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**Reflecting on Displacement and Resettlement: Experiences of
Leaving Syria, Memories of Home, and Remaking Home in
Canada
Suzan Ilcan**

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Reflecting on Displacement and Resettlement: Experiences of Leaving Syria, Memories of Home, and Remaking Home in Canada

Suzan Ilcan

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers the recollections of people on the move who have survived the current Syrian war and confronted the challenges of forced displacement, relocation, and remaking home, areas which have received moderately little academic attention. In building upon the insights of Syrians' experiences of forced displacement, the chapter focuses the analysis on their migrant journeys during displacement and their remaking home during resettlement in Ontario, Canada. These journeys are part of the broader tensions between displacement and resettlement, which contribute to their experiences and the challenges of remaking home in Ontario, Canada.

The concept of home in migration studies is commonly viewed through notions of territory, nation-states, and borders, which in turn have created dichotomies of "here" and "there" between the host country and home country (e.g., Boccagni 2017a; Taylor 2013). Furthermore, a plethora of research on home tends to emphasize Western-middle class experiences, including a focus on the distinction between private and public domains of home, where the former is understood as a safe haven and the latter as a place of interactions with strangers (Boccagni and Brighenti 2017). Recent scholarship on home is paying greater attention to its diverse meanings, including those that exceed the view of home as tied to a fixed place. It is increasingly emphasizing how family, friends, and community relations contribute to multiple meanings of home (see den Boer 2015). In this regard, conceptions of home are not immobile but dynamic processes involving acts of envisaging, producing, unmaking, changing, losing, and remaking home. This chapter contributes to this scholarship by highlighting these and other similar dynamics. It pays particular attention to issues of displacement and resettlement of Syrians, which it investigates along four levels: (a) the migratory journeys out of Syria to nearby host states; (b) memories of home in Syria; (c) state policies that aim at protecting refugees while at the same time imposing restrictions on everyday lives; and, (c) remaking home in Ontario, Canada that comprise complex relations that are embedded in diverse experiences of belonging. The theoretical and empirical arguments draw on scholarly, policy, and media materials, and on twenty in-depth, qualitative interviews with displaced people from Syria who have relocated to London and Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

This paper is based on extensive scholarly, policy, and qualitative, semi-structured interviews. A total of twenty formal interviews were carried out with people who had left Syria during the conflict. These interviews took place in London and Windsor, Canada. Ten interviews were carried out in London, Canada with a total of thirteen participants in 2019, and ten interviews were carried out in Windsor in 2018. All interviews were conducted in person and in the Arabic language, though discussions in English occurred with some research participants. Twelve Syrian women and eleven men were interviewed, all of whom have been resettled in London and Windsor within the past nine years. At the time of the interview process, most participants held permanent residence status, while a few held Canadian citizenship status. Of all sponsored refugees, approximately seventy percent of them were government-sponsored and the remainder were privately sponsored. All research participants lived in Syria during and prior to the war and left Syria to nearby host states, including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, between 2012-2017. They experienced various forms of insecurity (e.g., regarding rights, mobility, employment, residence) while living in Syria and in nearby host states. In the interviews, participants highlighted their lived experiences during the civil conflict, decisions to relocate within Syria and to neighbouring countries, memories of home in Syria, and processes of remaking home in London and Windsor. The interviews conducted in the two cities were digitally recorded with the participant's consent and transcribed in full prior to being analysed. To protect their identity, all names of research participants in this chapter are pseudonyms.

*Full paper is being prepared for publication. Further details to be announced.