figure 111). After getting into the car, we headed to the RIC. Although the hotel where we stayed accommodated only foreign tourists and most of the people I encountered were Caucasian Europeans and Turks — mainly using the ferry to travel to Greece — there were also asylum seekers who, without a doubt, were not tourists but had sought refuge in Samos. On our way to the RIC, I passed more than once what seemed to be refugees, carrying large amounts of luggage, boxes, and wrapped fabrics used as makeshift sacks. Some were leaning against the concrete fence by the bay, while others were sitting on sidewalk benches or even on their own luggage. It became unmistakably clear to me that what Samos had been known for years ago still persists: it remains the island of refugees. And yet, the social advantage that followed me to the island of Samos was the fact that I had the freedom of mobility — choosing to travel by airplane, taxi, and car. In contrast, many migrants face the harsh reality of walking long distances and depending on limited or precarious means of transport. They risk losing the money they saved to be smuggled between countries or across seas, often being deceived and robbed, as reflected in stories shared by family members. Additionally, they are subjected to barriers that impede their movement. This contrast highlights the freedom of hyper-mobility, a freedom that many migrants do not share, prompting and challenging me to reflect on the disparity between my experiences and theirs.

67 "I Have Rights: Camp movement on Samos." Information retrieved from: https://ihaverights.eu/camp-movement-on-samos/#:~:text=Kos%20and%20Leros.-,OLD%20CAMP,its%20projected%20capacity%20of%20650.

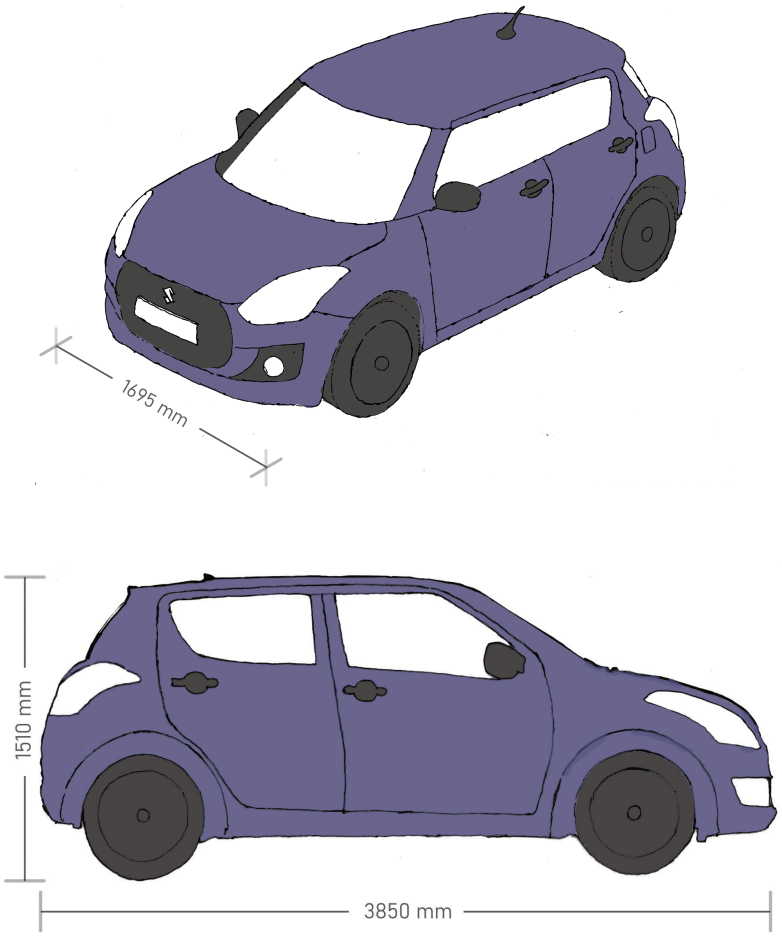


Figure 111. Aside from walking, transportation was provided by a second-generation 2010 Suzuki Swift, which was used from the second day after arriving at the hotel in Samos until just before departure from Samos Airport.

This disparity also reshaped the way I experienced the landscape of Samos — not simply as a scenic or neutral backdrop, but as a charged, relational terrain woven with migrant stories and struggles, some documented and many others unknown. As Massey (2005) argues, space is not a static container but a product of interrelations — always in the making, shaped by power, histories, and trajectories (Massey, 2005, p. 67). My hypermobility allowed me to move across the island, to explore, experience, and inhabit space fluidly, while many migrants across the globe were — and are — immobilized, confined to specific zones, their access to movement restricted, and their time in these zones prolonged indefinitely. Recognizing this uneven mobility reframed and shaped how I perceived and experienced the landscape. In turn, following Merleau-Ponty's (1945/1962) understanding of embodied perception, my experience of the island was shaped by bodily freedom — walking, sitting in the passenger seat, observing — whereas for many migrants, the same terrain was saturated with delay, waiting, and surveillance. The contrast revealed that space and landscape are never universal — they are lived differently, through different bodies, and across unequal conditions of movement and restriction, with many experiences marked by injustice, whether in their homeland, in the places where they seek refuge, or along the transit routes in between.

Because these realities are current and ongoing, I had to use the car as a means of transportation to learn more about where many of these migrants stayed and the conditions they faced. For that, I needed to prepare for the camp visit with a camera equipped with two memory cards, a notebook with blank pages, and an appearance that blended with the tourists around me to camouflage, as I was still experiencing the migrant fear (labeled or suspected as an illegal escapee, though not one) that Samos had instilled in me since my arrival. Then, it was time to take the car. The use of the Suzuki Swift as a means of implementing fieldwork complements Smithson's field trip in Smithson and Sumi (1983), while also representing her journey through driving the DS. Though the Suzuki Swift, a compact car, contrasts with the classic Citroën DS that Smithson drove during her exploration and interaction with the surrounding environment, it still evokes similar themes. Like Smithson's work, particularly in the context of driving and traveling, it explores the idea of traversing boundaries — not only geographical but also conceptual — and experiencing these boundaries, which is further examined later in the section when we got lost and the GPS became the real boundary. Though I was always sitting in the passenger seat, which I recognize as another advantage, I observed and reflected on the landscape, engaging with the environment from this place — which inevitably shaped the way I encountered and interpreted the terrain. Travel became not just movement from one place to another, but an interaction with and reflection on the places we traversed — those many migrants crossed on foot and the hardship they may have endured along the same route. We moved from the Mediterranean climate with its variety of vegetation — jasmine, fig, and olive trees — to an almost arid, dry landscape with numerous pine trees, as we neared the RIC camp. Similar to Smithson's experience, the use of photography, drawings, and notes taken as part of the diary during this fieldwork were fundamental for engaging with the surrounding and adjacent environments (Smithson & Sumi 1983, p. 17).

RIC is situated on a mountain slope, surrounded by pine trees and other native vegetation, and overlooking an Aegean Sea bay and the city of Vathy, Samos. After driving up the valley and passing through many curves, we arrived at a mural. The mural was colorful

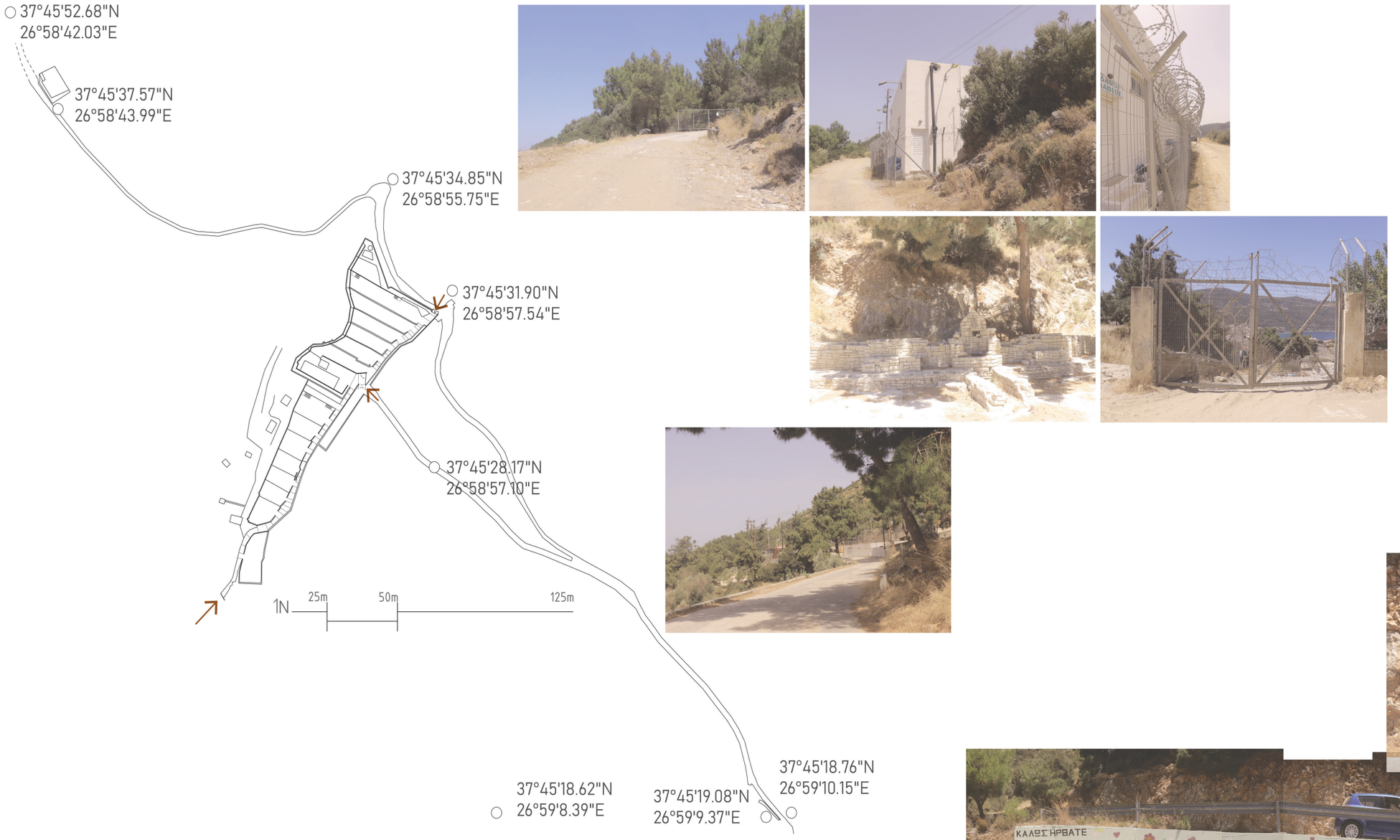












Figure 112. Site plan of the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in Vlamari Valley on Samos Island. It shows a parallel view of the entire camp, hidden and nestled among pine trees, and includes a construction truck en route to the camp, a mural at the entry ramp, the lateral gate leading to the central part of the camp (which I could not approach), the northeastern gate, an open natural water source near the camp, a guarded and secured water tank, and a dead end located further west of the site.

and seemingly cheerful, with a friendly message to foreigners, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in both Greek and English, visible to any car passing by, saying "Welcome to Vlamari" (Figure 112), which refers to the Vlamari Valley. Then, there is a ramp that leads to a narrow road. Right at the start of the ramp, there is a road sign saying, "Samian Fire Safety Volunteer Group 500m." The entire road leading to the camp is covered in sand, with no asphalt, guardrails, or traffic barriers. However, as we moved further along and closer to the camp, pine trees and bushes became increasingly present, casting shadows that helped us during the extremely humid and high-temperature summer weather.

After we had gone up the road to the northeastern end of the camp, there were a lot of miscellaneous objects hanging from the trees and strewn across all surfaces, such as ropes, chains, plastic bags, and different fabrics. At first, I could not figure out what caused these objects to be scattered outside the camp. Then, I recalled what the collaborator from I Have Rights mentioned about the overflow of asylum seekers. I had no idea of the extent of it, although what the collaborator said about the camp's capacity increase — reaching 7,000 individuals between 2018 and 2020, as also confirmed by Bird from Pressenza International Press Agency (2021)[68] — already sounded overwhelming. However, witnessing it in person was an entirely different reality. Although she did not explicitly state that this crisis forced some to stay right outside the camp, it was evident from the remnants. These objects are traces of how many individuals took refuge outside the camp when it reached maximum capacity and became overpopulated. The presence of these fragmented remnants covered large areas beyond the camp, extending for 2 km, from the point where we ascended the ramp to the end of the northwestern chain-link fence with razor wire of the camp. When I arrived there, from my first encounter with the place, the razor-wire structure of the RIC camp reminded me of the reinforced razor-wire chain-link towering walls that were built in Ceuta and Melilla, which Giráldez López (2019) described and represented architectonically in sections and elevations (Giráldez López, 2019, pp. 105-113).

We reached the northeastern end of the RIC, where one of the main chain-link fences with razor-wire gates to the camp is located. The RIC, a former detention camp, is an open-air closed facility that extends over a slope, naturally following the contours of the Vlamari Valley. It consists of different levels of concrete platforms, with no railings. I was previously informed that I would be arriving at a dismantled former refugee camp, as the collaborator from I Have Rights had mentioned. However, I did not realize that the main services were still intact, despite witnessing several large construction garbage trucks moving to and from the camp (Figure 112). The chain-link fence, made of interwoven steel wires forming a diamond-shaped pattern and referred to here as the mesh wall in general terms, was topped with razor wire and outlined the entire camp (Figures 112 and 113). The barrier consists of nearly one-third concrete, a little more than one-half chain-link fence, and a smaller portion (around one-sixth) of razor wire (Figure 113). Because of its chain-link structure, I could see all the intact structures and remnants inside the camp. However, I could not enter; the only accessible point without thorny dried weeds obstructing my movement was the northeastern part, which was locked with a chain and a padlock to prevent entry.

68 Pressenza International Agency: "Samos marches for peace and solidarity." (Bird, 2021) Information retrieved from https://www.pressenza.com/2021/05/samos-marches-for-peace-and-solidarity/



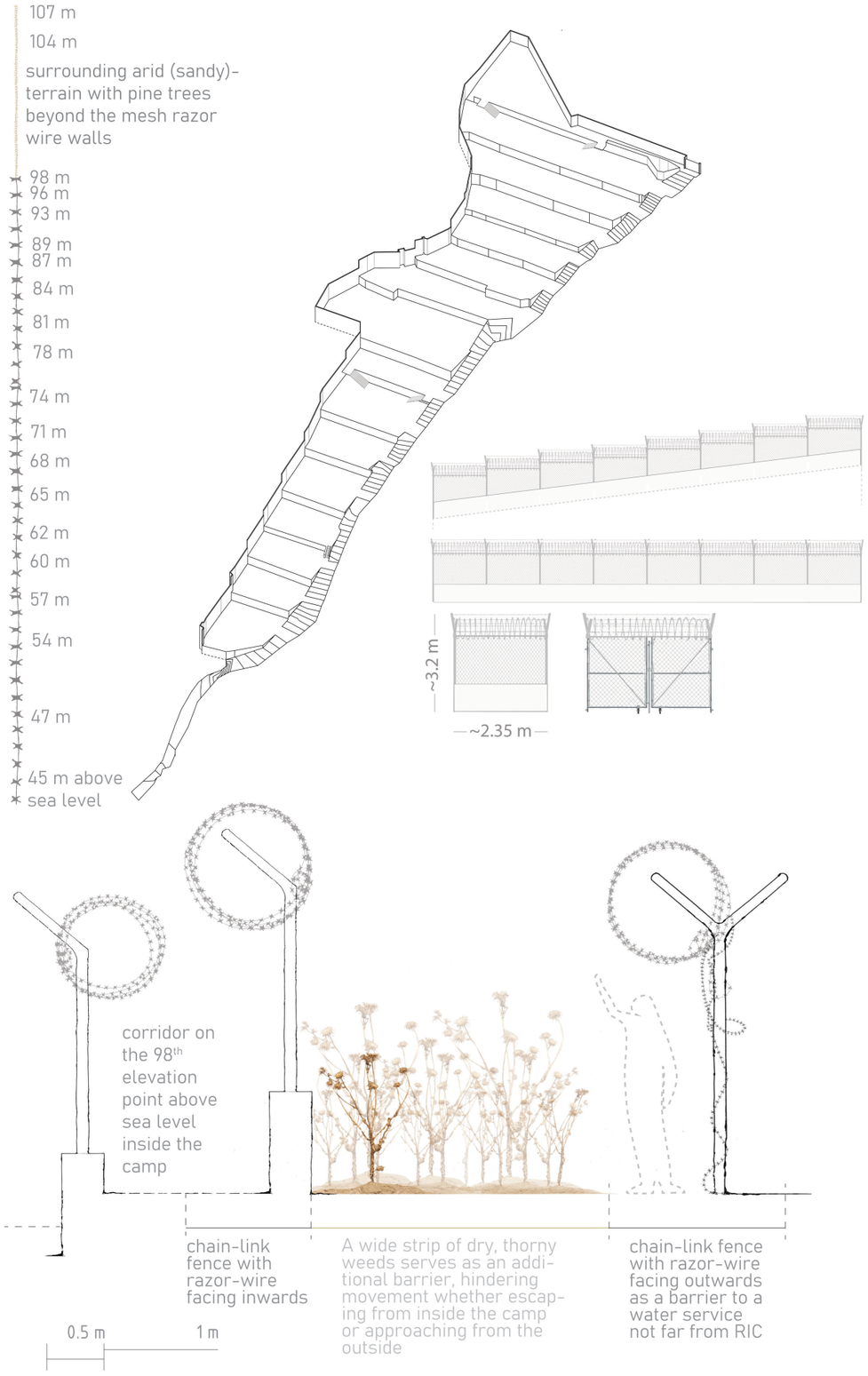




Figure 113.
Isometric plan of the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in the Vlamari Valley on Samos Island. It presents a topographical analysis, indicating the camp's elevation ranges between 45 and 98 meters above sea level. The diagram also includes a study of the camp's chain-link fence and its relationship to the surrounding landscape. Additionally, the representation features a section illustrating the spatial relationship between the interior and exterior before and after the installation of the razor-wire-topped fence surrounding the camp, compared with the chain-link fence enclosing the secured water tank block.

The first thing that caught my attention right after leaving the car and reaching the northeastern gate and then looking through it was the intact one-story building with a brick roof in the middle of the camp. It seemed to be the administration area and, at the same time, due to its central location, it could also have served as the food storage, cooking, and distribution zone. Then, I walked on the sandy road until I reached the northwestern end of the camp. At that end, there was what seemed to be a bathing area, with weathered wooden pallets lying on the ground under direct sunlight. Just above this area was another platform with a closed, one-story block protected by a separate chain-link fence with razor-wire, which I assumed served as a security or surveillance point. Further north, outside the chain-link fence, there appeared to be an old natural spring with a stone structure, a faucet, and a sink — likely used by individuals living outside the camp for drinking and washing. A few kilometers beyond this area, along a narrow rocky road, stood an isolated architectural block with doors and stairs resembling a water tank, secured by a chain-link fence with razor-wire positioned outward along the top edge. Unlike the RIC, where the razor wire was angled inward to prevent escape, here it was designed to deter entry (Figure 113).

Another barrier, raising further questions, was the presence of a thorny plant, seemingly a dried-out Musk Thistle — an invasive weed — forming a dense, ribbon-like layer across the northern and eastern parts of the camp, right in front of the chain-link fence with razor-wire. As I attempted to approach the wall of the chain-link fence with razor-wire, the thick, dry vegetation obstructed my path (Figure 113). Was this weed intentionally planted to serve as an additional deterrent, or had it grown naturally? In either case, it had merged with the structured environment of the camp, reinforcing its function as a barrier to movement, restricting those inside from leaving and those outside from entering.

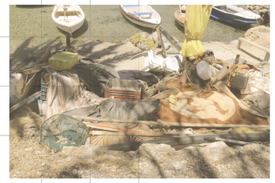
But the question remains: was that place a no-exit, concentrated camp where asylum seekers could only leave if granted refugee status or deported from Samos? According to the student migrant's narrative from the *Tamsaha* case study, he managed to leave the camp on his first night to go to a coffee shop, where he encountered two individuals from a humanitarian agency working with the UN. However, it is unclear whether this coffee shop was inside or outside the camp, as in 2016, shortly after the camp became operational, it housed a population of 900 individuals. Despite this, upon research, many sources referred to these individuals as detainees, as they were held after arriving illegally on the island and awaited the outcome of their registration and asylum requests.

After leaving the RIC camp, we tried to go northwest but encountered a dead end, where a chain-link fence gate blocked the path. So, we decided to return the same way we came. From the city of Vathy, Samos, we then headed northwest to check the littoral zone for possible ports. The road became quite rocky, with red-orange-tinted soil, narrow, and lacking railings. Then the GPS stopped functioning, and messages from Turkish cellular operators started to pile up one after the other. We could not use the GPS properly. The car drifted off its path when it reached the peak of the north and went into the interior, where we stopped receiving messages, and the mobile data functioned again. We then chose to head to the far eastern coast, the part of Samos Island that faces Türkiye and provides a clear view of it. The proximity creates a sense of connection between the landscapes — shore to shore, and from afar, mountain to mountain — separated by the Mycale Strait, a narrow stretch of sea

37°41'26.49"N
37°41'14.25"N
37°45'25.88"N
37°45'30.04"N
37°45'32.23"N
37°45'41.81"N
37°45'28.11"N
37°43'42.79"N
37°42'53.20"N










Samos Vathy Port Authority - Hellenic Coast Guard Office

Reception and Identification Centre

Samos Vathy ferry terminal

26°58'57.29"E
26°58'14.54"E
26°58'13.96"E

Paralia Mourtiá port maybe

Paralia Mikrí Lakka

27° 1'42.39"E
27° 1'29.43"E






Paraila Kerveli port maybe

27° 2'10.56"E





Paraila Sideras port maybe

27° 3'53.83"E




Pythagorio Port Authority - Hellenic Coast Guard Office

26°56'36.82"E
26°56'44.36"E

Pythagorio ferry terminal




N

0.5 km 1 km 2 km

Figure 114. Map of locations visited during the field mission to Samos, Greece. The map covers the easternmost part of Samos, including the location where the student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study stayed during his time in Samos. It shows the only airport on the island, two port authority and coast guard offices, and the closest ports and shores facing Türkiye.

dividing the two landmasses. The possible ports were all located further east on the island. Many times, the GPS led us to rocky, unpaved roads unsuitable for normal cars, forcing us to turn back and find alternative routes. Some ports remained inaccessible due to the absence of roads leading to the shore, reachable only by sea vessels or by hiking down from the cut terraces of rough natural paths, across the sloping pine woods (Figure 114).

The first shore we visited was Paralia Mourtiá. On the southern part of the bay, there was a port area with three wooden floating docks for boats to moor, each facing a different direction. Next to these docks, an area at shore level, partially enclosed by a stone wall, held several boats tied off, including a large gray inflatable boat grounded onshore. It was draped with various types of cloth and a winter blanket, with part of the gray inflatable boat peeking out from the side. The first thought that crossed my mind upon seeing the boat was how conspicuously it was placed, covered with numerous tied empty liquid tanks, plastic chairs, plastic rectangular baskets, and handmade fishing nets. I then wondered whether it occupied a rented spot and if its arrangement was meant to imitate a typical fishing setup — similar to smuggling systems that might have concealed inflatable boats or other sea vessels in the same way, the day before an escape attempt. After leaving Paralia Mourtiá, we headed south to another bay called Paralia Mikri Lakka. We were unable to reach it by car, but from the top of the rocky road, we could see the turquoise-colored water with a single ship anchored. The rocky road continued, but we could not venture further south to explore other parts of the coastline. Like Paralia Mikri Lakka, two other shores remained inaccessible, as we could not find a way to approach them, and the GPS provided no help in navigating the path.

The third day (2nd of July, 2024) was the longest, as we covered the greatest distance (Figure 115). I could not calculate it, as we got lost several times. On this day, we decided to explore more of the eastern shores marked on Google Maps — not only because of their proximity to the RIC, but also due to their nearness to Türkiye. Located close to the Turkish coast, we could see Türkiye clearly, even through the mist. Between Samos and Türkiye, a green mountainous facade stretched along the horizon, with a fine line of sandy shore — likely rock-strewn like most of Samos Island's coastline. As I shifted my gaze, I could distinctly follow this landscape, where the West meets the East, shore to shore and mountain to mountain. The setting sun made the contrast even more apparent, disappearing behind the Samian mountains and western shores, while the Turkish coast remained illuminated.

It was a mildly cloudy day, much like the one when the student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study made his second escape attempt. As we visited the shores — one of which he might have reached — we first arrived at Paralia Kerveli, a shore enclosed within a bay and part of a slightly touristic area. At the far southern end of the shore, where the bay curves, opposite the water, I found a stone bench approximately 90 cm in height, with a pile of miscellaneous objects, including a Styrofoam box, black garbage bags, and other items (Figure 114). As I approached and captured images to document what I had come across, I lifted the box and saw various clothing items that appeared to be winter garments, possibly drifted ashore and later gathered into the pile. One item caught my full attention — a child's puffer jacket. I wondered if it had belonged to a child who had attempted to escape to Samos, losing their jacket along the way. Perhaps this child had not survived — or maybe they had, but their jacket had washed up on the shore and was later stacked in the pile at the lost-and-found corner. This very spot near the stone bench makes Kerveli one of the most probable shores where the student migrant might have landed in the yellow inflatable boat. The

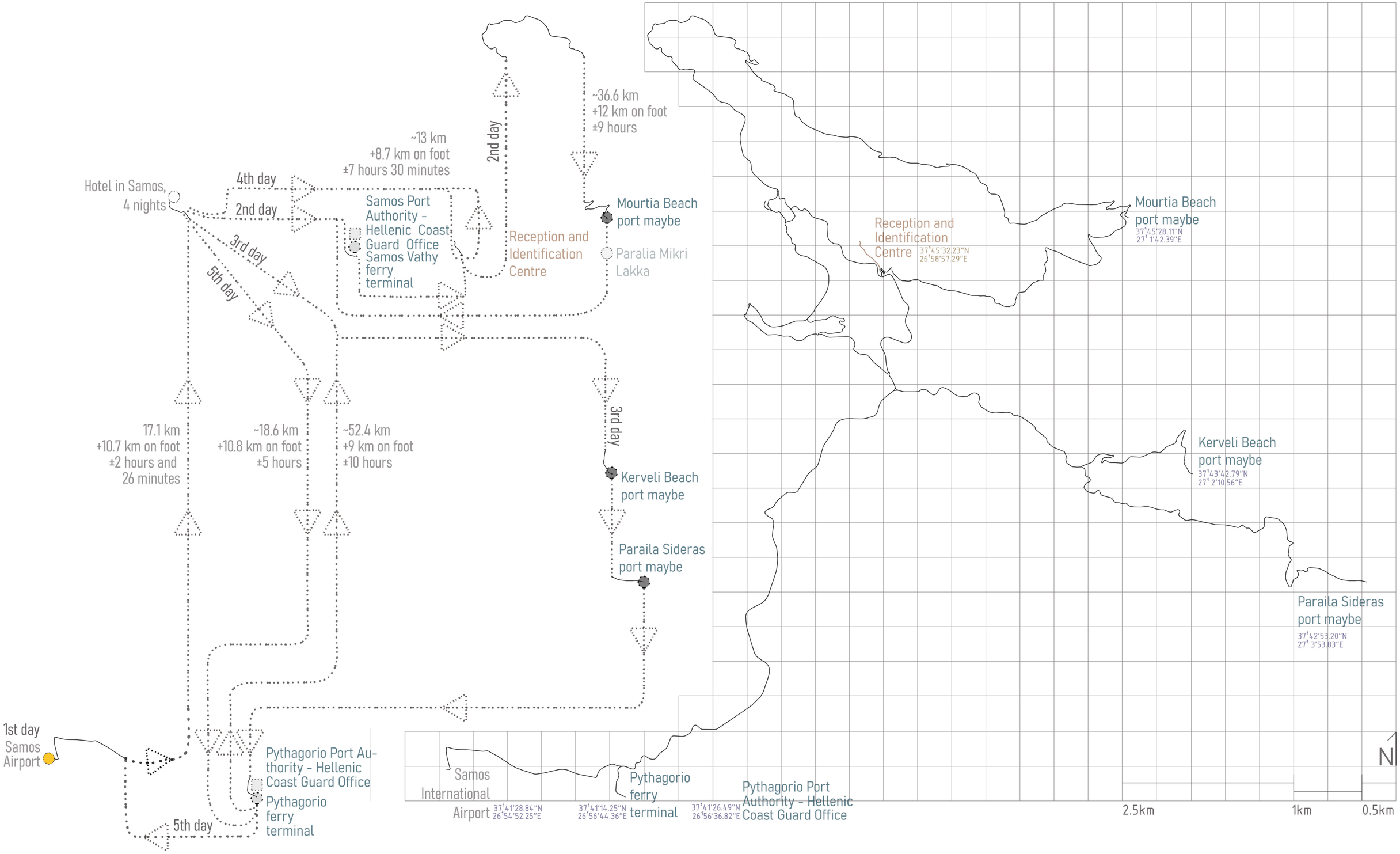


Figure 115. Map and diagram of the paths to the locations visited during the site visit to Samos, Greece. The diagram includes the estimated total kilometers traveled by the Suzuki Swift, kilometers covered on foot, and hours spent on each route.

distance from a port in Türkiye to Kerveli is relatively short: the route from Güzelçamlı Port (Türkiye) to Paralia Kerveli (Samos, Greece) is approximately 6 to 7 nautical miles (11 to 13 km), depending on the exact path taken. Traces left behind — miscellaneous objects possibly belonging to escapees — serve as evidence that many had reached Kerveli before.

After Kerveli, we continued to another shore, Paralia Sideras. As we approached, it appeared deserted except for a small, single-story stone house, with its owners nearby, sitting by the shore and conversing. The shore seemed to belong to them, though it remained open to the public. From where I stood, I could see the Turkish mountains with striking clarity. However, as I turned my head to the left after stepping out of the car, I noticed a pile of garbage next to some dry organic waste, with a large mattress lying among the trash and a torn piece of blue fabric similar to the ones I had found at the RIC. Considering Paralia Sideras as a possible landing site, it could present the shortest trajectory among the shores I visited (though there were a few I could not reach due to GPS failures and incorrect directions). The presence of abandoned trash — which seemed to belong either to a homeless person or to an asylum seeker currently detained at the CCAC — also suggests this shore could have been another landing site for the yellow inflatable boat. After Paralia Sideras, we headed to our final stop before returning to the hotel, as sunset was approaching. We reached Pythagorio, a town that contains another major ferry terminal in eastern Samos. It also houses a Port Authority and a Coast Guard station, which I passed by on the third day but could not locate, as GPS and Google Maps had misled me to a different location nearby.

On the fourth day (3rd of July, 2024), I needed to go back to RIC; I had to understand more about the traces. I cannot hide that I was very scared during the first field visit — maybe because I knew I might be caught taking photographs on restricted premises, or maybe because the area itself is considered a restricted zone. I know for sure that the inside of RIC is. And maybe, because I am Syrian, I feared getting into trouble related to my nationality — even though I also hold a European one. I also cannot hide that since my arrival in Samos, I have been afraid of being questioned about my trip, especially at the airport. The fear of being socially disadvantaged always followed me. Although I have declarations and documents with me proving that my trip is purely academic, I could not shake the fear of confronting those currently detaining escapees and asylum seekers. But I had to record what I witnessed — the traces I came across as I scanned the area surrounding RIC. It seemed like an archaeological site, with objects still on the surface layer of the earth. These objects were traces that proved escapees had stayed there when it was overcrowded. I am not sure if the escapees (probably asylum seekers at the time) were already staying outside of RIC or if that only happened when it was overcrowded. But the traces were many, almost covering the entire area where trees were located — probably because that's where the escapees might have tied their tents..

The traces included metal spoons, metal plates that looked like ashtrays, soap boxes, fuel bottles for gas cookers, gas cookers, DIY cookers made from metal containers, flashlights, cards, socks, toothbrushes, mattresses, water bottles, water bottle caps, many torn pieces of blue woven PVC tent fabric, ropes for tents, wooden planks, metal chains, basins, UN activity fliers, and keys, among others. From the pattern in which these objects were spotted and found, I could infer that there were three zones that almost all escapees shared (Figure 116). The zones where they camped and stayed for the night are marked in blue — this resembles

potable water source zone used for drinking, cooking, washing dishes and clothes, and personal hygiene.

living zones, cooking, eating and socializing

located 'within the pine trees' zones of temporary tent site

zones of the temporary tent site, observed through Street View on Google Earth Pro and located among trees and bushes.

Traces left by asylum seekers through their movements and interactions with the RIC surroundings.

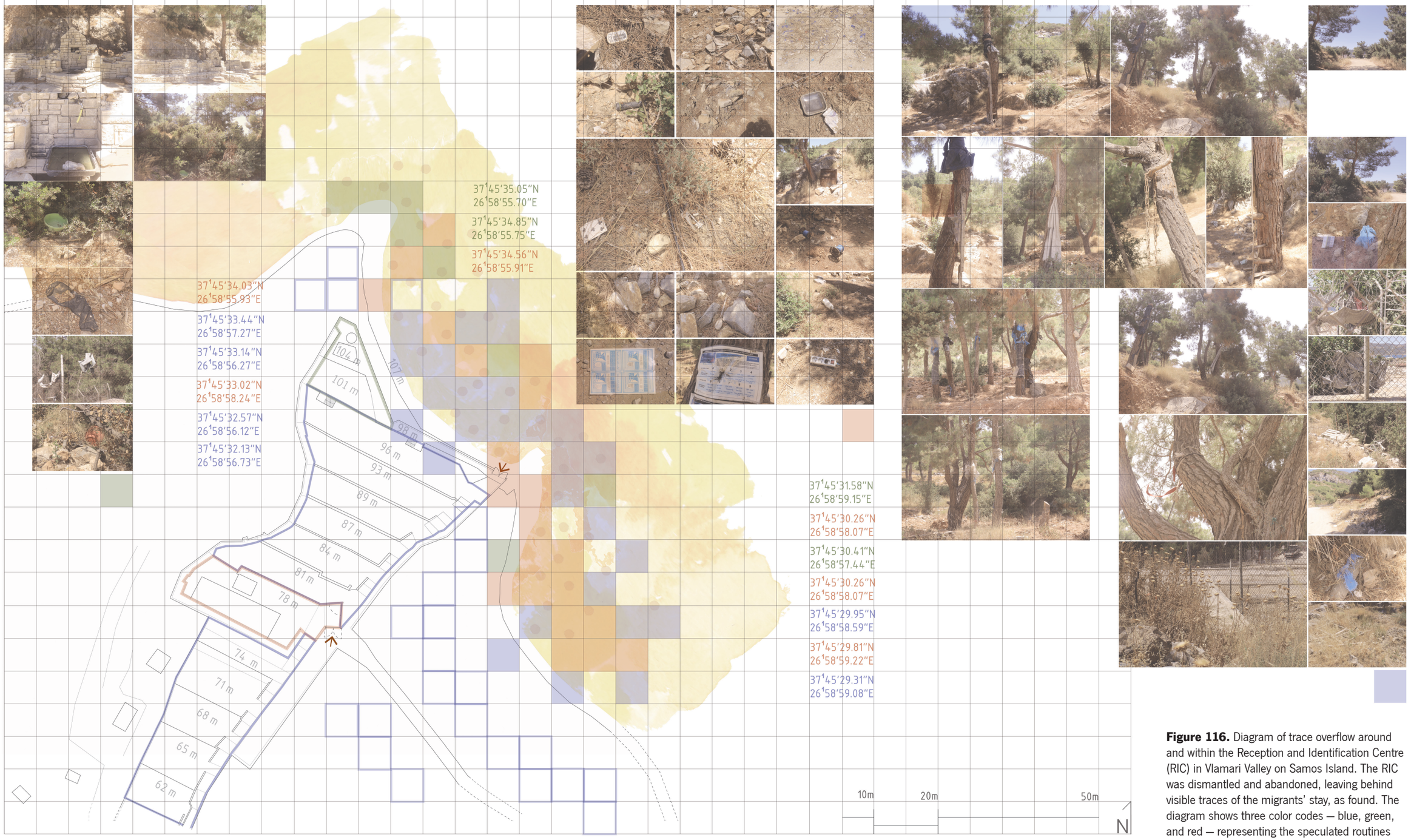


Figure 116. Diagram of trace overflow around and within the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in Vlamari Valley on Samos Island. The RIC was dismantled and abandoned, leaving behind visible traces of the migrants' stay, as found. The diagram shows three color codes — blue, green, and red — representing the speculated routines of asylum seekers and escapees during their stay inside and around the RIC camp.

the blue tent fabric fragments found scattered almost everywhere. These tents were probably set up mostly between trees, at a higher level than the car route, though not too far from it. The zones outlined in blue indicate temporary tent sites, which I observed only through Google Earth Pro's Street View and historical imagery — not during in-person visits. These zones show both pitched and dismantled tents, making it clear that they were makeshift rectangular shelters. The zones where they cooked, ate, and socialized are marked in red. These are at a lower level than the previous zone, though sometimes higher depending on the platforms built by the escapees and their need for privacy. For example, if the escapees were of Syrian descent, privacy was likely an important concern. Additionally, being an escapee from war, socializing may not have been a priority. However, it is likely that those who did socialize were younger individuals who either migrated alone or in groups with people of similar age. The third zone is the only fresh water supply, located on the northwestern side of the RIC area, marked by a stone architectural element that may predate RIC itself. There, I found many basins and trays scattered among the bushes — likely used by escapees to wash dishes and clothes. I also found many wooden piles, which might have served as a base for those who bathed in that area.

The traces outside the RIC made me return to the question of whether the RIC was truly a closed facility or not. From the life that unfolded outside, it appeared to be semi-open — meaning that the detained asylum seekers within the camp were not allowed to exit, while many others lived in informal shelters outside the official perimeter due to overcrowding, delays, or lack of access. These external settlements often created a grey area where people lived with limited freedom and visibility. Describing the RIC as semi-open refers to the fact that, in practice, the implementation of the detention center's rules varied. This led me to wonder whether a larger chain-link fence had been installed further out to restrict people from moving beyond that area. One thing to keep in mind is that, as asylum seekers, these individuals were not legally permitted to work right away, making them solely dependent on the RIC and UN support for a certain permissible period.[69] Although I did not see any evidence of a larger fence beyond the existing one enclosing the RIC, it remains unimaginable how long these individuals had to wait before their asylum requests were processed — or even acknowledged and attended to. If those inside the camp were actually being processed in a timely manner, there would not be such an overflow of people living outside it.

As a hypothesis, those who stayed outside the perimeter of the camp may have established a form of order within their temporary lives there. The alternation between these zones allowed the escapees to temporarily adapt to the harsh, arid environment while waiting for their asylum requests to be processed — if they were not deported to Türkiye. This was their way of marking their resilience. The stories created by the surrounding area of RIC — even within RIC — are stories of historical evidence. These traces are evidence of their resilience and struggle. All three zones and their zoning map diagram (Figure 116) are hypotheses based primarily on site visits and photographs taken during those visits. These hypotheses also show, based on the traces found, how simple these survival mechanisms were — and how simple the escapees were, in fact. The keys I found were definitely someone's home keys, left behind accidentally — maybe like that child's puffer jacket on the stone bench at Kerveli shore. These

69 This information is according to Refugee.Info Greece: "Asylum registration." Information retrieved from:https://greece.refugee.info/en-us/articles/4985589502743

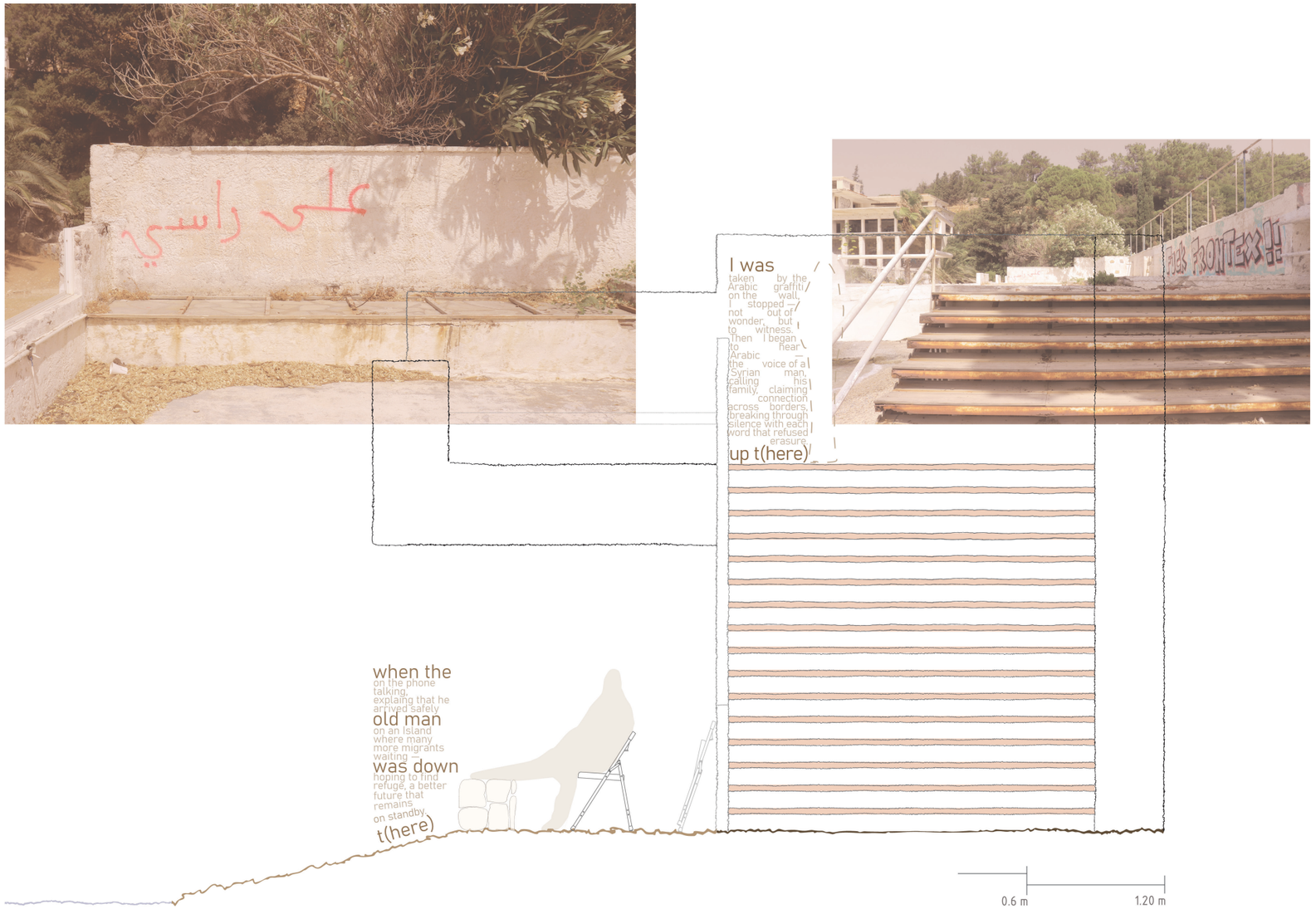


Figure 117. Section of an abandoned structure with graffiti at Samos Bay in Vathy, Samos. While exploring the rooftop, I overheard a telephone conversation with a middle-aged Syrian man sitting right under the shaded area.

very keys might have been kept by the person in hope that they, or their family, would one day return to their home, possibly in Syria.

After I finished scanning and registering these traces, and trying to understand the dynamics of staying at RIC and beyond, we went back to Samos city. But I wanted to walk a bit more and reflect on what I had witnessed. While approaching the edge of Samos Bay, where there was an abandoned structure in front of the shore, I discovered a Syrian Arabic expression written on the rooftop of that structure (Figure 117). It said على راسي, pronounced *ala rasi*, which literally translates to "over my head," but metaphorically means "I would do that with pleasure" or "I hold you in high regard." It was close to where I stayed. Right when I discovered this graffiti, I overheard a phone call. It was a middle-aged man, and from his dialect, I could tell he was a Syrian Aleppan. He was on the phone with what seemed to be his daughter, telling her on speakerphone that he was fine, that the island (Samos) was beautiful, and that he felt safe. I could not interrupt his conversation, as I did not want to scare him. I stayed at a distance and remained still. From the flow of the conversation, I could tell that he had recently made a successful escape from a Turkish shore and, at that moment, was not detained at the CCAC. I did not want to stress the old man, so I left him in peace. But I also felt happy for him, because it is always reassuring to know that migrants survive when they escape and put their lives at risk.

On the fifth and final day (4th of July, 2024), specifically in the last hours before heading back to Portugal, I had to go to Pythagorio again to locate the other port authority and coast guard office. Upon arrival, I did not use any GPS tools. Instead, I began checking stores one by one after finding a map of the customs offices in Pythagorio, to ensure they were by the bay, until I found both located directly across from the ferry terminal as a reference point. They were hidden in the shadow of the surrounding trees. I also found a coast guard car, most likely used to detain illegal migrants on shore and transport them to the port authority or directly to the CCAC. I tried to find a coast guard vessel while observing the port line, but I could not identify any. Maybe it was parked somewhere else or was being used at that moment to detain escapees.

It was at that moment, when I went to check the other side of the bay, that I noticed a customs control office and what seemed like a terminal. Next to it, I saw a large gray vessel, which appeared to belong to some military naval unit, parked at the port on the opposite side of the port authority and coast guard office. I recalled that the naval vessel was not docked anywhere in the port on the third day. On the right side of the vessel, there were two white tent containers that seemed to belong to an organization similar to the Red Cross, but with a black cross. This made me think they were part of international or humanitarian aid efforts, supporting the naval missions that passed through the area. However, I could not stay longer. Time was running short, so I had to leave Pythagorio and head to the airport..

Then we headed to the last location in Samos, which was also the first on the 30th of June. From the car seat, I looked at the Mediterranean olive fields before we left the Suzuki Swift, which had served us well, in a nearby parking lot for rented cars. After arriving at Samos Airport, the flight was delayed for a few hours. This delay, while seemingly uneventful and insignificant — a minor disruption in the schedule, yet one in which movement is assured

and secured — opened a space for reflection. As Massey (2005) argues, time is always intertwined with space; and within Bakhtin's (1975/1981) concept of the chronotope, such hours become negligible when compared to the temporalities of migration, which he describes through the 'comparative chronotope' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 218). For many migrants, especially those crossing borders irregularly, time stretches across months and years, marked by uncertainty, repetitive cycles of waiting, and displacement. In that light, the delay was not an inconvenience but a moment of confrontation — a brief experience of waiting that, for others, is far more prolonged and unstable.

Then it was time to board Aegean Airlines' Airbus A321neo again and make the reverse trip from Samos to Athens. Afterward, we flew back to Portugal, overlooking the sea from a different angle, with the memories of this mission and site visit replaying over and over again — especially the graffiti expression *ala rasi* على راسي on that abandoned rooftop wall. It was the first time I had seen Arabic written on walls in years, particularly informal Syrian Arabic. I wondered if the person(s) who wrote this expression was glad to have arrived in Samos safely. Did they gain refugee status? Did their migration continue, or did it end there in Samos? Was this person(s) related in any way, or did she or he know that child whose blue puffer jacket was found at Paralia Kerveli? Did they survive in either RIC or CCAC, or were they deported back to Türkiye or even Syria? Many thoughts crossed my mind, leading me to wonder whether these traces of words might also bring forth multiple histories waiting to be told and mapped.

chapter **iii.iii.**

_Past events in the learning and creative process



Figure 118. Poster of "Rebuilding Syria from Within" workshop (18 to 28 of July, 2018). Retrieved from: https://lab2pt.net/summer-schools/rebuilding-syria-from-within/ and https://www.uminho.pt/EN/follow-uminho/Pages/event-detail.aspx?Codigo=53157

Figure 119. Book cover of *On the Summer School Rebuilding Syria from within. A visit to its archive* (2024). Retrieved from: https://lab2pt.net/publications/2024-on-the-summer-school-rebuilding-syria-from-within-a-visit-to-its-archive

iii.iii.a. Research and findings: before and during this thesis

This chapter discusses how events and findings were elaborated, contributed to, and affected the representation process. I have not included the details of these findings in the second part of the thesis structure because the focus was on the case studies, without interrupting them through my self-involvement. The order of these findings is chronological and is also reflected in the activity report at the end of this thesis. They represent both colloquium and non-colloquium events that occurred before and during this thesis, and which influenced the development of my work, as well as my activist position and demand for higher education.

. Summer 2018 and autumn and winter of 2019:

In the case of the *Tanmeel* case study, the damage assessment and the idea of representing it emerged from an archival and research collaboration I conducted for On the Summer School Rebuilding Syria from Within: A Visit to its Archive (a work established in 2019 and published in 2024) through the Centro de Estudos da Escola de Arquitetura, Arte e Design (Centre for Studies at the School of Architecture, Art, and Design) of the University of Minho. This work corresponds to the summer school Rebuilding Syria from Within (2018), held at the School of Architecture, Art, and Design of the University of Minho (EAAD). During this summer school, I was coincidentally selected to work with the group focused on Douma, located on the eastern outskirts of Damascus. This area is close to where the student migrant in the *Tanmeel* case study had lived and near the site of the incident that occurred during the 15-minute time-interval.

. Spring 2020 -

AAfter joining Humans Before Borders (HuBB) as a volunteer at the end of March 2020, Portugal began facing migration issues due to the complicated processes handled by the Services for Foreigners and Borders (SEF), exacerbated by COVID-19 restrictions. These challenges impacted migrants living in Portugal. In response, an open letter was issued to raise awareness of the urgency of this issue and as a humanitarian call. The letter, signed by HuBB members and other associations, urged all governmental organizations and political bodies involved in migration to find swift solutions for the vulnerability of migrants. It also called for better monitoring and coordination within services handling migration cases. A key issue HuBB seeks to address is the delay in processing migrants' applications, as well as issues related to the renewal and candidacy for Portuguese residency, particularly concerning cases within Portugal and involving Europe.

HuBB is a Portuguese-based NGO (operating in Porto and Lisbon) that functions as a collective of individuals and volunteers (activists) opposing the inhumane treatment of migrants and refugees. The organization demonstrates that borders do not truly exist and that human beings should come before any border obstructing their path to seek refuge. HuBB engages in various projects, initiates manifestos, and provides training on the sensitivity and urgency of migration issues. One of their initiatives advocates for the release of refugee rescue ships in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Libya, which had been immobilized by Italian authorities due to COVID-19 security concerns. This blockade led to many deaths. In response, a petition was launched, signed by HuBB members and others, to be presented at demonstrations held in Porto and Lisbon in June 2020. HuBB has also been active in addressing racism and human rights issues, particularly following the global outcry after George Floyd's murder in the US. The organization views the obstruction of sea rescue efforts off Libya as a direct manifestation of systemic racism.





Figure 120. Expresso: "Carta aberta. Covid-19 e os Centros de Detenção em Portugal: 41 associações e mais de 100 cidadãos pedem libertação dos migrantes" (Open letter. Covid-19 and Detention Centers in Portugal: 41 associations and more than 100 citizens call for the release of migrants.) Retrieved from: https://expresso.pt/opiniao/2020-04-09-Carta-aberta.-Covid-19-e-os-Centros-de-Detencao-em-Portugal-41-associacoes-e-mais-de-100-cidadaos-pedem-libertacao-dos-migrantes

Figure 120. Jornal Mapa: "Pela libertação dos migrantes detidos pelo SEF" (For the release of migrants detained by SEF.) Retrieved from: https://www.jornalmapa.pt/2020/04/10/pela-libertacao-dos-migrantes-detidos-pelo-sef/

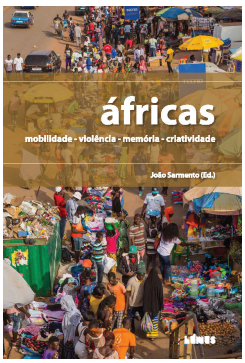


Figure 122. *Áfricas: mobilidade, violência, memória e criatividade* João Sarmento (ed.). Retrieved from: https://www.cecs.uminho.pt/publicacao/africas-mobilidade-violencia-memoria-e-criatividade/

. Summer-autumn 2020 , published in spring 2021:

When I was researching documented escape events for my work in the summer school "Áfricas: Mobilidade, violência, memória e criatividade" (2020-2021) (Africas: Mobility, violence, memory, and creativity) under the supervision of João Sarmento, I studied the works of Forensic Architecture. Their factual and rigorous research, along with their representation through documentation and shared videography of urgent, emerging events, became essential for understanding the sequence of escape events across the Mediterranean. Their research projects, particularly those focusing on migratory escape events, involve various entities that shape the broader scope of these occurrences. These range from coast guard interventions and restrictions on escape attempts to Sea-Watch, a German NGO that assists escapees from drowning. Sea-Watch contributes video and sound data recorded by its vessels to document migratory events. I discovered that the Sea-Watch website offers public news articles that report on vessel incidents and events recorded and reported by Sea-Watch.

When I searched for 2015 in the category of past missions, I found 11 reports covering demonstrations and vessel incidents. Three of these reports[70] discuss incidents from November 2015 related to missions assisting vessel incidents near Lesbos, Mytilene, where the student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study attempted his first escape. One of these reports displayed a "That page can't be found" notification, likely because it is archived but hidden due to its date. However, the other two are accessible and describe how Sea-Watch helped escapees whose inflatable boats were capsizing and sinking. Although neither report shows a yellow inflatable boat, and the student migrant does not mention Sea-Watch being involved in the rescue, it is possible that his vessel incident overlapped with others that Sea-Watch did not intervene in, or that the Turkish coast guard reached the vessel before the Sea-Watch rescue team. It is also possible that not all incidents were reported at the time due to the numerous escape attempts. Furthermore, it's possible that the inflatable boats the student migrant used were not actually yellow, despite his recollection and emphasis that both were, and that Sea-Watch helped escapees back to the Turkish shore because the place where the motor broke down and where they stopped was closer to it than to Mytilene.

However, while the titles "Status-Update 14.11.2015: 'Sea-Watch' starts a new mission securing the escape route to Lesbos" and "Status-Update 17.11.2015: Operational conditions on Lesbos" suggest Sea-Watch was actively involved in rescue efforts, the text in the reports does not explicitly state that they directly helped the escapees reach Lesbos. Instead, the reports describe their role in monitoring refugee boats, passing their positions to volunteers on land, and preparing for future rescue missions. They were setting up operations, coordinating with other volunteer groups, and training for rescue maneuvers.

70 Past Missions. Information retrieved from: https://sea-watch.org/en/page/13/?s=2015
."Sea-Watch in the Aegean" (That page can't be found.). Retrieved from: https://sea-watch.org/en/mission/lesbos/
."Status-Update 14.11.2015: Sea-Watch starts a new mission securing the escape route to Lesbos." Report retrieved from: https://sea-watch.org/en/status-update-14-11-2015-sea-watch-starts-a-new-mission-securing-the-escape-route-to-lesbos/
."Status-Update 17.11.2015: Operational conditions on Lesbos." Report retrieved from: https://sea-watch.org/en/status-update-17-11-2015-operational-conditions-on-lesbos/

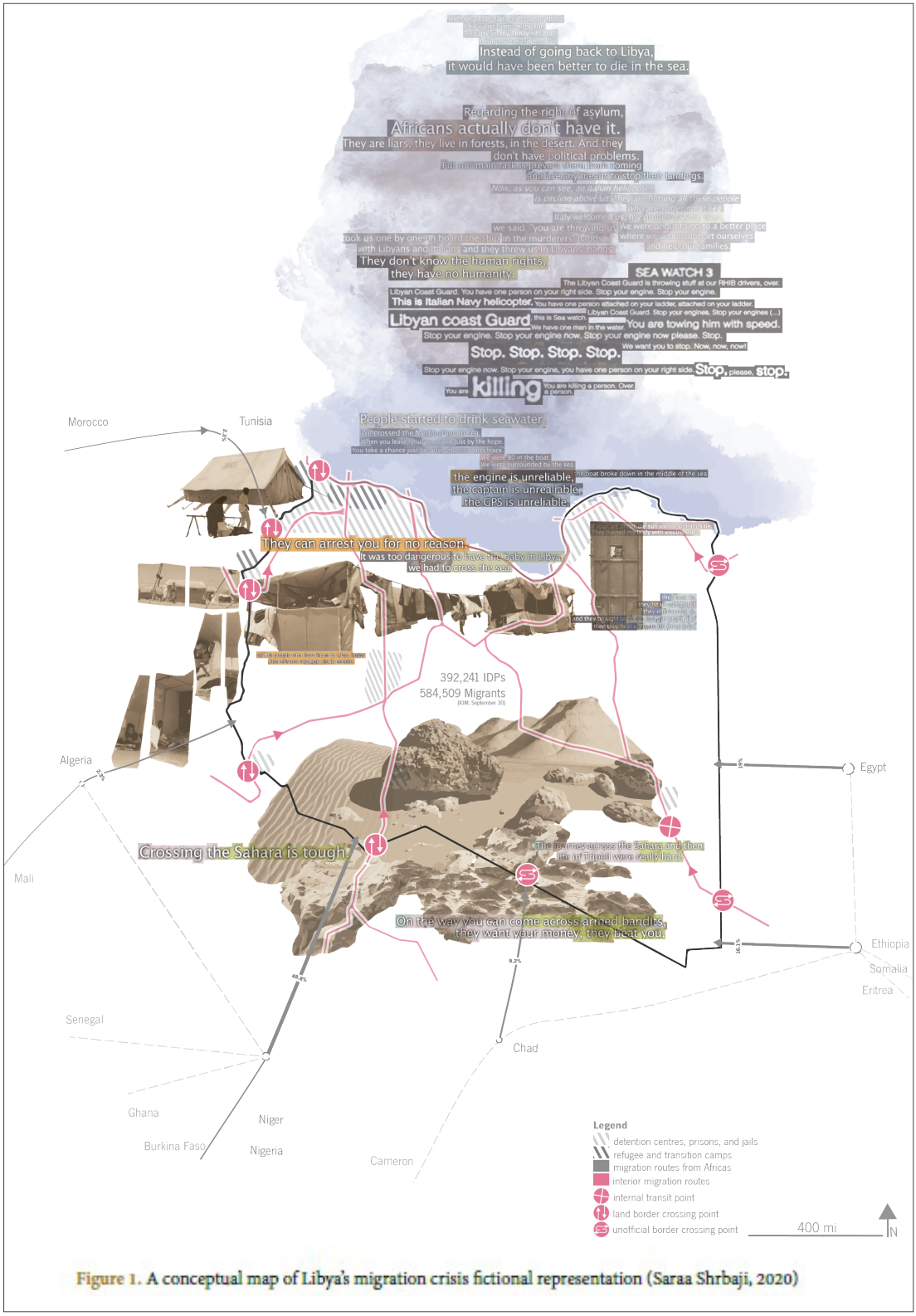


Figure 1. A conceptual map of Libya's migration crisis fictional representation (Saraa Shrbaji, 2020)

Figure 123. Map representation of my individual work "Projecting incompleteness in the case of Libya's migration crisis: fictional representation of image and textual documentation" in "Áfricas: Mobilidade, Violência, Memória e Criatividade". Source: https://www.cecs.uminho.pt/publicacao/africas-mobilidade-violencia-memoria-e-criatividade/ Retrieved from: http://www.lasics.uminho.pt/ojs/index.php/cecs_ebooks/issue/view/268/showToc

While they aimed to secure the escape route, the updates do not clarify whether they physically assisted boats in reaching Lesbos. They mention responding to distress calls, carefully navigating at night to spot refugee boats, and working to establish a continuous rescue system. This implies they were engaged in rescue operations, but it does not specify whether they physically transported refugees or simply coordinated and assisted other organizations in the process.

. Autumn 2022:

The Portuguese Red Cross (CVP) in Guimarães, Portugal, launched an initiative in collaboration with a local association, "A Associação de Apoio Criança," to create a project called AAA-Refugiados (AAA-Refugees). This project welcomed 14 Afghan adolescent musicians (around 273 across Portugal, according to the Público newsletter in 2021), who were part of the traditional music group within the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM). I was one of the volunteers involved in this initiative.

Although the project was short-lived due to organizational and logistical challenges — eventually leading to the association and some volunteers continuing their efforts separately — it was a meaningful initiative that fostered engagement and support. The project aimed to integrate the Afghan adolescents into the Portuguese community, as they were attending music classes in a conservatory but had no opportunities for natural interaction with Portuguese peers their age. To facilitate their integration, we began by introducing them to the city and later provided beginner-level Portuguese language lessons, combining learning with practical language use. We also worked to create a familiar environment, encouraging them to speak their language(s) and compare them to Portuguese, and in my case, English and Arabic as well. This is the second type of student migratory flow that Portugal and the European Union have organized to bring students to Portugal as part of efforts to support their education.





Figures 124-125. Posters from the 1st International Meeting on "Space, Power & Politics" (April, 2024).

. Spring 2024:

A 'story map' was the description given by Luís Moreira, a geography teacher and professor, after assisting with my oral communication and visual presentation at the Department of Geography at the University of Minho during the seminar "1st International Meeting on Space, Power, and Politics," which was organized by João Sarmento and Luís Moreira and to which I was invited to participate, in April 2024.

. Summer 2025

During the summer of 2025, I took all the story maps with me to see what could be identified through the act of traveling. The only thing I repeatedly noticed in different places was the yellow taxis. It was the first time I came across a yellow taxi in Portugal. In Albania, taxis were everywhere, mainly yellow ones. I could not identify any Saipa Saba, though. However, the idea and visualization of the yellow taxi are no longer perceived the same way after encountering the representation of the *Tanmeel* case study.







Figure 126 to 128: Images of yellow taxis that I took during trips to Tirana, Albania, and Porto, Portugal, in 2024.

. Winter 2021

Reflecting upon the two previous chapters, which include performances created as an extension of the case studies' representations, there is a particular visual performance that began at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued afterward. This is another personal event that added fragments to this thesis — a medical issue that arose during the pandemic. I have always experienced floaters, known in Portuguese as "moscas volantes" (literally "flying flies"). According to the ophthalmologists I consulted, these floaters are specks clustered together that cast shadows on my retina, primarily caused by nearsightedness or high myopia. Although my vision has been affected, I have always found them special, as they resemble visible tissue cells, adding a layered pattern to my perception.

In early 2021, I had an accident where I fell down a stone stairway. A few days later, I began seeing a large, dark, web-shaped floater in my left eye, along with stringy floaters in both eyes. My vision became so impaired that I was unable to work or read, so I decided to rest. However, the floaters persisted, so I visited the emergency room in Guimarães. The ophthalmologist explained that my eyes, especially the left one, had experienced a traumatic shock and that I had a raised retina. She told me the floaters would remain, and I would need to adapt. This was right when I was beginning the representation part of this thesis. I continue seeing ophthalmologists to monitor my condition. Although I have adapted to the floaters to some extent, they complicate things, especially when reading, working, or giving presentations. They obscure my vision, and I also struggle to see in dim light. I often blink or squeeze my eyes to move them, though they usually follow my eye movements with a slight delay.

To avoid dwelling on this story further, I want to explain why I mentioned it in this sub-chapter. My floaters resemble the line fragments I drew in the path studies. Sometimes they appear more vivid, and at other times, they are blurry with different shades of gray. The resemblance is uncanny, especially since both emerged almost simultaneously — one during the learning and creative process, and the other in my vision — both impacting the progression of this thesis. It only occurred to me after drawing the path fragments. This was not intentional, but due to the resemblance, they may appear in some representations, adding another layer to the visual experience. Just as the path includes pauses where the migrant may stop to enter a place or wait, the path and the place(s) together resemble a cluster of strands and web floaters with various knots.

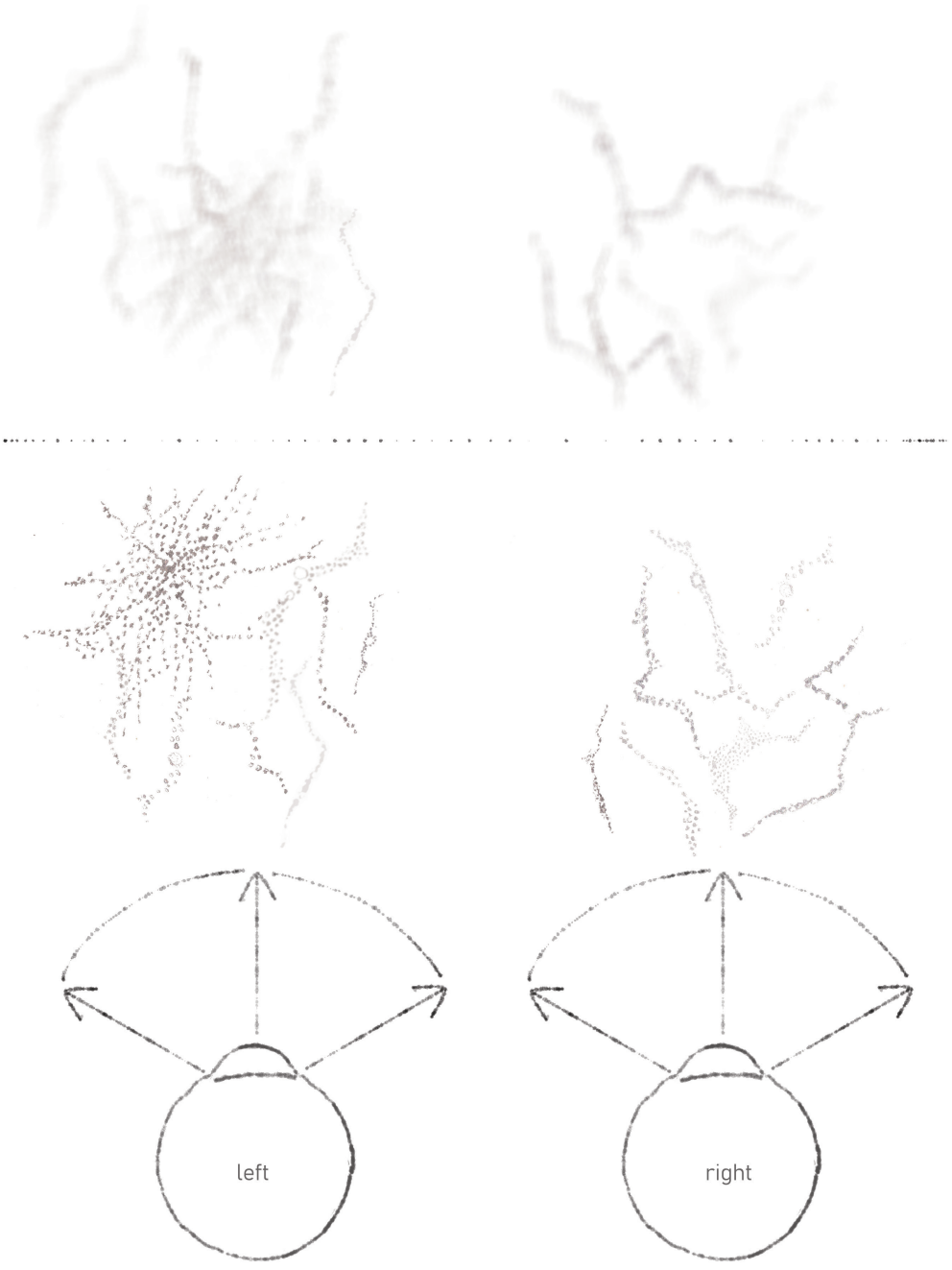


Figure 129. Diagram of vision floaters illustrating how eye movement causes floaters to appear in all directions. The left eye contains more webbed, cloud-like, and clumped floaters, while the right eye primarily shows strand-like floaters and specks. In both eyes, two distinct visual experiences are present: one in which the floaters appear more detailed, and another in which they are blurred.

iii.iii.b. Conversations on migrants and migration

In this sub-chapter, two encounters have taken place — one through academic correspondence and the other through direct dialogue — providing distinct yet complementary insights into the psychological dimensions of migration. While my exchange with Matos's research introduced me to studies on trauma and stressors affecting Syrian migrants in Portugal, the second psychologist offered an immediate, clinical perspective shaped by frequent interactions with migrants. Together, these conversations reinforced the necessity of addressing the psychological and emotional aspects of migration not only in academic discourse but also in the personal narratives shaping this thesis.

A noteworthy revelation from these encounters was the profound influence of language on the migrant experience. Matos's research underscored how trauma and displacement affect the psychological well-being of refugees, particularly Syrian migrants, in Portugal, while the second psychologist's reflections emphasized how words — whether self-ascribed or imposed by others — can shape a migrant's integration and sense of belonging. This realization strengthened my argument for a glossary of border-thinking, which aims to foreground the nuanced and often overlooked ways in which language contributes to either inclusion or exclusion.

. Summer 2021:

I contacted Matos via email after coming across the first article about Syrians in Portugal that she co-authored with Indart, Park, and Leal, "'That is not my country anymore': Pre- and postdisplacement trauma, stressors, and distress in war-affected Syrian civilians" (2021). I asked her, after outlining the theme of my work, if she knew any Syrian refugees in Portugal who might be open to having discussions with me. This occurred while I was still trying to establish a criterion for selecting case studies for the structure of this thesis. Shortly afterwards, she responded to my emails and forwarded me some contacts. Although I did not end up including the stories of these individuals in my case studies. This was due to my unfamiliarity with them and the criterion I later developed, which involved choosing individuals with whom I had an existing relationship, a level of trust, and whom I could contact frequently for more dialgoues or some specific information, without feeling restricted with time or communication. Matos' academic works (2021–2023) are referenced in this thesis to highlight how she repeatedly emphasized the psychological needs of the Syrian population in Portugal — an issue that extends to all refugee populations. Based on my own experiences and observations of myself and my colleagues among the student migrants, I recognize that this issue should be addressed not only from a humanitarian perspective but also as a fundamental right for those who have survived war and wish to pursue education and other aspirations.

. Winter 2025:

Later, I met another female clinical psychologist (who remains anonymous for personal reasons) volunteering in Portugal with migrants, specifically those with refugee status, and marginalized individuals facing social and financial difficulties. I asked for her assistance in clarifying some doubts and answering questions that could contribute to the narratives within the story-maps.

The questions and responses include the following:

Can migration alter memory and the processes through which it is recalled?
"Well, this is quite a complex question, because we can repress memories. That is, if something traumatic happens, a person may have difficulty recalling it. There can even be memory gaps, right? We might also be talking about a highly stressful context, which could involve some form of disturbance, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, where genetic factors may play a role, and the person might even experience flashbacks of the trauma. So, there are indeed aspects related to memory, recollection, and even the traumatic event itself that can be altered."

Can a sense of belonging emerge after a critical event — such as the dissolution of a dictatorial government — in a migrant's life? Or is it something that has always existed?
"Yes, it is quite normal. When someone grows up without experiencing a sense of belonging — perhaps due to political oppression, displacement, or other challenging circumstances — it can leave you unfamiliar with what that feeling truly is. Belonging is a fundamental human need, but if the conditions around you (like living under a dictatorial regime) do not support forming strong connections to a place or community, then the idea of belonging might feel foreign. When circumstances change, such as when a country like Syria transitions to a freer and safer environment, you may begin to encounter new opportunities to connect with others and feel part of a community. This process of learning what it means to belong can be gradual and even a bit overwhelming, but it is a natural part of adjusting to new social and personal realities.

In this sense, belonging is not only about political structures but also about shared experiences and cultural identity. To feel a sense of belonging, we first need to perceive something in common — that we share experiences with the rest of the community or that something there is almost part of our identity, which is why cultural identity is often emphasized. It can also be linked to a sense of security. So, even when a migrant's country undergoes the dissolution of a dictatorial government, this migrant can experience a deeper sense of belonging. In fact, this sense of belonging may even intensify, as much of the cultural context remains tied to that country, reinforcing the individual's connection to it."

Is it possible to experience more than one type of subsequent trauma? In the case of a migrant (whether a refugee or someone who left a country at war through regular or irregular migration), can this happen? Can traumas overlap and follow one another?
"Regarding this question — whether a person can have more than one trauma — yes, people can experience multiple traumas. I am not sure if you want to know about the concrete case of a PTSD, for example, post-traumatic stress disorder, because you frequently and alternatively mention migrants and refugees here. In the case of experiencing post-traumatic stress, this often applies to someone who has fled a war context. What can happen is that any stimuli associated with something that reminds them of that context can trigger significant anxiety, you see? And it can be inferred as here as being with trauma from that situation, but sometimes it is actually triggered by stimuli when recalling that specific experience."

Does displacement, in the case of migrants and/or refugees, reduce or eliminate — to varying degrees — the recognition of home abroad (not in the physical sense)?
"The idea of 'home' as a safe haven or a country is subjective, and many still feel that their true home remains in the country they left, right? However, displacement can weaken these emotional bonds and disrupt the internal models of identity and belonging that are so vital to one's sense of self. Psychological theories such as place attachment and identity theory describe that 'home' is more than just a physical space — it encompasses feelings of safety, continuity, and emotional connections, all of which are challenged during displacement. With successful integration, though, new emotional bonds can form, allowing individuals to rebuild or even redefine their sense of home in their new surroundings."

Can the word 'privilege' be attributed to a migrant (who flees from war but through regular migration) and/or a refugee through irregular migration?
"This question is subjective and complex. When we talk about 'privilege,' we usually refer to advantages that some people have because of their social or structural position. For migrants and refugees, privilege is not a common experience because they often face significant hardships. However, some might still have access to certain opportunities, like scholarships or legal benefits, which could be seen as a form of privilege. But overall, most migrants face systemic challenges that make the concept of privilege less applicable. There are exceptions where factors like strong support systems or resilience can act as buffers, helping some individuals cope despite adversity.

For these student migrants, the idea of privilege is complex. While scholarships offer certain advantages, like access to education, these benefits do not erase the broader challenges they face, such as trauma, displacement, and marginalization. Calling their situation a privilege can oversimplify their experience. This means focusing too much on positive aspects while downplaying the difficulties they encounter. It can also create cognitive dissonance, a form of 'invalidating experience' — a concept in psychological trauma theory where an individual's lived reality and struggles are minimized, which can hinder their ability to integrate into new environments and contribute to feelings of isolation or marginalization. This kind of narrative can make it harder for them to adjust and integrate, contributing to feelings of isolation and marginalization."

When I heard the psychologist's response to this question, I felt conflicted. I have often been described using this term by people from various nationalities — particularly older Portuguese individuals — who view me as 'privileged' for having been able to leave Syria during the war through the APGES scholarship program. Although I could not entirely refute the validity of that characterization, the psychologist's response compelled me to reconsider how language and labels can significantly influence an individual's efforts at integration and social interaction, and how such attributions may contribute to broader social and structural marginalization. This brings me back to the first dialogue I performed with a refugee family in Portugal, whose primary difficulty with integration was language, especially in the case of the daughter, whose negative experiences were shaped by the negative language attributed to her. Hence, the glossary of border-thinking, although it could not encompass all the words used by the Syrian student migrants, was created in the first part of this thesis to emphasize the importance of

language as part of a humane approach to migration stories and migrants.

So I chose to use the term ‘advantaged’ instead of ‘privileged,’ because it concerns social or systemic advantages in an analytical context. ‘Privileged’ could carry connotations of entitlement or societal inequality, as I have comprehended from the conversation. Whereas ‘advantaged’ is more about the presence of specific favorable conditions without necessarily implying inequality or being undeserved of something. In the context, referring to ‘advantaged’ describes the student migrants as individuals who have received benefits with favorable circumstances — whether due to resources, academic opportunities and achievements, or structural and border conditions — without the potential negative connotation that might come with ‘privileged.’ This term could objectively express the circumstances of the Syrian student migrants from the APGES scholarship program, while avoiding the complexities and discrimination tied to other ambiguous or stigmatized terms.

However, Matos (2022) used the word ‘privilege’ once to describe Syrian student migrants in Portugal after a Syrian student migrant acknowledged the responsibility he holds as a scholarship recipient to do his best so that he can give back. In response, Matos wrote, “This feeling was shared by many students, who struggled to reconcile the guilt they felt for their privilege as beneficiaries of student programs, an overwhelming sense of responsibility to succeed, and a perceived obligation to work towards Syria’s post-war reconstruction and healing” (Matos, 2022, p. 191). Here, the notion of privilege does not carry a negative connotation but instead represents a complex mix of responsibility, gratitude for the host country, and the demand to contribute to post-war reconstruction. Similar to the case of Tatneesh, the student migrant mentioned that she wants to give back for the higher education she was granted, which indirectly led to her current career in the Portuguese Air Force.

_Conclusion

Addressing the political frame of late 2024 - early 2025

To begin, I had a sub-chapter titled "Manifesting with the student migrants," which was meant to introduce the third part of this thesis structure. However, following the Syrian revolution on 8th of December 2024 (the new Syrian day of independence from the Assad dictatorship), with the downfall of the Syrian regime, political tensions arose, particularly among those who supported the former regime. These tensions were expected and stemmed from a mix of uncertainty many Syrians felt regarding the current sequence of events, the temporary political transitional government, and the political state, as well as the dubious news, events, and misinformation that may engender hatred, sectarianism, and fear. While these tensions had already existed before the regime's dissolution, due to the sectarianism, segregation, structural hate, violence, and corruption rooted in the Assad regime, those who did not support the dictatorship were previously forced to remain neutral and refrain from speaking out against inhumane acts, even outside Syria. Now, however, everyone is no longer afraid to speak, especially those who were forcefully silenced or had lost their loved ones due to the regime's unhinged and outrageous crimes. On the other hand, those who supported the previous regime — many of whom conformed and assimilated to avoid criticism, and others who still support it — continue to fuel tensions, propaganda, misinformation, and eventual crimes.

For this reason, I decided to remove the sub-chapter on re-dialoguing with the student migrants, where I would present each representative. This decision was made not only because such dialogues in the current situation might introduce changes that could alter the narratives and, consequently, the representations of the case studies within the time-frame, but mainly because, at the time when Syria was experiencing a completely different political situation, I had the student migrants' permission to record and reinterpret their narratives through drawings. To avoid involvement in political conflicts, which are currently highly sensitive and subject to ongoing debate, I have chosen not to pursue this approach. While it may be feasible in the near future, at present, I prefer to avoid placing either myself or the student migrants in a position that could compromise and jeopardize our relationship and, consequently, the integrity of this thesis. This is not to suggest that their political perspectives either oppose or align with the arguments presented here; rather, it acknowledges the complex and often conflicting emotions experienced by all Syrians around the world at this particular moment.

From distancing to fragments of thought

Positionality was never a static standpoint from which to speak; rather, it was geographically located, socio-politically anchored in a specific view of Syrian student migrations and Syrian migrations in general, and academically, it adopted a non-neutral and activist stance toward the theme of migration. It shifted across airports, email threads, Zoom calls, conversations, documents, forms of representation, and languages. Establishing that positionality — what it meant to be here while writing there, and vice versa — demanded not just acknowledgment but theoretical and methodological grounding. Distance became not only a logistical condition but also a theoretical one. Thus, this thesis briefly leans into distance — not as an obstacle, but as a productive tension, a space for thinking that detaches from the context of Syrian student migrations to distinguish itself from the empirical references. This distance emphasizes migration as a context and theme to understand what this thesis has achieved,

before engaging with the focus group, though it remains inevitably interwoven. Before delving into the concluding fragments related to Syrian student migration, this thesis needed to close — to draw a line and bring the research process to a pause. This closure is specifically made through an acknowledgment of external factors — foremost among them the recent, frequent, and continuous changes in Syria — which may lead to further shifts within the entirety of the thesis.

Yet, this very pause signals not an end, but a reorientation — a moment from which to reassess, demand, and extend. To synthesize the utility, relevance, and intrinsic value of the theoretical results, and to assess what this thesis may or may not have achieved across continents, another map must be drawn to open new points for intervention, questioning, and argument. Therefore, the following questions arise: How is migration to be thought of beyond the immediate empirical terrain? How could one approach it when the research itself unfolded across geographic, emotional, and political distances and dimensions? And how might a specific type of research — emerging through fragments, performances, and mapping practices — be introduced as part of the approach of this thesis?

These questions required a conceptual and methodological grounding that shaped the earliest stages of this thesis and continued to resonate throughout this research, defining what was achieved through theory in relation to migration. Bakhtin's (1975/1981) notion of the chronotope provided an entry point to this thesis: a way to approach dialogue as an initial step in the research process, while relating the notion of time–space as intertwined aspects of lived experience(s). These aspects highlighted how the subjective dimension of narrative discourse and perceived duration shape the framing of migration contexts. In this sense, the comparative chronotope guided this research process in distinguishing and drawing parallels between regular and irregular migrations. Similarly, Guattari's (1989/2013) schizoanalytic cartographies enabled a mapping of displacement not through fixity but through multiplicity. From this, ethical and aesthetic dimensions, principles, and guidelines were shaped, with an emphasis on existential territories — psychological, emotional, affective, relational, and other human forms of being in migration — that address subjective shifts concerning migration as a theme. This emphasis, along with the separate relation of aesthetics and ethics, paved the way for a reflection on representation.

From this point, the idea of geo-architecture was explored by examining the connections between architecture and geography in Le Corbusier's ASCORAL (1945), which helped to understand the expansion of territorial scale in representation as relevant to addressing the theme of migration across continents and linking this expansion to notions of mapping. Despite this expansion, migration in this thesis was approached not only as a matter of border-crossing, but also a movement across language, translation, and border-thinking, as shaped by Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of the borderlands, with an emphasis on identity and language in negotiation, contradiction, and rupture. With this focus on language, this thesis integrated this layer into its key elements, recognizing that border-thinking is not merely about geopolitical boundaries, but about experiencing in-between spaces and territories that resist binary categories and labels and, at the same time, deconstruct them. Marginalization must come to an end, and there must be a demand for change in the structures that sustain it — an idea that supported the approach to mapping as resistance.

On the other hand, the critical perspective of Mignolo's (2000) concept of border-thinking foregrounds knowledge produced from the margins of modernity and coloniality. This idea supported the process of thinking from — and not merely about — socio-political paradigms, as well as from geopolitical and epistemic borders within migration. The bridging of border-thinking and architecture was approached through Pieris' (2019) work, where her exploration of architectural expression highlighted how architecture can serve as a critical and creative tool in responding to migration and negotiating these boundaries and their socio-political contexts. This thesis was informed by and built upon the ideas and concepts of these authors to reflect on how knowledge is produced through the positionality of the researcher in relation to the theme of migration — an approach further developed through Abrams' (2010) concept of inter-subjectivity within oral history method. This shift away from traditional and dominant views on migration also inherently molded connections with ideas concerning human rights, advocacy, and their pursuits.

After having established a bibliographical mesh of interconnected ideas, concepts, and authors that helped this thesis form a foundation for engaging with, addressing, and approaching the theme of migration, the research proceeded to explore its applications and contributions. Guided by objectives rooted in the academic discourse of architecture and its interdisciplinarity, this foundation addressed specific agents and discursive tools in representation. This thesis explored how fiction serves as a crucial and critical idea and practice in this academic research process, particularly within the theme of migration. It also examined how this practice relates to Genette's (1991/1993) imaginative and speculative construction of representation through fiction — an essential tool for the textual and visual representation of migration contexts. These ideas were later addressed in Pestana's (2019) experimental collaborative work, which explores fiction as both a creative and academic practice, representing new forms of knowledge — a mode of practice also pursued in this thesis, though not through the same kind of collaboration, in the representation of the theme of migration. This connected to Corner's (1999) concept of generative cartographies and the potential of representing migration through the agency of mapping. Building on his theorization and foundational ideas regarding the expansion of mapping's potential across different human and territorial contexts and scales, the objectives of this thesis were built and developed in order to address migration through representation.

In turn, an expanded and situated comprehension of migration time was required during the foundational, exploratory, and experiential phases of representation. Serres' (1995) reflections helped articulate the characteristics of migration, from understanding what it means to live within disjointed temporalities — where past, present, and imagined futures coexist — as is often the case for many migrants, to acknowledging that these temporalities belong to individuals, rather than being collective. From migration, seen as both a phenomenon and a crisis, came the recognition that migration time is made of critical overlapping layers of events. This revealed how temporal relations unsettle any stable notion of a fixed route — from origin, through transit, to refuge — showing that these movements follow no single pattern and that temporality is layered and recursive. This was later explored through an understanding of narrative descriptions in relation to the theorization of migration events in Franz and Silva (2022). This framing of time in migration allowed fiction and history — interlaced components in this thesis — to intersect not as opposites, but as co-constructive

dimensions in the production of knowledge. Studying fiction and history within the context of migration helped this research reach a point where migration is understood as more than a question of arrival or legality, while still recognizing these questions as integral aspects of the experience. Through the idea of critical ethnography in Madison (2005), this research became a space of ethical encounter — relational, partial, unfinished, and ongoing — opening space for voices, contradictions, and future engagement both with this thesis and as an expansion of it or from it. Through this thesis, critical ethnography as a methodology has underscored the necessity of being embedded and urgently needed in any research on migration. Building on the practice of critical ethnography, this thesis later moved towards addressing subjectivity — particularly through auto-ethnography, drawing from Heider (1975) — to explore embodied experiences within migration contexts. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2020) took this further by shedding light on and emphasizing the complex, multi-faceted experiences of displacement, which must be approached with ethical considerations, recognition, and awareness. From this point, it was understood that action must be taken within the context of migration theory and research. Theory was not a prelude to fieldwork, but rather the very condition of its possibility. In other words, theory was not merely an introduction to representation and fieldwork, but the essential foundation that enabled and shaped the entire research process. This theoretical infrastructure created space for methods that could hold fragmentation and contradiction without resolving their complexities, allowing this thesis to remain open yet focused, suspended yet interconnected — deliberate incompleteness and ongoingness — across places, stories, and temporalities. It engaged with complexity not by simplifying it, but by deconstructing it.

Through performance-based research, these authors, concepts, and ideas wove together the intricate character of migration and its fragments, establishing a ground from which further academic interventions, questions, and arguments may emerge. While these may or may not directly relate to the learning process, creative development, or findings of this thesis, it is important to recognize performance as a humane act — a demand for human rights within the theme of migration — that contributes to the academic field of architecture in different ways: from expanding the agency of mapping to re-establishing a foundation for this expansion in ways that speak to today's migration realities, which have contributed to framing migration as a crisis. Rather than concluding its methodologies and theoretical framework, this thesis initiates groundwork for continued and expanded intervention and reflection across continents — despite its geographical focus on the Mediterranean — projecting beyond its formal closure as a time-bound academic research project. From here, performance-based research is further deconstructed in the conclusion, through fragments of thought that seek to understand how the utility of this thesis can be re-approached, and how the outcomes of the learning and creative process have shaped and affected this research.

Revising the selection criteria and representation results

Though the five student migrants from the case studies contributed valuable input to the representational work during the learning and creative process of this thesis — raising various critical issues concerning Syrian student migration — I identified certain aspects that could have been further explored. One such issue is the absence of description and representation of universities or academic facilities in the student migrants' narratives, which may stem from the lack of focus on this topic in the inquiry questions and dialogues. Given the emphasis on education and the fact that these migrants are students, universities are not only institutions

for learning but also key spatial points they attended — whether in Syria, in transit countries, or in Portugal. These were missing from their recollections, as none of the participants described their lived experiences within the academic spaces they encountered. This further branching of representation and narrative could have helped to understand the role of universities in shaping the migratory experience — including the academic atmosphere, the rooms where they took classes, and the integration process. I view this as significant, and it could serve as a potential extension of this thesis using the same methodologies. That is to say, it is essential to acknowledge that each university or academic facility, of course, performed differently, provided varied experiences, and influenced how the migrants' educational pursuits and migratory paths were shaped and reconfigured. This recalls what Turchi expressed in *Maps of the imagination: The writer as cartographer* (2004):

> The plan that guides our exploration may or may not be the structure-defining intention of the map, the document that leads the reader; experience reminds us that there is often a world of difference between what we hope to find, or think we might find, and what we discover. (Turchi, 2004, p. 15)

If there were an opportunity to explore an extension of this thesis, I would pursue further findings through the active act of mapping. This is why the vast agency of mapping, as highlighted by Corner (1999), and its potential to respond to critical questions of today's crises, could serve as a tool to advocate for humanitarian approaches. Just because I only addressed the representation of these institutions in the conclusion does not mean I had not noticed their limited description — such as the name of the university and/or the university residence — and even their exclusion — particularly the lived experiences within university premises — from the story-maps. As Turchi (2004) also notes, "Maps are defined by what they include but are often more revealing in what they exclude" (Turchi, 2004, p. 29), emphasizing that mapping is always an act of selection and exclusion.

Another issue is whether these five case studies are sufficient to address Syrian student migration to Portugal — as a whole or to a significant extent. To begin, what brought me closer to the Syrian situation, having left Syria in the early stages of the war, was the bibliographical reference of Al-Sabouni (2016), which connects Syria and architecture through different cultural, political, and border-thinking forms. I was able to read Al-Sabouni (2016) when I participated in the "Rebuilding Syria from within" summer school in 2018 at the School of Architecture, Art and Design of Minho University in collaboration with APGES, which had participants (mostly Syrian student migrants) directly and indirectly manifesting parts of their migratory experiences through their work in the workshop. The proposal for this thesis emerged from an impulse to respond to the ongoing and worsening devastation of the war and migration crisis, as well as from the urgency I witnessed during the "Rebuilding Syria" workshop and the efforts of the EAAD and the APGES scholarship program to rebuild Syria.

Merging this socio-political, geographical, and architectural observation — felt and experienced during the latter workshop — with the friendships and connections formed throughout this intense period, few years later, led to a reflection on the idea of having participants, as student migrants, deliver their testimonies (stories) through dialogues, serving as potential data for representation. This marked the starting point of the performance-based research of this thesis, following the articulation of my non-neutral positionality towards migration.

Coming back to the issue at hand of the case studies: Certainly, had these case studies been fewer (meaning fewer participants), the ideas developed throughout the structure would not have been the same, nor would they have yielded the same results in terms of the learning and creative research process, as well as the research findings. Since these case studies interacted with one another — collectively, sequentially, in sets, and individually — each story highlighted important aspects of Syrian student migration, from the cultural and socio-political contexts to the struggles of displacement and their relation to a war-torn country, which shaped representation in this thesis.

Beyond what was explored through the planned migrations (by APGES and UN programs), the case studies engaged with ideas that are both individual and interconnected, revealing layered migratory experiences that intersect with questions shared by many Syrian migrants across the globe. The *Intima'a* case study introduced the question of physical and relational home across architectural, geographical, and emotional terrains — where belonging lay somewhere between the search for home and the process of learning how to belong. The *Tatneesh* case study highlighted the mental and geographical trauma resulting from forced displacement due to war, followed by student migration and the ongoing process of coping with and adapting to this trauma in the search for a place to grow and heal. The *Tanmeel* case study emphasized the imagery of undocumented and documented (assessed) war ruins that erased much of Syria's infrastructure and history — places once familiar now rendered unrecognizable. The *Tamsaha* case study, focused on territorial juxtapositions within irregular migration, which revealed the struggles many migrants endure, both similarly and differently, while shedding light on the broader migration crisis unfolding across the Mediterranean. Finally, the *Shantata* case study, with its geo-architectonic scope, explored the geographical experience of displacement and continuous reflection on its implications. All five case studies were essential to this thesis and its research process, regardless of the variations in the volume of shared information between each student migrant. While these case studies provide critical perspectives on specific lived experiences, they may not fully encompass the broader spectrum of migration dynamics, including other varying socio-political factors, individual stories, and regional differences. However, these case studies were selected for their relevance and criticality in representing key themes and patterns within the migratory experience, providing a foundation for further exploration into the wider narrative of Syrian students in Portugal.

On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge the circumstances this PhD thesis has gone through, from the long COVID-19 pandemic to distancing from acquaintances and colleagues, including Syrians, due to the pandemic, as well as political tensions surrounding the Syrian regime and past and current states. It is difficult to assess what might have been different had I been able to find more participants. Of course, with more dedicated and collaborative participants, like the ones who contributed to this thesis, I would have gained more input and variety. Especially in the case of irregular migrations, whose narratives often reveal and expose the raw and harsh realities of forced displacement, there would have been more and different inputs and details describing the escapees' attempts to reach zones of safety. These accounts could provide more insights and produce more knowledge about the physical and emotional toll of the irregular migratory paths, the improvisation required along the way, and the constant negotiation of danger, uncertainty, and hope — alongside other unknown factors, lived

experiences, and coincidences. However, having five participants from five different migratory flows met the requirements for this thesis' structural view and time-frame (2014 - 2018), while also capturing important events each student migrant shared with their colleagues from the same migratory flows. Additionally, the personal familiarity with each student migrant, built through years of acquaintance and trust since my arrival in Portugal, facilitated a more fluid conversation. I needed time to establish similar connections with student migrants whom I did not know well or had only met in passing. This time of becoming acquainted with global events and the distance created by them, along with the process of gaining results, required more time. Therefore, to conclude the representation results, I had to be more concise and practical due to the limited time provided by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT) scholarship.

It is important to acknowledge that the process of research in this thesis required significant emotional effort, particularly due to the personal connection I have to the theme and the recognition and appreciation I have for the stories and experiences shared within it. Preparing for the oral communications, visual presentations, and performances was emotionally draining and prolonged, as I was reliving both my own experiences of war and those of the student migrants. Doing more performances and presentations meant reliving these migratory paths and experiences, and I found it difficult to detach from the stories I was performing and sharing. As Madison (2005) states:

> The process of being transported, of receiving meanings and generating meanings, is a more intimate and potentially a more traumatic engagement for the performers than for the audience members, because the transportation is mentally and viscerally more intense than traveling to the world of Others. It is making those worlds your home place. The performer is not only engaged, but also strives to become. For the performer, this is an endeavor not only to live in an individual consciousness shaped by a social world, but also to live in that social world as well. (Madison, 2005, p. 177)

Through this endeavor, I reached what I consider to be a process of learning. I gained valuable moments with these student migrants and their narratives, even though my own experiences may not necessarily mirror theirs. As Madison expresses in *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance* (2005), "Dialogue is both difference and unity, both agreement and disagreement, both a separation and a coming together" (Madison, 2005, p. 9). The time spent preparing the written and represented work, oral communications, and performances constituted a significant portion of the duration of this thesis, frequently interrupting and halting its overall progress, especially due to the emotional effort involved.

'Exceptional' student migrations to Europe

When Syrian students migrated to Portugal, their notion of migration shifted, as many — if not all — had never left Syria or the broader Middle Eastern and Arab region. Migrating from Syria to Europe had long been a dream — an unachievable goal for many Syrians, both before and especially during the war. Upon arriving in Portugal, each student experienced the host country differently — from cultural shocks to language barriers, to prolonged feelings of being unsettled and displaced. This invites a return to Merleau-Ponty's (1945/1962) idea of perception and meaning-making when describing the lived experiences of these student

migrants. Part of the phenomenon of Syrian student migration has already undergone processes of meaning-making — shaped by institutional categorizations, humanitarian agendas, and academic representations that frame how these migrations are understood, responded to, and addressed. Guattari's (1989/2013) concept of 'eventization' presents a way to frame these student migratory flows as meaningful events — moments that provided an opportunity for academic pursuits in safer zones, far from war. The event-making of architecture within the theme of migration encapsulates the singularity of each student's migratory path and experience. This emphasizes not only the possibility of such migration events for a select few but also, by contrast, their inaccessibility to the majority of the Syrian population. In addition, the human right to education, although theoretically protected by international frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1951 Refugee Convention,[71] is frequently hindered in practice by various factors, including bureaucratic delays, social exclusion, and other barriers. This is why the APGES scholarship calls and the organized migratory flows are termed 'exceptional': they represent rare occurrences, making these migratory flows exceptional migration events.

From story-mapping to no-solutions

The story-maps form an essential part of the process on which the performance-based research relied to approach the Syrian migration (and displacement) crisis and the lived experiences within it, as well as to cross-reference statistical data and theoretical references. This method proved significant for mapping as a form of resistance. Without it, the stories would not have been shared in the same way. In this sense, Turchi (2004) explores the relationship between mapping and storytelling, stating, "To ask for a map is to say, 'Tell me a story'" (Turchi, 2004, p. 11). Complementing this idea, Abram (2010) expresses, "Memory stories are not repositories of an objective truth about the past; they are creative narratives shaped in part by the personal relationship that facilitates the telling" (Abram, 2010, p. 58). This mutual relationship is explored through the acquired learning and creative process, where, just as a story unfolds through a sequence of events, a map traces paths, relationships, and histories. Mapping, therefore, is an interpretative act — one that selects, organizes, and presents information, much like storytelling does. A migrant's path, when mapped, is not just a set of coordinates; it is a story of displacement, movement, struggle, adaptation, and the pursuit of education.

Everything shared through storytelling and representation in this thesis about what student migrants have experienced — and continue to experience — during their migrations is an inevitable result of displacement. The Global Platform for Syrian Students, with the support of former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio, along with its board members and financial backers, made exceptional humanitarian efforts to ensure that these students achieved their educational goals, integrated into Portuguese society, and accessed job opportunities. These efforts, however, also reveal both the potential and the challenges of humanitarian initiatives in addressing the complex realities of student migrants.

71 .The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – Article 26 explicitly addresses the right to education. Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/
.The 1951 Refugee Convention outlines the rights of refugees, including education. Retrieved from: https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html

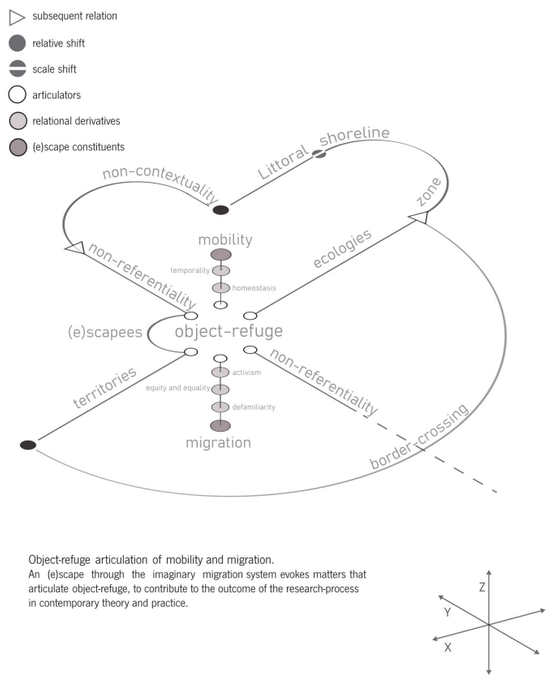
Unlike the APGES scholarship program — which is a network of people — the thesis, which is written and researched by one person, does not provide direct solutions to the challenges faced by these migrants, future migrants, or the broader Syrian migratory crisis, other than raising awareness and advocating for educational opportunities and support from humanitarian organizations and academic bodies to create pathways for students. Another humanitarian demand is the establishment of a focused mechanism for data sourcing, archiving, registration, and the retrieval of lost, unknown, and unregistered data concerning Syria as a whole, including the war-conflict and migration crisis. This thesis serves as a manifestation of voices and stories that are no longer marginalized — while many others remain unheard and unregistered. The objectives and methodologies used and developed in this thesis aim to make migrants' paths and experiences visible and raise awareness of the Syrian context through representation. It is a continuous learning process — one in which these representations could not have been produced without the presence, contribution, and collaboration of the student migrants whose stories are told.

Furthermore, I have not personally known any Syrian student outside Portugal who received a scholarship from certain scholarship entities. However, I am aware of those who later joined the Global Platform for Syrian Students after participating in other short-term scholarship programs,[72] which successfully brought Syrians to Europe. One such program is the Aga Khan International Scholarship Programme, which has also collaborated with the APGES scholarships. Both programs have helped many Syrians continue their studies abroad, providing opportunities that, in some cases, enabled them to temporarily leave areas affected by the conflict in Syria. Another scholarship that facilitated Syrian migration to Portugal was the European Union-funded PEACE II program, part of Erasmus Mundus initiative.[73]

This thesis stands as a reminder to the world that many Syrians are still being forced to migrate, still attempting to escape, as the situation has not stabilized to this day and remains deeply concerning. It is a stark acknowledgment that the Syrian migration crisis has not ended. Many Syrians cannot yet return to their homes — and for those whose homes have been destroyed, where would they return to? To dust, mud, and rubble? When will the war ruins enter the phases of reconstruction, rebuilding, rehabilitation, and reutilization? These questions remain unanswered. Many cities, towns, and villages have been abandoned. Even in areas where some residential buildings remain intact and appear unaffected, the environment is not suitable for living. War ruins have degraded into dust, infiltrating homes and posing serious health risks.

72 PEACE II differs from the PEACE Education Project, which lacks a mobility component for Syrian students. It now functions solely as an educational platform aimed at creating inclusive learning environments and reducing school violence by equipping educators with peace education skills.
.PEACE II program, Information retrieved from: https://ischolar.eu/منح-ايراسموس-peaceii–للطلبة-السوريين-لجميع/
.PEACE Education Project. Information retrieved from: https://www.peaceeduproject.eu/elementor-3436/

73 Several scholarship programs support Syrian students worldwide, though calls for these scholarships are not always open. They primarily award scholarships to individuals rather than groups, unlike APGES, which supported both. Restrictions for those still in Syria make access difficult, so many recipients are refugees or migrants abroad. Programs like Jusoor, certain university scholarships (Birmingham, Paris-Saclay, Institute of Education in London), the Aga Khan Foundation, and the EU-backed EDU-SYRIA/EDU-JORDAN generally provide partial support, mainly covering tuition. In Germany, DAFI and DAAD offer full scholarships, while Türkiye Scholarships and Erasmus+ provide fully funded opportunities, including master's degrees and student exchanges.



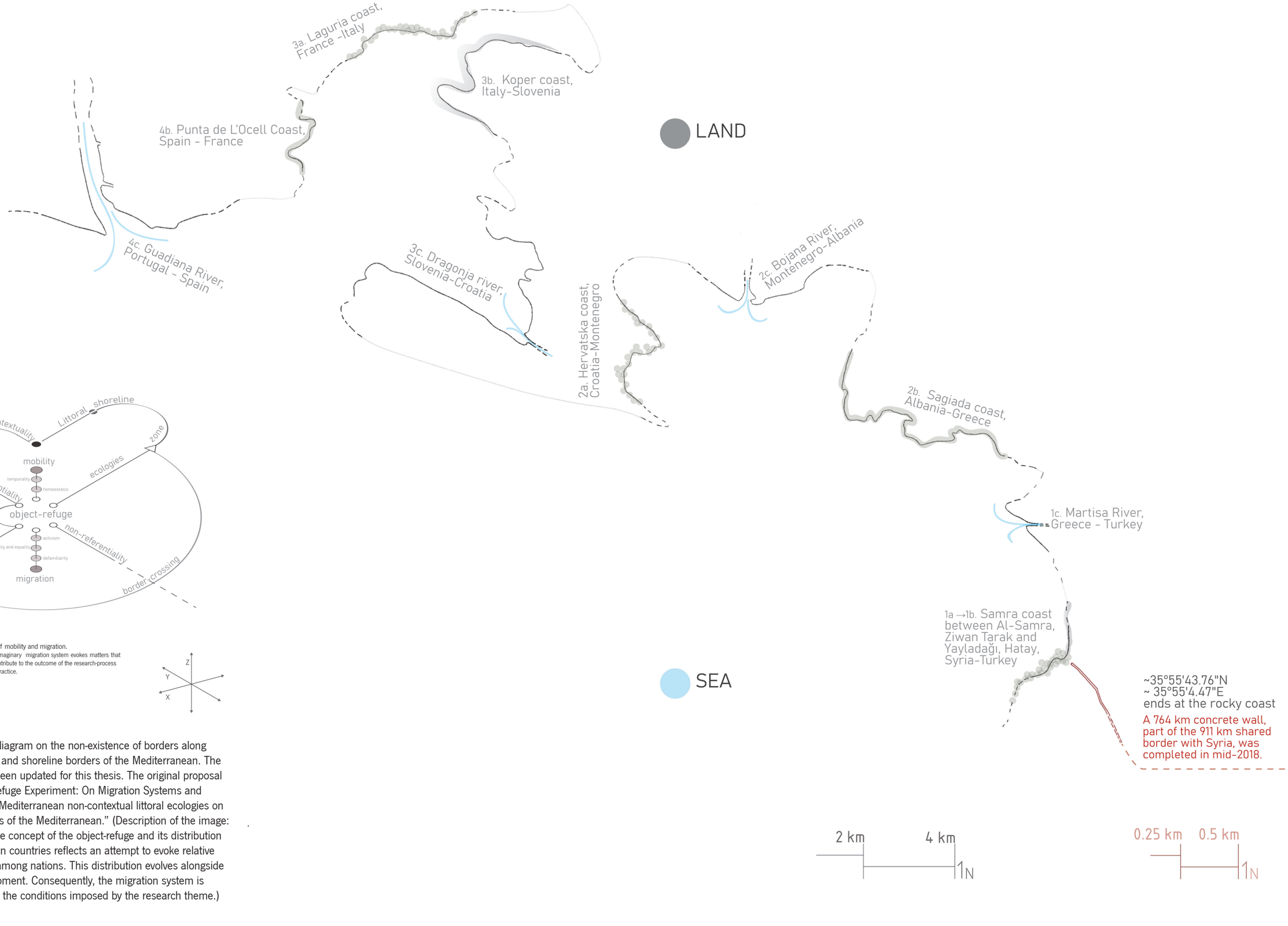


Figure 130. Map diagram on the non-existence of borders along the littoral ecologies and shoreline borders of the Mediterranean. The diagram has since been updated for this thesis. The original proposal was titled "Object-Refuge Experiment: On Migration Systems and (E)scapes amid the Mediterranean non-contextual littoral ecologies on the shore borderlines of the Mediterranean." (Description of the image: The choice to use the concept of the object-refuge and its distribution across Mediterranean countries reflects an attempt to evoke relative equality within and among nations. This distribution evolves alongside the research development. Consequently, the migration system is shaped according to the conditions imposed by the research theme.)

On the other hand, many refugees and asylum seekers who were in camps in Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan are returning, but many have no place to go. Others remain in the camps, as the memories of war persist even after the dissolution of the dictatorial regime, making them unwilling to return to Syria. Because I was away from Syria for a long time, I thought I knew what was happening from the many stories I heard — especially from my family and relatives, from North to South. I believed I understood what people in Syria were going through — their struggles, complaints, and daily lives. But in reality, experiencing it in person is far more complicated and difficult. The situation is tragic. The help needed is far beyond what any single actor or organization can handle alone.

I cannot imagine how families with members who have been displaced, disappeared, tortured, and/or killed over the past 14 years — and even during the 54 years of dictatorship — have managed to survive: enduring financial crises, insecurity, the absence of proper education and career opportunities, lack of housing, and so much more. Many of these families are led by women, often left alone with their children, if they have any. According to the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, between 2014 and 2018, the total (registered) number of male migrants exceeded that of female migrants — although in 2014, there was approximately a 0.11% difference, with more females. Additionally, the majority of those imprisoned under the Assad dictatorship were men.[74]

The only solution I proposed with an architectonic scope was submitted in 2019 in response to a call for scholarships for doctoral students and candidates issued by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT). The proposal involved constructing physical checkpoints that would act as shelter-points to assist migrants in crossing safely along the littoral shoreline from Syria to Europe. However, it was rejected due to its perceived impracticality, being deemed too ambitious and theoretical. The rejection likely stemmed from its controversial aspects and infeasibility, as it overlapped with and challenged the power structures established by European borders and neighboring countries around Syria, making it a proposal unlikely to be realized in today's reality. Although its core objective aligned with this thesis — humanitarian in focus, advocating for human rights and the right to cross borders — the proposal was larger in scale than others accepted that year. Its emphasis on challenging the principles upheld by Frontex and other border policy agencies — which control, restrict, and obstruct movement and migration in ever-changing ways — may have contributed to its rejection. As Batuman states in "Introduction: The urban refugee: Migration, neoliberalism, and the city" (2024):

> In this respect, the evolution of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, is indicative. Created as the 'European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU' in 2004, the agency's reorganization in 2016 reflects a significant level of securitization and militarization of migration. (Batuman, 2024, p. 7)

In this rejected 2019 proposal, I used Google Earth Pro to map the northern and eastern Mediterranean, from Syria to Portugal, and found that no physical borders were directly placed along the coastal shorelines (Figure 130). I proposed an "object-refuge experiment" that would create a humanitarian kind of safe and refugee-friendly no-man's-land along the Mediterranean coast, acting as checkpoints rather than traditional borders, providing temporary refuge for

74 UNHCR Refugee Data Finder: https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?v2url=6ec6f6



Figure 131. Montage of a physical border along the coastal region between Turkey and Syria, photographed by a Syrian colleague during their visit in early 2025.

those fleeing by land and sea. The aim was to minimize migration deaths caused by irregular migration through dangerous routes — a phenomenon labeled as a crisis. Despite its activist intent, the proposal remained unrealistic from a geopolitical perspective, though not from a humanitarian one.

Years later, a colleague who visited Syria in early 2025, after years of displacement, to celebrate the revolution with their family, shared photographs taken from the same position — one zoomed out, the other zoomed in (Figure 131). These images show the physical barrier that Türkiye constructed between 2015 and 2018.[75] This barrier follows the administrative borders between Syria and Türkiye to the shoreline but does not fully block access to the coast and sea, despite the presence of military officers overseeing the frontier.

The absence of solutions also reveals the need to understand the reality behind the implementation of proposed ones. What Aravena (2016) proposes is far more difficult to implement in reality, even if theoretical research might suggest otherwise, given the harsh conditions that define migration as crisis. In *Reporting from the front: 15th International Architecture Exhibition* (2016) Aravena states and demands:

> Given the complexity and variety of challenges that architecture has to respond to, Reporting from the Front will be about listening to those who were able to gain some perspective and are consequently in the position to share some knowledge and experiences, inventiveness, and pertinence with those of us standing on the ground. (Aravena, 2016, p. 19)

Aravena uses the metaphor of Maria Reiche, a researcher who studied the Nazca Lines by climbing ladders to gain a better perspective, to express the importance of viewing architectural problems from different vantage points (Aravena, 2016, pp. 19–21). He argues that architecture should not be confined to theoretical discourse but should actively

75 "Turkey finishes construction of 764-km security wall on Syria border." Article retrieved from: https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/06/09/turkey-finishes-construction-of-764-km-security-wall-on-syria-border

engage with real-world struggles, proposing solutions to inequality, inadequate housing, and environmental degradation. His statement reinforces the idea that architecture, beyond traditional norms, has the potential to address urgent social, economic, and political questions, making a tangible impact on people's lives.

(Higher) education demand as a response to the Syrian crisis and its realities

Throughout this thesis — both before and after 8th of December, 2024 — a habit of writing, rewriting, and erasing what was written about Syria and the Syrian context has been exercised. Before that date, I faced restrictions on speaking openly about the Syrian dictatorial government, its inhumane laws, and its human rights violations due to concerns for the safety of my family still in Syria. After the success of the Syrian Revolution of Dignity and Pride — marked symbolically on December 8, 2024, with the liberation of Damascus from the former dictatorial and criminal Syrian military, Iranian military, Hezbollah militias, and Russian troops (though some remained in other parts of Syria after that date) — I continued this practice of writing, rewriting, and erasing, because the situation remains unresolved.

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights,[76] war and instability are ongoing, primarily due to the recent escalations and the extension of the Israeli occupation into the southern part of Syria, along with the continued killing of innocent civilians and bombardment of Syrian territory — including scientific research centers, military bases, and airports. These actions intensified following the fall of the regime and persist alongside Israel's ongoing settlement expansion and apartheid policies. The Syrian war, the Syrian migration crisis, the Syrian student crisis, and the Syrian student migration crisis are only some of the many crises Syria and its people have endured for years — and continue to endure.

Returning to Aravena's point, and contrary to his demands, the issue of migration — specifically Syrian migration — will not end abruptly, and solutions remain elusive. The true solution lies in rebuilding Syria from its core: not only by fragmenting all arbitrary power structures, addressing corruption, reducing and eliminating non-beneficial international interference, and implementing more studied policies to enable a positive and humanitarian foundation for the transitional justice, but also by focusing on healing the wounds of the Syrian population from within. This includes the search for the disappeared — encompassing political activists and innocent civilians detained in Al-Assad's torture chambers and prisons, those forcefully kidnapped, those massacred and buried in unknown (mass) graves, and those lost while escaping across the Mediterranean — spanning all ages and genders.

In the present and future, advocating for emergency education programs that facilitate migratory flows or, at the very least, provide safe study environments is both a significant and humane demand and solution. Sharing the stories of student migrants from the Global Platform for Syrian Students and their migratory paths emphasizes these humanitarian successes and accomplishments — particularly in a time when border policies are becoming stricter and more exclusionary. It is a message to those both in power and in academic roles to embrace more of these initiatives, advocate for more organized emergency scholarship programs, challenge border restrictions and structural arbitrariness, and expand this process

76 The reports about these attacks are available in the SNHR website. SNHR condemns the violent acts commuted by the Israeli occupation. Information retrieved from: https://snhr.org/?s=israel

to all populations suffering from injustices.

The expansion of territorial representation, as Le Corbusier (1945) suggests in his reintroduction to geo-architecture, aligns with this thesis demand — which advocates for the expansion of emergency scholarship calls. When practiced with this methodological activist positionality, geo-architecture may encompass the representation of facilitated humanitarian migrations — while also representing, in contrast, irregular migrations. Facilitated regular migrations, such as those facilitated by APGES, could enable legal border crossings and emergency educational pursuits for many individuals globally — particularly those imprisoned in conflict zones, for whom escaping the region is nearly impossible, such as Syrian individuals who cannot legally leave without systems that allow border facilitations. In doing so, this demand expands Corner's (1999) agency of mapping — in both its objectives and its potential to approach humanitarian causes and become a form of mapping as resistance on a global scale. Similarly, to emphasize the role of performance-based research in architectural discourse, Bártolo in "Practical fiction/ practice of fiction" (2019) expresses, "One of fiction's tasks is to expand possibilities of 'social imagination' as a critical process of mediation with reality — reality as given and reality in the making" (Bártolo, as cited in Pestana, 2019, p. 38).

In this context, Sarkis, in "Le Corbusier's 'geo-architecture' and the emergence of territorial aesthetics" (2017), raises the question, "Is it not time to reconsider the potential of form as a means of intervention at the scale of territory?" (Sarkis, 2017, p. 131). By doing so, he challenges the reader to rethink the role of form — whether in architecture, design, or planning — as a powerful tool for intervention at a broader territorial scale. He is questioning whether our understanding and use of form — shapes, structures, and spatial organization — can be leveraged to influence or transform larger geographies and political landscapes, extending beyond conventional architecture. This aligns with the notion of architectural academia and interdisciplinarity in architecture as means of addressing broader social, political, and environmental issues within a given territory.

In relation to border-thinking, the expansion of representation through the approach of this thesis in 'mapping as resistance' could further articulate sub-themes that suggest potential solutions and interdisciplinary interventions in the global migration crisis, particularly by acknowledging the fragments within the migration phenomena and the migrants who experience them. Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of border-thinking challenges the fixed notion of the border and embraces transformative identities, as the struggle in migration remains the question of borders (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 63). This notion aligns with Sarkis' call to reconsider the role of form through interdisciplinarity as a tool for territorial intervention. Both suggest that space can be redefined to transcend boundaries. Similarly, mapping as resistance, by advocating for the expansion of humanitarian migrations and the facilitation of border crossings, resonates with Anzaldúa's rejection of restrictive borders, providing alternative frameworks for understanding migration, belonging, and spatiality. In relation to this demand regarding the human right of movement, Calypso 3621 in *On drifting* (2020) states:

> "لكلِّ فرد الحق في مغادرة أيِّ بلد، بما في ذلك بلده، وفي العودة إلى بلده."
> Everyone has the right to leave any country, including one's own, and to return to one's country. In Article 13.2, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
> (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as cited in Calypso°3621., 2020, p. 17)

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_Activity report

from 2019-2025

(pre-enrollment and until end of thesis)

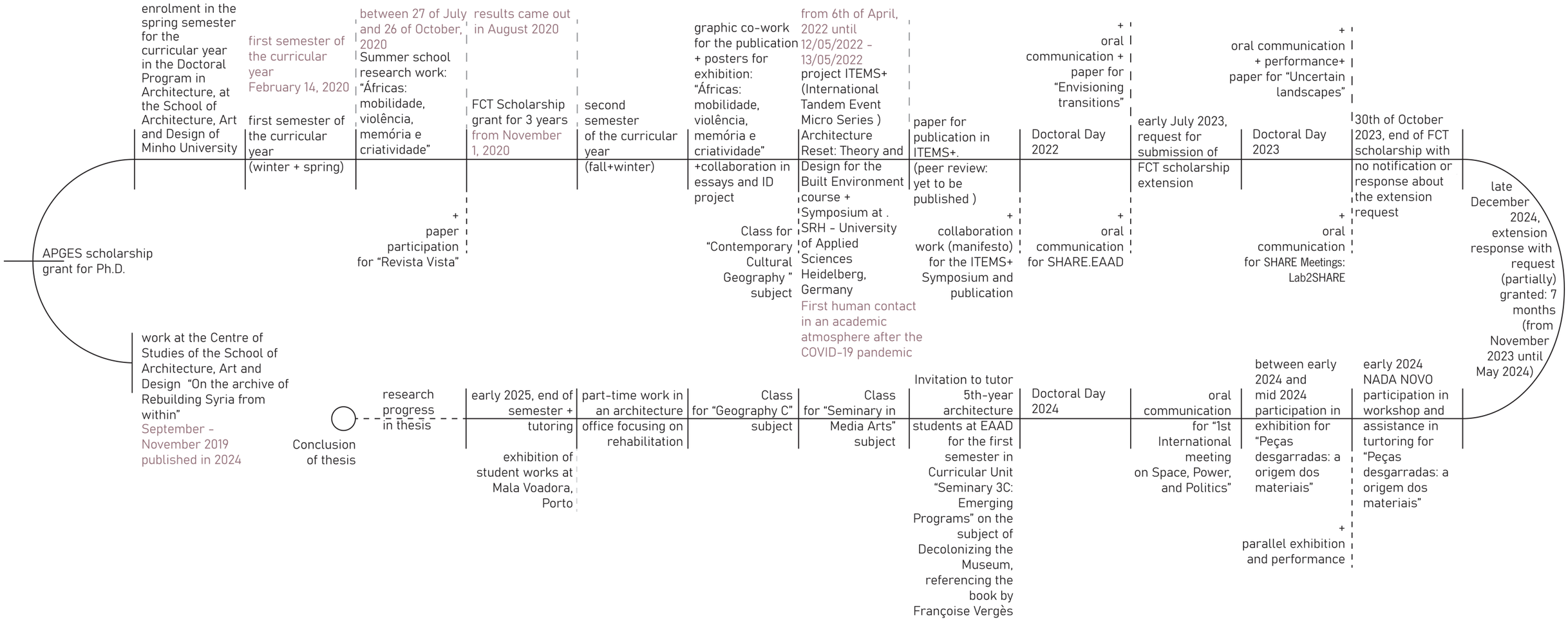


Figure 132. Activity report from November, 2019 until April 2025.

_Archive of images

Archive of images shared by Syrian student migrants, spanning various time periods

case study_*Intima'a*
school year (2013/2014)



Images taken during the flight in the C-130, flying over the Mediterranean. These moments were captured either continuously or separately during the 9-hour long flight, showing the times when there was an opportunity to eat during the long, sleepless night.

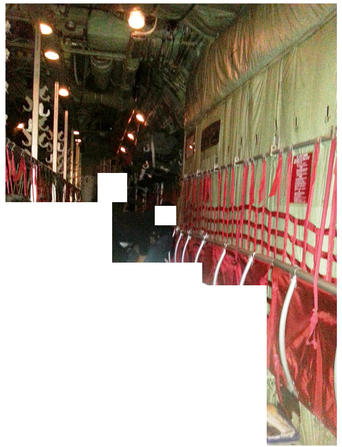






Image taken after the student migrant's arrival in Portugal at Figo Maduro military terminal.



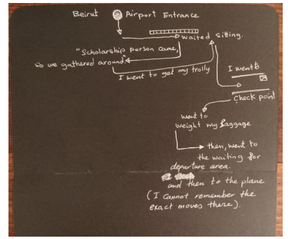
Image taken after the student migrant's exit from the military terminal of Figo Maduro. This image is the name of the place where the student migrants from the first group of Syrian student migratory flows through APGES met the board members and had breakfast before their departure to their intended cities.

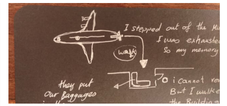
Image taken after leaving the Figo Maduro military terminal in Lisbon.

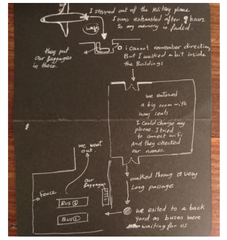


Figures 133. Images shared by the student migrants from two case studies.

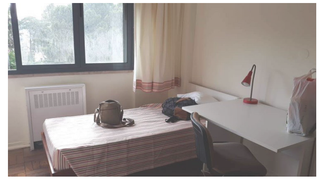
case study_*shantata*
school year (2017/2018)

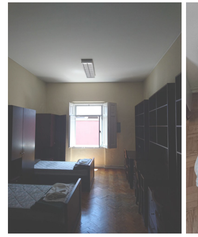




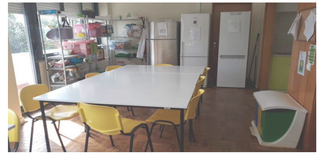


Student migrant drawings representing Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut and the Figo Maduro military terminal in Lisbon.









Images taken by the student migrant of some of her temporary accommodations, captured shortly after her arrival at each location.

Archive of images during Samos site visit mission
30th of June - 4th of July, 2024
_From vegetation to port maybes







Images of the types of vegetation and the changes in the landscape of Samos.









Images of the shore and port sides of Paralia Mourtiá on the far eastern coastline of Samos — one of the possible shores that the student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study might have reached upon arrival.




Images of the almost separate shore and port sides of Paralia Kerveli on the far eastern coastline of Samos — one of the possible shores that the student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study might have reached upon arrival.









Images of the shore (without any port side) of Paralia Sideras on the far eastern coastline of Samos — one of the possible shores that the student migrant from the *Tamsaha* case study might have reached upon arrival.










Images of the customs and passport control office, along with the only military vessel found docked at the Pythagorio ferry terminal and port.




Images of the only bus stop found, located near Pythagorio.







Images of the port authority and coast guard office, as well as the ferry terminal in Vathy, Samos.



Images of the port authority, coast guard office, and customs office, as well as a coast guard vehicle found in Pythagorio, Samos.





Figures 134. Images taken during the Samos field visit mission. The images are organized by theme: types of vegetation, ports, bus stops, port authority and coast guard offices, ferry terminal, and navy vessel.

Archive of images during Samos site visit mission
30th of June - 4th of July, 2024
_Traces

These traces include a spoon, a light bulb, a soap bar package, a small plate, cooker gas heaters, a tuna can, a man-made DIY setup suspended over a cylindrical fire pit, a gasoline bottle, and another man-made fire pit at floor level.

These traces include pieces of tent fabric, a sock, water bottle caps, potable and natural water source station, a flashlight, and water basins.

These traces were found between the pine trees. They include a broken metallic foldable chair, a cluster of wooden planks that might have been used as a base for tents or for showering, as well as a damaged electric extension cord, although there was no indication of available electricity outside the camp.

These traces include pieces of tent fabric and ropes tied and hanging between trees, serving as evidence of previous tent installations at these specific locations.

These traces include various pieces of torn tent fabric caught in the razor wires and an unreachable mattress wedged between thorny dried plants.

Traces of the lived experiences of migrants who used to stay around the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC). In addition to pieces of tent fabric and ropes tied and hanging between trees, various materials were found reinforcing these installations, such as wooden planks, metal chains, and durable garbage bags.



Figure 135. Images of found traces of the lived experiences of migrants who used to stay around the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC).

Archive of images during Samos site visit mission
30th of June - 4th of July, 2024
_Traces found between routes

The migrants at and around the RIC camp also appeared to have participated in programmed activities within the migrant community at the site, in collaboration with the UNHCR.



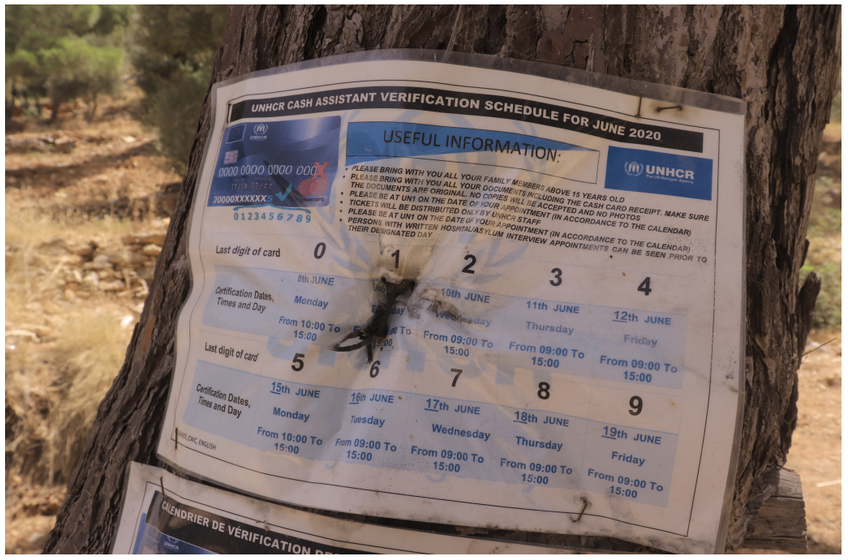




Figure 136. Photographs of found traces of migrant activities at the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), as well as along the paths to and from the camp, where these traces could be found.







Photographs of the routes to and from the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC). These routes include: a parallel view of the camp from a few kilometers away, before reaching the ramp leading to the camp; the dead-end encountered when attempting to leave the camp from the western, opposite side; and the middle entry to the camp, where construction trucks were parked at different times.