



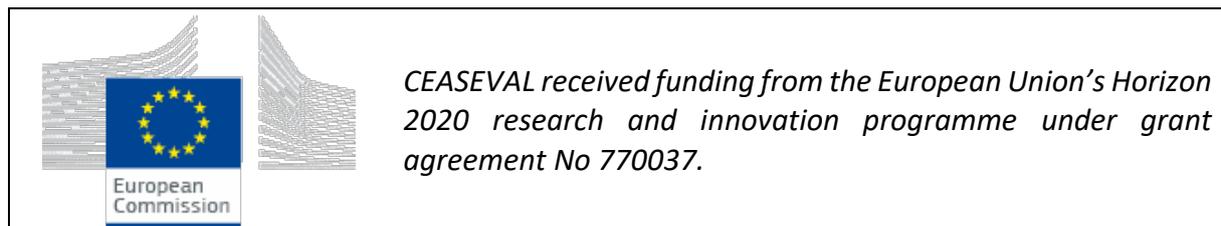
Borders and the mobility of migrants in France

Claudia Paraschivescu, Birte Nienaber and Lucas Oesch

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Herausgeberschaft:

Prof. Birgit Glorius and Dr. Melanie Kintz
Technische Universität Chemnitz
Institut für Europäische Studien
Humangeographie mit Schwerpunkt Europäische Migrationsforschung
09107 Chemnitz

<http://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/europastudien/geographie>

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Abstract

This country report investigates the ways in which the border as a site of control interferes with asylum seekers' and refugees' mobility trajectories before, upon and after arrival in France. The interplay between borders and mobility plays a key role in the Common European Asylum System, the Schengen area and the Dublin regulation, which all have been affected by the 2015 so-called migration crisis. Based on in-depth qualitative interviews with thirteen migrants and ten institutional actors in the city of Metz, the overarching finding indicates that migrants' movements evolve from geographical trajectories in order to reach a country of destination, to administrative trajectories, in order to become regularised in the host country. Furthermore, while physical borders have interfered with some informants' migratory journeys, they have done so only by changing their trajectories, and, at times, the initial country of destination. Thus, they did not deter the migrants from reaching a safe country of destination. Once in Metz, the migrants become subject to administrative borders performed by state agents, such as the Préfecture and the French Agency for Immigration and Integration (OFII), as well as by private actors from the employment market.

Keywords: borders, mobility, asylum seekers, refugees, Schengen Agreement, Dublin Regulation, CEAS, EU

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1. Introduction

1.1. Context and research questions

The overall objective of WP4 is to investigate the functioning of the European Union's internal and external borders in the governance of migrants' mobility.

This report seeks to investigate the border (and the ensuing bordering processes) as a site of control and the ways in which it interferes with asylum seekers', refugees' and rejected asylum seekers' migratory trajectories before and upon arrival in France.

Specific objectives of WP4 are:

1. To understand the interactions between Schengen and Dublin;
2. To explore the reasoning behind the participants' journeys in the Schengen area; and
3. To examine the tensions between the determination of responsibility for assessing asylum claims and the respondents' preferences, choices and trajectories within the Schengen area.

More precisely, this report builds upon the views of municipality and civil society actors, as well as the experiences of the asylum seekers, refugees and rejected asylum seekers interviewed. Given their experiences of borders and boundaries, asylum seekers and refugees can shed a new light on the understanding of borders and bordering process (Kearney 1991). The term 'border' embodies two main concepts. These are borders as external frontiers and boundaries, as internal social categorisations (Fassin 2011, Yuval-Davis 2013). In a similar vein, Balibar (2002:84-85) refers to the "ubiquity of borders", highlighting the fact that borders have been transferred into the nation-state and the political space (Balibar 2009:109). For the purpose of this research, borders are defined *as the physical state frontiers the migrants first cross when they enter a new territory*. The term 'boundaries' will be used solely when referring to *the social barriers that migrants are affected by in their daily lives depending on the lines of exclusion they are subject to, such as legal status, gender, age, race, ethnicity etc.* However, it is worth noting that both physical borders and social boundaries affect social relations and contribute to migrants' inclusion and exclusion in the receiving country.

1.2. Methodological considerations

The fieldwork on which this report is based was conducted in March 2019 in Metz, France, with a phone interview conducted in April 2019, in line with the CEASEVAL budget allocated to this end. The choice of Metz, a city in the Great Est region, was threefold.

Firstly, most studies on the topic of asylum seekers and refugees have been carried out in Calais or Paris, with little attention given to the East of France, notably the county of Moselle, within which Metz is situated, despite the relatively high numbers of arrivals.

Secondly, Metz is located in the geographical region called the Greater Region of Luxembourg, or simply the Greater Region (Grande Région), comprising of the regions of Saarland, Rhineland - Palatinate (Germany), Lorraine (the Great East, France), Luxembourg, Wallonia, as well as the German-speaking community of Belgium, covering 65.401 km² and comprising 11,6 million inhabitants. It is an area characterised by high cross-border labour mobility. Indeed, the Greater Region "promotes an active labour market policy based on cross-border mobility for all job types and career stages" (Grande Région n.d.). Out of a total of 230.000 commuters, Luxembourg alone is the destination for 176.000 (Grande Région n.d). Lorraine-based French cross-border workers based in Luxembourg represent the

largest number of employees from the neighbouring countries. While most of the commuters live in the district of Thionville, a quarter reside in the district of Briey and 16% (tot. 10.772) live in Metz. As such, these three locations make up 93% of the population of Lorraine who work in Luxembourg (Système d'Information Géographique de la Grande Région n.d.). Given the cross-border movement of the residents of Metz to Luxembourg, the choice of Metz will help us understand the ways in which the interaction between borders and mobility in the lives of the respondents pans out in the everyday.

Thirdly, the city slightly differs in terms of the nationalities of asylum seekers from the national average. For the whole of France, in 2018, the three first countries of origin of asylum seekers were Afghanistan (10.270), Albania (9.690) and Georgia (6.960). However, in Metz, most of the applicants are from the Balkans, mainly Albania, Serbia, and Kosovo. This was clarified during an interview with an association which wanted to stay anonymous:

In Metz 70% of the population is from the Balkans. However, OFII [Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration¹] is sending, through the medium of national arrivals, asylum seekers [of other nationalities]: Syrians, people from Africa. But these type of sending processes are less frequent. At the local level, 70% are from the Balkans. In CADA [Centres d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile], 85% of the population is from Eastern Europe or from the Balkans. That means that we have a number of failed asylum seekers, which has plummeted (...). In SPADA [Structures de premier accueil des demandeurs d'asile], for the first arrivals, there are 82 nationalities: 30% Albanian, 18% Serbs, 8% Kosovars, 8% Macedonia, then Armenia, Bosnia and finally Niger. However, in the accommodation centre for refugees there are Syrian, Iraqi populations (...) because they were sent here from the national level.

All this indicates a need to delve into the interplay between mobility and borders applied to asylum seekers, refugees and rejected asylum seekers in the city of Metz.

1.3. Recruitment

This explorative study makes use of semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews with a total of 23 participants. The interviews were carried out in either French or English. On two occasions, interviews with two asylum seekers who were not proficient in either French or English, were carried out with the support of a friend of the informants' who spoke Arabic and was able to act as an interpreter, translating the information from and into French. A combination of institutional and individual respondents were met during the fieldwork, as follows:

- Ten interviews with institutional actors from the civil society (*Collectif d'Accueil des Solliciteurs d'Asile en Moselle, Comité d'Aide humanitaire au Peuple Syrien, Fondation Abbé Pierre, Ligue des Droits de l'Homme*) as well as the municipality sector (*Mairie de Metz and the Centre Communal d'Action Sociale of the Mairie de Metz* and a third public institution which declared that they wished to remain anonymous).
- Thirteen interviews conducted with refugees, asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers. This same represents the target population in terms of nationality. Of this cohort, five were women and eight were men. The participants were aged between 18 and 63 at the beginning of the study and their length of stay in France varied between three months and five years. The table below provides an overview of the migrants' characteristics.

¹ The English translations of the French names of the institutions referred to in this report are found under the list of abbreviations.

Table 1 Participant details

Participant pseudonym	Nationality	Age	Time in Host Country	Gender	Marital Status	Multiple Migrations	Consider secondary movement	Date of interview
Interview_1	Albania	46	3 years (Dec 2016)	Male	Single	Yes (Germany, United Kingdom)	No	March 2019
Interview_2	Bosnia	28	3 months (Dec 2018)	Male	Single	Yes (The Netherlands, Luxembourg)	No	March 2019
Interview_3	Congo	18	3 years (2016)	Male	Single	Yes (Greece)	No	March 2019
Interview_4	Congo	31	3 years	Male	Single	No	No	March 2019
Interview_5	Eritrea	24	2 years (early 2017)	Male	Single	No	No	March 2019
Interview_6	Guinea	30	2 years (March 2017)	Male	Single	Yes (Italy)	No	March 2019
Interview_7	Syria	50	2 years (Oct 2017)	Male	Married, 3 children	Yes (Turkey)	No	March 2019
Interview_8	Yemen	30	2 years (April 2017)	Male	Single	Yes (Turkey, Denmark)	Yes	March 2019
Interview_9	Albania	39	3 years (Jan 2016)	Female	Single, daughter	No	No	March 2019
Interview_10	Burundi	42	3 years (2016)	Female	Married, 3 children (In Uganda)	Yes (Norway)	No	April 2019
Interview_11	Nigeria	22	3 months (Dec 2018)	Female	In a relationship (partner in Italy),	Yes (Italy)	No	March 2019

					one daughter			
Interview_12	Syria	63	4 years (Dec 2015)	Female	Married, 4 children in France (one in Turkey, one in Syria)	No	No	March 2019
Interview_13	Syria	39	5 years (May 2014)	Female	Married, 3 children	Yes (Lebanon)	No	March 2019

1.4. Limitations and challenges

One of the most significant limitations of this report is found in the low number of interviews with institutional actors, who did not answer our invitations to be interviewed. This means that the institutional view of state actors and border agents, particularly regarding the interaction between borders and the mobility of migrants, is somewhat missing, therefore hampering one of the objectives of the research, that of analysing this interaction from the perspective of institutional actors. While it is unknown why they declined to take part in the study, various individuals met in the field from the civil sector or academia agreed that access to the state actors we were specifically interested in recruiting (*Direction Générale de la Police aux Frontières*, OFII and *Préfecture*), is extremely problematic.

Another challenge encountered was the audio recording of interviews. The data was gathered through semi-structured and in-depth qualitative interviews. However, most (rejected) asylum seekers and refugees were not happy to be recorded for two reasons: unfamiliarity with an audio recorder and distrust in the research purpose. One participant’s refusal to have the interview recorded was explained as follows: *“we don’t know where the information will go”* (Interview_4). Another participant (Interview_9) mentioned that she would not tell me her name and surname as soon as we sat down in a café. Therefore, notes were taken by the researcher, either summarising or directly quoting the interview. Throughout the report, the field notes are rendered in italics, with double quotes enclosing direct quotations. Not recording the interviews might have meant that the participants felt more comfortable, which means that they were less cautious about the information they disclosed. Thus, they were less likely to present an image of themselves they might have otherwise done during a ‘formal’ audio recorded conversation.

2. The legal national framework for the bordering of asylum-seekers and refugees

2.1. Introduction

This chapter contextualises the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in France. After presenting the asylum legislative framework, it moves on to discussing the Metz context, with focus on the migrants' trajectories before and upon arrival in the city.

2.2. Laws and regulations governing the admission of migrants and the handling of their claims

In France, refugee status is granted to the following groups of people: people persecuted due to their actions related to freedom, people who meet the refugee definition under the 1951 Geneva Convention and people who fall under the UNHCR mandate.

If the claim is allowed by either OFPRA (*Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides*) or CNDA (*Cour nationale du droit d'asile*) at appeal, a residence card which lasts for 10 years is issued to the applicant by the *Préfecture*, as well as to their spouse and any children under the age of 18. Once a person is granted refugee status, they have the right to work and are entitled to the same social rights as the French citizens. In order to facilitate their integration, refugees are eligible for the Integration Contract (Ministère de l'Intérieur n.d.). Some people whose claim is not allowed, can, under certain circumstances, be granted subsidiary protection for one year and they have the same rights as refugees.

France adopted a new asylum law on the 1st of January 2019. This report does not provide a comprehensive review of the multiple changes it brought to the asylum process. Rather, in this section, the focus will be on one aspect of the law which has had a sizable impact on the asylum seekers from Metz: the inability to apply for a residence permit for medical reasons (*titre de séjour étranger malade*) if the asylum claim has been unsuccessful. Prior to the 2019 asylum law, rejected asylum seekers would appeal the decision; in cases where the application was still unsuccessful. They would then try to stay in France by making another application, this time on health grounds. However, under the new law, individuals arriving after the 1st of January 2019 in France and lodging their asylum application, must apply at the same time for the residence permit on medical reasons. A legal volunteer from the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* (LDH) explains this:

The idea behind the asylum law was to avoid having people who, between the moment when they arrived, lodged an asylum claim, received an answer from OFPRA, appealed to CNDA and by the time they had a definitive answer, it would pass two, two and a half years, if not longer. After three years, families would be told that they had to leave. Children would go to school, humanly speaking, it was complicated. We see at the LDH people who've been here for four, five, six, seven years. They have exhausted all the asylum routes, at the moment they are finishing the appeals and they apply for the residence permit on medical reasons which takes around four to seven months to hear back, they have a residence permit for one year which can be renewed one, three times. Depending on the type of health condition (...). At some point they cannot get the residence permit renewed any longer and you have people who, after five-six years in France, they have nothing: no residence permit, in irregular status, no accommodation if they didn't have it before. When they have the residence permit on medical reasons, they have the right to work, and it all stops when the residence permit is not renewed. Now, when an asylum application is lodged, the application for the residence permit on medical reasons should be done at the same time.

The Valls circular (named after Manuel Valls, a former French Interior Minister) is another piece of legislation in the context of which rejected asylum seekers try to regularise their stay in France. In theory, this legislation could allow undocumented migrants to stay in France on personal, familial or professional grounds. This circular allows the *Préfecture* to grant a residence permit for exceptional reasons such as presence in France for five years, children enrolled in schools for three years or involvement in the community such as through volunteering. However, in an interview with LDH, it emerged that despite the existence of this circular, it is still very difficult for an employee to obtain a residence permit as “*it is at the discretion of the Prefect*”.

The process for lodging an asylum claim in France is comprised of three stages:

1. The initial reception (*le pré-accueil*). The applicant is required to approach an organisation in charge with the initial reception (in Metz, the *Association d'Information et d'entraide mosellane*), which will book them an appointment with the *Préfecture*, at the ‘single desk’ (*guichet unique*).
2. The recording of the asylum application at the ‘single desk’, where the *Préfecture* and the OFII asylum caseworkers are present. Firstly, the asylum application is recorded at the *Préfecture* of the municipality in which the claimant resides. Here, *Préfecture* asylum caseworkers, in charge with deciding asylum claims, fingerprint the applicant and, during a screening interview, decide if France is responsible for the asylum application, after the data and fingerprints of the applicant are searched in the EURODAC data bank. Secondly, an OFII caseworker will evaluate the claimant’s personal circumstances, such as the need for accommodation, and starts the administrative process for the asylum allowance.
3. The decision on asylum claims are made by the OFPRA. During this stage, the asylum application is sent to *OFPRA*, which arranges for a substantive interview with the claimant to take place at its headquarters. In cases where the application is not fast-tracked, *OFPRA* is required to make a decision within six months. If *OFPRA* denies the applicant’s asylum case, asylum seekers can appeal to the CNDA (*OFPRA n.d*).

Applying for asylum at the border has been possible in France since 1982. In cases where foreigners do not meet the requirements to enter French territory, they can be placed in a waiting zone for up to 20 days, although the authorisation of a judge is required if the migrant is detained for more than four days. Once the asylum application is lodged, the decision of authorising the claimant to enter the territory belongs to the Ministry of Interior, after the interview has been conducted by *OFPRA* (*ibid.*). It appears that although the interviews should be conducted either in person or by videoconference, many of them are done by phone (La Cimade 2018). The numbers of asylum application at the border are relatively low, with only 1.003 applications in 2014 from the following countries of origin: Syria (8,4%), Central Africa (7,5%), Philippines (7,0%), Nigeria (6,1%), Ivory Coast (4,7%) and other (66,2%).

Moreover, it is legally possible to apply for asylum from outside France. Foreign nationals can claim asylum in the French embassies or consulates from their countries of residence. Decisions regarding the asylum visa (*visa au titre de l’asile*, or Visa D) are made by the Ministry of Interior. After the visa is approved and issued, its possessor can travel to France and needs to commence the asylum process in the *Préfecture* of the municipality they reside in.

2.3. Contextualising the asylum situation in Metz

The total number of applications and granting of protection status at first instance in France in 2018 was 119.190, out of which 20.940 received refugee status, 1.260 subsidiary protection and 82.175

were rejected. The remaining 52.925 were pending at the end of 2018. The top five sending countries were Afghanistan (10.270), Albania (9.690), Georgia (6.960), Guinea (6.880) and Ivory Coast (5.375). Syria is in 11th position, with 2.930 applicants (Forum Réfugiés - Cosi 2018).

The city of Metz is an interesting case study because the asylum population, which has always been rather invisible, became visible in 2013, when the city became home to the Blida camp, as a result of a lack of places in asylum reception centres. The camp, which was dismantled in 2017, hosted well over 2.000 asylum seekers who were living in extremely precarious conditions. Often referred to as 'mini-Calais', the camp represented a cause of concern amongst the local authorities and communities regarding the precarious conditions of reception of asylum seekers, as well as anti-social behaviour. Indeed, as one of the respondents confirms, "*the issue of migrants didn't arise until 2012, but in 2013 we saw the slum at Blida*" (Véronique Etienne², Director of the Grand East Unit of the *Fondation Abbé Pierre*). This is also reflected in an interview with the *Centre Communal d'Action Sociale* (CCAS), where the informant highlights the disturbance experienced by the local community due to the presence of the Blida camp:

The moment when we had many arrivals not accounted for who found themselves in Blida, the [local] population was angry to see outside their block of flats people sleeping rough, children., (...) the population was worried and ended up bringing and installing [makeshift shelters], in poor conditions, and it stays like that. In that sense, the town council, and this is the reason why I talk about public disorder, is denounced because it is happening on its territory, even if it is not the town council in charge with providing shelters and [offering good] living conditions.

With regards to Moselle specifically, the county in which Metz is situated, in 2018 it accounted for 72% of arrivals in Lorraine, while the remaining three counties (Meurthe-et-Moselle, Meuse and Vosges) accounted for the remaining 28%. This translates into a certain tension amongst the counties due to unequal numbers of asylum applications as well as pressure on the reception system of Moselle, as it was remarked during the interview with an association from Metz:

The weak point of the system is that there is an unequal distribution of these population on the [French] territory and the difference keeps growing, because [if we look at] the number of arrivals in SPADA in January and February 2019, we have six times less arrivals in Meurthe-et-Moselle than in Moselle. We had 687 arrivals in February and over 500 in January.

Nevertheless, in an effort to relieve some of the pressure from Metz, 750 asylum seekers were reallocated towards other counties in the Great East region during the first half of 2018.

2.3.1. The routes taken by asylum seekers before and upon arrival in Metz

Metz is home to three main groups of asylum seekers: the largest group is represented by people from the Balkans, followed by Africans and finally, Syrians represent the smallest community.

As previously mentioned, in Metz there is a large community from Albania and other Balkan countries, which facilitates the settling process for the new arrivals. Most of them travel to France by bus, train or plane on tourist visas since they have biometric passports, which allows them to travel in the EU for three months on a self-sufficiency basis. Once in Metz, they apply for asylum, as Maurice Melchior, the director of the *Collectif d'Accueil des Solliciteurs d'Asile en Moselle* (CASAM) details:

² The referenced respondents have agreed to be named.

The problem is that once here [in Metz], they have no revenue, and they lodge an asylum claim in an effort to stay on. They come to Metz, they go to the AIEM first reception offices which books them an appointment with the single desk or they give them the asylum application which they have three weeks to fill it in and send to OFPRA. The protection is granted for less than 10% for the Albanians, but it is still something. For other countries from the Balkans such as Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo the number is of around 10-15% as well. For Georgia and Armenia too. Since the introduction of biometric passports, there are people who try their luck in Europe.

The issuance of biometric passports has triggered travel facilitation for people from countries who would have otherwise needed to apply for a visa to enter the country. The absence of border control mechanisms enables the bearer of a biometric passport to enter France legally and then lodge an asylum claim. However, since they come from countries deemed safe, most of the asylum applicants will see their applications rejected.

Moving on to the second largest group of asylum seekers, since 2017, Metz has witnessed the arrival, in small numbers, of asylum seekers from African countries, such as Guinea, Ivory Coast, Congo, Somalia and Eritrea. Most of them have their paths paved by smugglers, or they try to reach Europe via the Sahara, as Maurice Melchior, the president of CASAM tells:

Africans always come here with a smuggler, or (...) [via] the Sahara, now, [but] it is a little less because they closed the platform in Agadez (...), now they are passing through Algeria, Occidental Sahara and Morocco; at the moment, the new route is Africa, Sahara, Morocco, Spain, the Pyrenees, France. Before, it was Africa, Sahara with a smuggler, always with stages to work, to make some money etc. In Libya there usually are work camps, slavery, the pressure to leave, it's the deportation. Then, [they get to] Italy, where they gather some money and take the train to Ventimiglia, they try three-four times, then, the fourth time, it works. In 2017 there were 50,000 cases of refoulement. This does not mean 50,000 people.

The journeys of Africans who try to join Europe are thus fragmented, comprising several stages in order to save money to fund their onward trip, or because they are placed in detention or being abused by Libyan police or employers. Once in Italy, those who want to reach France often need attempt the Italian-French border several times before making it to France, due to the presence of border agents who send them back to Italy. After the 2015 terrorist attacks, the French government declared a state of emergency, suppressed Schengen and reintroduced border controls. Therefore, enforcement agencies have been given greater authority to conduct identity checks and patrol national borders. Within a 20 km radius, the border police (PAF) can question, check and return to Italy individuals who are not in possession of documents allowing them to enter France legally:

Since the terrorist attacks, France has suspended Schengen, and thus a closure of borders, which means that the police do checks within [a 20km radius] and send back the people who have no documents. But they send back two, three, four times, the same people. However some of them manage to cross, they try several times and then they succeed. (Maurice Melchior, CASAM)

With regards to the Syrians, they are often in possession of an asylum visa, having already made an application to come to France from countries like Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey. This allows them to fly to France and apply for refugee status upon arrival. All the Syrian refugees met in Metz during the fieldwork arrived in France on an asylum visa.

Upon their arrival in Metz, asylum seekers tend to be provided accommodation by social networks. Alternatively, those who do not have contacts in Metz, either approach strangers who orientate them

towards associations in charge with asylum populations, such as AIEM. In theory, they should be placed in shelters. However, due to the shortage of available places, many asylum seekers experience homelessness.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an account of the French asylum legislation and administrative processes, and it discussed the elements of asylum law and of the Valls circular which will undoubtedly impact on the asylum population from Metz. Under the new asylum law, rejected asylum seekers are not able to apply to stay on in France on medical grounds, which limits their residency options. This is the case despite the Valls circular providing avenues for undocumented migrants to remain in France on professional and personal reasons, as this piece of legislation is discretionary, the decision being left to the Prefect's choice.

3. Empirical research with institutional actors

3.1. Introduction

Based on interviews with civil society and municipality actors, this section begins by introducing the notion of borders. It will then go on to examine the following issues: the interplay between the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Regulation in the mobility of asylum seekers and refugees; how internal and external borders are connected; the changes and challenges Metz has experienced since 2015; the ways in which CEAS could be reformed; as well as the employment and housing context for the asylum and refugee population.

3.2. Institutionalised bordering practices performed by legislators

3.2.1. The interplay between the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Regulation in the mobility of asylum seekers and refugees

While the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees of crossing the borders will be documented in the next chapter, this section is concerned with the views of institutional actors on border crossings.

Due to the terrorist threat, France has suspended Schengen since November 2015. In practice, this means that if migrants are caught by police within a 20 km radius of the French/Italian border, they are sent back to Italy, the first country of arrival. As such, due to the reintroduction of border checks by France, the Dublin regulation is applied.

In Lorraine, a region which shares a 50km border with Luxembourg and Belgium, the reintroduction of borders had an immediate effect on the daily lives of the local population, as the commuting time of cross-border workers was prone to delays due to police checks. A common view amongst the stakeholders interviewed was that the suppression of Schengen had a negative impact on Metz, due to the cross-border mobility most residents engage in on a regular basis. This was illustrated in an interview with an association:

When the terrorist attacks happened, we went to a higher level of security and the borders were reintroduced. It was very complicated for people who work in Luxembourg or Germany. It's not manageable, it's not possible. (...) There is too much exchange and we are in a county where this essentially takes place by car resulting in endless traffic jams.

With regards to the asylum population specifically, Maurice Melchior, the president of CASAM, reports that the Dublin regulation has only had negative consequences, as France applies the regulation consistently. Many French-speaking asylum seekers fingerprinted in Italy want to come to France. However, once in France, since they are Dublin cases the treatment of their asylum claim is delayed, time during which they are left to their own devices for up to a year. Below he details the time-consuming process they undergo and the uncertainty they experience in the meantime, ultimately which often results in the rejection of their asylum claim:

France tells them: you are a Dublin case, we will see if Italy wants you back. All this takes around six months, up to a year (...). Often, the Dublin cases are on the streets, because they are single men and they are not provided with accommodation. Or they are offered housing, but sporadically. (...) They get the asylum allowance, if they live in a centre they get 6,80€ a day. If they are not, they receive an extra 6,40€, I believe. And that means that they need to get by living with friends, on the street, calling 115 [a housing crisis hotline]. There is no rule, the Dublin cases do not represent a priority. Those who find

accommodation straight away are in a normal procedure, because the others are in a fast-track procedure. That's what Pascal Brice says in his book³, those people, we keep them six months, one year in housing centres, even prior to the asylum claim, because they are Dublin cases, and after that it takes three-six extra months for the asylum claim to be processed, and often they are being rejected. (...) They keep waiting without knowing if their claim will be successful or not. So Dublin is very negative.

This view was also echoed by another association, highlighting the impact that the lengthy time spent in transiency has on migrants from a legal perspective, as they cannot lodge their application until the first country of arrival (usually Italy, but also Germany) allows the French authorities to take charge:

For us, the people with Dublin cases (...) are in transit, waiting for readmission to Germany. It is hard for them to make plans for the future and for us to work with them. It's complicated to provide education, access to health services. Everyone is waiting – Will they have a future here or not? They don't know for how long they will be there, (...) at least 6 months. As long as the decision about the readmission is not enacted, as long as the country of original departure has not stated its position they cannot make their request for asylum. Thus, everyone is waiting. The family doesn't know if they can make their asylum request in France or if they will have to return to the country of first arrival to do so. (...) They might wait several months not knowing if they will be returned or not.

The Dublin cases are therefore in limbo, time during which their access to services such as education and health is rendered difficult by their somewhat undetermined legal status. Moreover, the same association also talks about the difficult situation the Dublin cases find themselves in if they refuse to return to the first European country, as they lose their entitlement to accommodation and the provision of allowances:

They have the obligation to leave. (...) This can lead to even more extreme situations of precariousness and isolation for those persons when they refuse the Dublin return (...). Be it through refusing to board the airplane, or not being present when the police comes to their domicile to carry out the readmission. They are declared fugitive and from this moment or they lose all the material conditions regarding reception, meaning no more rights to accommodation, no more rights to allowances.

Another negative aspect of Dublin revealed by the interviews with institutional actors in Metz was asylum seekers' fear to be sent back to Italy, particularly expressed by women who had been victims of sexual violence and prostitution in Italy.

There is little action concerning women who announce that they arrived in Italy and were fingerprinted without really knowing the implications. (...) They arrived in camps and eventually ended up in prostitution networks. They know very well that they will find themselves in exactly the same situation again when they return to Italy. Therefore, they refuse categorically to go back there. (Association)

The Schengen Agreement brought in the elimination of internal borders and border controls between the EU countries belonging to the Schengen zone. Refugees can freely travel between Schengen countries, provided they carry identification documents to prove their identity and their status of refugee. In contrast, asylum seekers are not allowed to leave the territory of the country in which they lodged a claim. However, in practice this is impossible to enforce, since there are no border checks.

Furthermore, asylum seekers are also not allowed to lodge multiple asylum applications in other countries in the EU if they have already lodged an application in France, a practice which is known as 'asylum shopping'. Nevertheless, in practice, due to the geographical position of Metz close to Belgium,

³ Brice, Pascal. (2019). *Sur le fil de l'asile*. Paris: Fayard

Germany and Luxembourg, they often apply for asylum in more than one EU state. This is evidenced in the below quote, from an interview with an association:

An asylum seeker cannot leave the [French] territory (...) in theory. But if their application is unsuccessful in one country, they are going to try in the neighbouring country, if it doesn't work, they go to Belgium as well, why not? We have this type of profiles. I think of the Roma families who often come from Kosovo or Serbia, who could have been out of former Yugoslavia for more than ten years and they have been to Italy, Germany, Belgium and France, never going back to their country of origin, they have migrated from country to country and from rejection to rejection.

'Asylum-shopping' becomes therefore a way of living which, despite its pitfalls, still provides these families with living conditions superior to what they had experienced in their countries of origin, mainly due to the discrimination and racism encountered:

They say that they don't have anything to lose (...) 'it is always going to be better than what we have left behind'. They do not have a country to go back to, they are not seen as citizens, anyway, so being in Germany or in Serbia, where they were not considered like citizens, it makes no difference to them. (Association)

As such, Schengen facilitates the illegal cross-border movement of asylum-seekers and it calls into question the Dublin Regulation. While the Dublin Regulation is a piece of legislation which tries to re-create borders meant to impede asylum seekers from lodging an application in a country different from the one they first arrived in, the Schengen space translates, in practice, into a borderless area in which asylum seekers move freely:

They do the same thing we do: they take the car and one moment we are in France, and the next we are in Luxembourg. It is fine if you are not stopped by the police, but if you are... There are a few who get checked by the police. We do warn our families: 'be careful, you do not have the right to visit your daughter in Germany. (...) We need to remind them, because sometimes it is not obvious for them to think 'we are not allowed to move because of the borders', they travel as easy as us. It is a territory, we have three borders here, these are borders each one of us crosses regularly. I don't even know how many people a day go to work to Luxembourg or Germany. You do not see them, you cross a border, you do not get stopped. (Association)

This cross-border movement of asylum seekers has also been reiterated by other interviewees, who explained that many of them work in Luxembourg in the building industry. They avoid being stopped by the police by carefully planning their route which involves the choice of small and slow roads or buses over trains and motorways, due to the likelihood of police presence.

Nevertheless, there are also cases where asylum seekers get stopped by the border police and they are being sent to the detention centre in order to check whether their presence in France is legal:

The [border police] is more present in border regions (...) to fight against migrants crossing the border at all costs. Because, when they make controls like that, there are many persons who had the obligation to leave France but it wasn't implemented and they are still here. They are going directly to the detention center. That allows them to verify the persons' situation. All the time, I see people who were in the detention center or who were stopped by the [border police] for several hours and then they were released again. Nonetheless, there are stricter controls. (Legal volunteer, LDH)

This shows that due to France having reintroduced border controls, border-crossing is rendered more difficult for asylum seekers. If at the Italian-French border the systematic police controls mean that

migrants attempt to cross the border several times before eventually reaching France, in Lorraine, the police checks are less regular, which enable migrants to engage in cross-border mobility. This suggests that the suppression of Schengen, is not put into operation evenly across the French territory. This has resulted into rejected asylum seekers from Metz engaging in onward movement to the neighbouring countries in order to lodge subsequent asylum applications, highlighting that the Dublin Regulation is poorly implemented in a region characterised by high levels of cross-border mobility.

Interestingly, the EU Dublin Regulation has translated into an ‘internal Dublin regulation’ at the national level, with counties in Lorraine not accepting asylum seekers who have previously been in a different county:

Here, we talk about ‘internal Dublin’, which means that someone who comes here from the Vosges or the Meuse, we will tell them to go back where they are coming from because the material conditions are at the level of a department, it is still the State, it is the department of Moselle, and if a person comes from the neighbouring department, we will do everything it takes to send them back. (CCAS)

Mechanisms of solidarity sharing are thus largely inexistent at a regional level.

3.2.2. How internal and external borders are connected

When asked ‘How would you define borders?’, the respondents agreed that the main function of borders is that of a control mechanism which filters migrants according to their nationality. The below quote is very telling in this regard:

The border is symbolic for us, but not for them. They [asylum seekers and refugees] are subjected to regulations that don’t apply to us. But the border is also, me, wanting to go to Senegal for vacation, (...), and I’m not asked for a visa, I’m not asked how much time I want to stay there. There are people who can travel without problems (...), with more freedom than others. The western countries are almost free to go wherever they want. Even outside the EU, where an authorization needs to be requested, we can go almost everywhere. We don’t ask ourselves questions about borders in the same manner. When we stay in Europe there is no more customs, there are no more border checkpoints, only in exceptional cases. Or you have to go to England. (Legal volunteer, LDH)

Borders are thus understood to function according to an us vs. them binary, in which Westerners embrace the freedom of cross-border movement both in Europe and even outside of Europe, where travel documents, if needed, are granted by default.

During the interview with institutional actors in Metz, there seemed to be a general sense of dissatisfaction regarding the current immigration legislation and border system, resulting into experiences of precarity for those who succeed to get to France. Indeed, despite the presence of external borders and the Dublin Regulation, people are still able to cross the physical borders, but once in France they experience boundaries which translate into a life characterised by exclusion due to their irregular status. In other words, while the physical external borders do not stop migrants from migrating and the internal borders are largely absent due to Schengen (even though France has suspended it), asylum seekers face a new type of border which is enacted administratively.

[Borders] are efficient and inefficient because they [migrants] are still here. But their living conditions are terrible. It prevents them from being here in their full right or from living a normal life. And they become clandestine migrants (...) for a certain period of time. (...) We do not exist when we lead a clandestine life. We do not refer to them as being ‘clandestines’, but they lead a clandestine life. (CCAS)

This suggests that the inefficiency of physical borders has resulted in borders being enforced administratively. While they do not prevent people from coming to France, they prevent them from living legally in France, due to the strict asylum legislation which prevents people from getting refugee status. According to this, it can be inferred that inefficient external border have triggered a more severe filtering process of migrants at a national level, leaving many migrants in a state of vulnerability.

When reflecting on the relationship between EU external and internal borders, Véronique Etienne, Director of the Grand East Unit of the *Fondation Abbé Pierre*, indicated that one of the differences between them is the violence migrants are subject to during border crossings:

Even when we didn't have Schengen, the people crossing the borders always knew how to pass. The PAF, okay, they concentrated themselves on certain places. Here in Moselle Est, even if borders would be introduced, there are always ways (...). The problem is that when there is a porosity of the borders in certain places, it is followed by a hardening. If you take for example the case of Hungary or Italy. At the moment the topic of border is a dangerous one (...), because we don't have one European bloc with one border anymore, Schengen space and non-Schengen space. We encounter hard borders and others that are more human, more classic. I know for my part that when I go to Saarlouis [in Germany], I saw the [border police] once time in my life.

This above comment illustrates that Lorraine, a region where cross-border movement is part and parcel of the residents' daily live, is still part of the Schengen area, despite France having suppressed it.

It has also been suggested that the main drawback of the current system is the hard-line immigration system, in which asylum is the only avenue available for third country nationals to reach France.

Not everyone is a political refugee in my opinion but it's the only option to enter nowadays. So, you are more or less forced to do it this way. Do we have to agree on other forms of asylum, political or economic? If not, the sense of the term political refugee is distorted. (CCAS)

This view was also echoed by the members of an association interviewed. It was reported that the current system encourages individuals who do not necessarily meet the strict asylum requirements, to choose the asylum route because it offers them temporary protection:

After all, you find yourself with people who requested asylum here who didn't come to do so from the beginning. But it's their only way of entrance. Everyone enters through an asylum request. They are encouraged a little by the administration to do so. But, a certain number don't withdraw their asylum request and they say so themselves. (...) They are either ill or disabled, and, the asylum request offers them a legal framework within which they have a secured livelihood and accommodation for a while.

This results into people coming to Metz after having had their asylum application rejected in Germany.

3.2.3. Changes and challenges since 2015

The response of the city of Metz to the 'migration crisis' was one of solidarity, with many residents having been mobilised by the arrival of Syrians in Europe to volunteer to host them or offer French language classes. Despite this, Metz did not experience a surge in the numbers of refugees and/or asylum seekers after 2015, as a result of the Syrian war:

[In October 2015 the city held a day to welcome the Syrians which mobilised everyone] and they never came. They did come, but not in large numbers. Citizens stepped up to help and show support, I think it was due to the press, and everyone was ready, we had even looked for host families (...) People were happy to give French classes, we had tons of clothes (...) The Syrian cause had the wind in its sails, which

is a bit sad, because in Yemen too there are horrible things happening, but because they are not on the front pages of newspapers, we will empathise less (...). (CCAS)

In a similar vein, an association mentioned that after 2015 the numbers of Syrians increased only slightly. However, a new housing structure was created as a result of the so-called migration crisis. This comprises 50 places and aims at providing support towards the social and professional integration of beneficiaries of international protection.

3.2.4. The ways in which CEAS could be reformed

During the interviews conducted in Metz, the respondents highlighted several dimensions which should be at the core of the reform of CEAS, the systemic failure of which is mainly due to the lack of solidarity between member states.

According to them, CEAS is doomed due to the Dublin Regulation, which in practice fails to work as EU countries lack solidarity towards Italy and Greece, as shown below:

[Dublin] is something that doesn't work. (...) It's getting worse and worse. It's nonsense, because it is not applied. (...) Dublin is supposed to send the people back to where they were registered for the first time. Okay, apart from the fact that all of them will be sent to Italy and Greece, countries that reached their limits. (...) You can't place the burden on only one or three countries because the people arrived there. Another system needs to be found. (Véronique Etienne, Fondation Abbé Pierre)

In a similar vein, Mr Melchior, the president of CASAM, points to the lack of solidarity between European member states in general, and the Visegrad group countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) in particular, which constitutes the stumbling block to the Dublin regulation, as European Union countries do not take their share of asylum seekers:

If there is a lack of solidarity with other countries, they are obliged to register them and make them leave. The problem of Dublin is that repartition is not done well, all the Visegrad countries do not want to take any in, and then there are the Nordic countries which have taken some asylum seekers in, but not enough. So we are left with the Southern countries...

Referring to the burden on some member states with regards to asylum seekers preferring to claim asylum in some countries over others, it has been reported that a common European social system might act as a stringent deterrent. Raphaël Pitti, Municipal advisor at the Metz local council, reported that one way of harmonising welfare benefits across member states could be by curtailing some of the social rights refugees have in France in order to offer similar welfare provision in all EU states:

We have a higher standard of social rights than what you find maybe in Romania. The people prefer making their request in France to get access to the common law in France, rather than going to Romania or Hungary. Thus, there is a problem with social legislation, with welfare. You can't harmonize social rights in Europe from one day to another (...). That creates a problem. Since, when someone obtains the right of asylum in France, they benefit from all the social assistance systems a French citizen has access to: housing assistance, health support, free access to health insurance, minimum social revenue and so forth. Maybe we have to think about the possibility that a refugee doesn't necessarily enter into the common laws of the hosting country once they obtain the status. They have the right to [receive] an allowance, to look for a job, but (...), if we want to harmonize and if we want to achieve that the people don't systematically come to the country with the highest level of social security (...), then we need to think about the harmonisation of social support.

This was also indicated by an informant from the CCAS, highlighting access to employment as a matter of paramount importance in the creation of a social Europe which would materialise into improved conditions of reception for asylum seekers and refugees as well as better integration outcomes:

Europe has always existed. But it was the Europe of commerce and money. The Europe of the people, in reality, if there is nothing social in it, there is no Europe. (...) To be more concrete, it means having minimum conditions for everyone, that are identical in the European countries. If not, there is still competition. Apart from that, a social Europe also includes the ability to work. Work is an essential factor for integration. When you work, you speak French quickly, you are able to communicate quickly and you understand the system within which you move quickly.

Talking about the reasons why CEAS does not work in practice, the same informant also points to the importance of creating a common EU safe country of origin list: *“People are handed back and forth because the dangers in the territories of origin are not treated in the same manner.”* (CCAS)

The majority of respondents agreed in that Dublin does not work in practice. Maurice Melchior, the President of CASAM suggested that an alternative to Dublin might be the creation of landing sites where migrants would get registered (rather than in the first countries of arrival, as it is the case under the Dublin Regulation) and might ultimately be dissuaded from engaging in secondary movements, as they would ultimately be relocated to the countries of choice.

Dublin needs to be removed. What should be done at the landing sites in Europe, in the countries of first arrival – which can be as well France since it is situated at the Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Croatia, even if there is a little less in those places.

The landing sites would be managed by an independent asylum agency in charge with examining applications for international protection, as well as the relocation of asylum seekers to EU member states according to their preferences:

I think it is necessary that it's an independent agency and that it is this agency that manages the preferences of the migrants and asylum seekers. (...) I don't want the agency to be intrusive. It shouldn't ask why they want to go to a certain country. (...) Let's assume Guineans, they are francophone, and they are told, “It's not possible”. The problem is the quotas. The problem of the quotas is that they have to be divided depending on the people who have been selected for asylum. (Maurice Melchior, President of CASAM)

According to the informant, the applicants who do not qualify for refugee status, should either be allowed to apply for work permits or other types of residence documents, or be sent back if their asylum application is rejected. Nevertheless, the main challenge is represented by the distribution of asylum seekers, if countries can only accept a limited number of asylum seekers, in which case the other member states should step up in the name of solidarity and take in the remaining number of successful applicants.

A recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense amongst the respondents that the EU currently lacks the framework for a common asylum system, which causes different reception systems in terms of asylum legislation and housing circumstances.

Regulations need to be enacted which are basically the same in all the countries and which take into account the laws and the legislatures of the countries but impose the fact that the reception of an asylum seeker is effectuated in that way, no matter if it is in Paris, Rome, Hungary or Germany. (...) A sufficient amount of space needs to be created, human dignity needs to be respected, as well as the

dispersal of families and the access to fundamental rights. (...) The quality of receptions also determines the quality of integration. (Véronique Etienne, Fondation Abbé Pierre)

One of the main obstacles to the absence of legislation surrounding the reception and integration of asylum seekers in the EU is the forefront role that the Ministries of Interior play in managing asylum, which alludes to the security threat that asylum seekers pose to the receiving nation-states. Asylum seekers are thus being attributed criminal characteristics, rather than being offered humanitarian protection.

It's necessary that we have a true politics of reception and integration. In France, the ministry of the interior blocks these politics because they see them as a security problem. I see as well, that there is a security problem. You can't let in people who come from war zones known for the mafia. That's clear, but it's only a part of the problems and it cannot be the case that the Ministry of the Interior determines the right of asylum (...). Every government needs to have its own state secretariat responsible for the challenge of reception in a manner that every country sovereignly determines its politics of reception with coordination on the European level. (Raphaël Pitti, Municipal advisor at the Metz local council)

This suggests that the labelling of refugees as potential criminals has implications over the types of duties states have in receiving and integrating them into society.

3.3. Institutionalised bordering practices performed by actors in the housing and/or labour sector

3.3.1. Refugees and asylum seekers' right to work

In France, asylum seekers are only allowed to apply for a provisional work authorisation to work if no decision has been made on their case by OFPRA within the first six months of the application being lodged. In 2018 there were only a dozen applications for work authorisation in Moselle, amongst which five were rejected because the employer had not sent out the documents needed or the period during which the applicant was entitled to apply had passed. From the beginning of 2019 the numbers of requests have increased. Nevertheless, employers wanting to hire foreign nationals, need to first justify why they do not hire local resident workers instead. This means that there may be instances where, asylum seekers can face barriers to their access to the labour market, as a result of their foreign nationality or their short presence on the territory. Another factor which can affect their labour market participation stems from their lack of experience in the French labour market, as well as their qualifications abroad not being recognized by employers.

As previously discussed, there are numerous cases where rejected asylum seekers have applied for a residence permit on medical grounds in order to extend their stay in France. According to a legal volunteer from LDH, many individuals who have been in France for five years and whose medical residence permits are not renewed try to stay in France for familial, personal or professional reasons, as allowed by the Valls Circular. Nevertheless, in reality, their applications for work permits are rejected, as they are assessed by the *Préfecture* and the *Direction régionale des entreprises, de la concurrence, de la consommation, du travail et de l'emploi* (DIRECCTE) on an individual basis:

I see a lot of refusals. Even after you started to work and even when your residence permit expires and you renew it, you can be refused. It depends on the opinion of the DIRECCTE, on the opinion of the prefect. (...) There are jobs with shortage of labor – but no residence permits are issued. Many employees are refused and at the same time the employers complain about not finding enough

manpower. It's (...) not transparent. In the texts it's possible to receive a residence permit but in practice it's really, really rare.

Maurice Melchior, the President of CASAM further describes the vicious circle in which asylum seekers find themselves due to the fact that although they have the right to work, they do not have the right to benefit from the employment services, such as an adviser or access to job vacancy lists:

So, an employer needs to be found that makes the request at DIRECCTE (...). And if the company hasn't made a request in the first place at the level of the French employment agency saying, 'I am in need of someone for this position', the DIRECCTE can say, 'No'.

As far as the refugees are concerned, they should have the same rights as French citizens with regards to access to the labour market. This means that no support dedicated to refugees is in place.

Indeed, the President of the *Comité d'Aide humanitaire au Peuple syrien* (COMSYR) detailed that most of the Syrian refugees who arrived in 2014 tend to work despite the language barrier. However, they are found in sectors such as construction, cleaning or hospitality. Due to the lack of recognition of their degrees, they find jobs mostly through networks. Women are also likely to face another obstacle that blocks them when considering entering the labour market, associated with the wearing of the veil. As such, Syrian women who do work have ceased wearing it.

Another barrier to employment is the time it takes for the refugee status to be approved, time during which the applicants do not work and thus have a gap in their CVs and become demotivated, as identified by several stakeholders:

You didn't do anything while your application was being processed, and then you start from zero, and this takes a huge amount of time. Even if they have the authorisation to work, they didn't take any courses. That wasn't organised. And they have to learn everything. (...) Let's assume you made an [asylum] request, then an appeal and a second appeal. All that time that you have lost! All that time that is lost for the parents. For the children there is a little chance that they went to school. (...) The system is really constructed in a bad manner, so that time is lost. (Véronique Etienne, Fondation Abbé Pierre)

3.3.2. Refugees' and asylum seekers' access to housing

In France, municipalities do not have control over the integration of foreign populations, which is the remit of the French state. In practice, this means that municipalities cannot attribute available accommodation to asylum seekers, who need to be placed in housing facilities by the state. The organisation in charge with the first reception of asylum seekers is the *Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration* (OFII). The agency manages the arrival of asylum seekers in Housing structures for asylum seekers (*Centres d'Accueil pour Demandeurs d'Asile*, CADA), as well as in temporary housing centres (*Centres Provisoires d'Hébergement*, CPH).

In Metz, the asylum seekers interviewed were living in accommodation (shelters, hotel rooms and social housing) provided by associations such as the *Accompagnement, le Mieux-être et le Logement des Isolés* (AMLI), and the *Association d'Information et d'entraide mosellane* (AIEM). One of the main actors in the field of the housing of asylum seekers and refugees in Metz is AIEM. The asylum department of AIEM is comprised of six establishments: first reception centre (SPADA), housing structures for asylum seekers, emergency housing (*Hébergement d'Urgence des Demandeurs d'Asile*, HUDA), the centre of emergency housing (*Centre d'Hébergement d'Urgence* CHU), hotel rooms, as well as social housing for refugees.

As such, each type of accommodation caters for a different stage of the asylum application process, and the applicants need to leave the housing structure the moment their status changes. This is disruptive, since they need to abandon their social circles or even put the children in different schools.

[As soon as the people's status changes, the accommodation changes] but not necessarily within [the same] structures. It's at the will of the state. There are ruptures depending on changes at an administrative level. (...) It's something really restrictive for them. (...) There are a lot of changes, which are imposed by the state. They are not asked for their opinion. It might very well happen that at a certain moment they are transferred from Metz to another region from one day to another. (...) There are people who are in the [asylum] application process for quite a lot of time. They get involved within the territory. Their children go to school and they establish relations with other people in the neighbourhood. It's (...) difficult for them to change. But I think that the state aims at sending a message to those who will not stay [in France], so that they don't start to think that they might be able settle there in a durable manner. (Association)

Not allowing asylum seekers to stay in the same accommodation over an extended period of time might thus deter them from forging roots in a place, which might make leaving France easier if their application is unsuccessful.

Another problem with the reception system is due to the lack of housing places, which means that not all asylum seekers have access to the same quality of housing services; rather, it becomes a lottery, with single men being the most at risk of finding themselves homeless:

It's also about the quality of reception that people making an asylum request encounter. There are still people (...) who are accommodated in hotels. (...) And also in a certain manner it's a question of equal treatment of the entire group of asylum seekers, because we are in a system that's like a lottery. One asylum seeker who arrives in France will find himself in a CADA (reception center for asylum seekers), another in a HUDA (emergency accommodation for asylum seekers), another one in a hotel and still another one without accommodation. Basically, there is no equal treatment for those people who are in the same situation. (Association)

As already mentioned, the main challenges of the reception of asylum seekers is the housing shortage, particularly for single persons, while families are more likely to be provided a room in hotels, shelters or apartments in various housing facilities. During the interviews with various state and civil society actors, as well as asylum seekers and refugees, it became apparent that the group most unlikely to be offered accommodation were single men, as they were not considered to be as vulnerable:

Because of the material conditions, the lack of space, the state will inevitably privilege the placement of families and vulnerable individuals. Thus, isolated single men are given less priority. Except that for me an isolated single man, an adolescent of 18 years who wandered around the territory, who left everything behind, is very vulnerable. (...) Especially when he spends three weeks or a month outside. After that they lost their faith (...) and they are easy prey for abuse. (CCAS)

While there were no major instances of direct discrimination or racism from the other inhabitants, one of the associations interviewed did mention one situation in which the asylum seekers were rather noisy, which created dissatisfaction amongst the retired neighbours in the building. Other clashes were mainly related to 'the fear of the other' who looks different:

[T]he mother is veiled. That creates some distress. (...) There are worries and fears. But when they meet the people, you see that those barriers are reduced and it's getting easier for them to establish relationships. As soon as the people meet each other they aren't scared anymore. (Association)

Consequently, there have been cases when the refugee families who did not feel welcome in some areas, made a request to move to diverse neighbourhoods, outside of the city centre, where they would feel more at ease. This is not uncommon among migrants in general, since the sense of feeling at home is generally triggered by the familiarity of the social space in which people speak the same language or can shop at ethnic shops.

We have refugees who don't want to stay in the apartment or the neighborhood in which they are living because they don't feel welcomed. (...) They wish to go back to a neighborhood with a higher population density and more diversity. We thought that it is in their interest to put the people in apartments in the city center but that was not what they were asking for. (...) They need their peer group. They felt stigmatised in the neighborhoods in which they were located at in the city center. They put forward that they had only few relations with other people there, that they don't speak the language and therefore it's complicated. And that they prefer to be in a neighborhood close to their community. (...) We try to find an apartment at a location where the family wants to live at. (Association)

Despite obstacles encountered in access to both housing and employment, it emerged that generally, migrants were reluctant to move away, due to the social networks created.

Not a lot of secondary movement. Because they have a network, they have ties. Often there are parents who came, and children. Or the husband marries someone in the same sector and the people stay and settle themselves. I saw women with two children in a situation of precariousness, a situation of misery: no work, a grim future. Well, having children allowed them to continue to live and to have hope. (Legal volunteer, LDH)

However, during the interviews with asylum seekers, the only instances in which people considered engaging in secondary movements was in case of refused asylum. In contrast, the refugees encountered seemed unlikely to leave Metz in search of a new home, as the next chapter shows.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has identified that despite France having suppressed Schengen and reintroduced border controls, cross border mobility between France and the neighbouring countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany), is still part of the everyday of the asylum and refugee populations. According to the actors interviewed, this encourages migrants to engage in 'asylum shopping', practice which is facilitated by the geographical location of Metz, making it easy to move across borders. Moreover, it established that upon arrival in Metz, finding accommodation is the main obstacle single male asylum seekers face, while access to the labour market is often hampered by the employment gap in which refugees find themselves whilst waiting for their status.

4. Empirical research with migrants

4.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to discuss the bordering experiences as well as mobility practices of asylum seekers and refugees before, upon and after arrival in France.

4.2. Lived experiences of borders and bordering practices before, upon and after their arrival in France

The Syrian refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection met in Metz all arrived in France with an asylum visa which was issued to them in either Lebanon or Turkey by the French consulate, although in some instances it took well over one year before they were able to travel to France. Thus the screening process did not take place on French territory, but it was performed by French authorities abroad. Visas regulate and control the movement of people, as nation-states determine who is allowed or denied one, on the basis of which they can enter the country. In the case of the Syrian respondents interviewed, the presence of the asylum visa meant that the border crossing at Charles de Gaulle airport was uneventful, as they were not asked any questions and were let in. Once in France, they lodged their asylum application, and were granted subsidiary protection for one year. During an interview with a Syrian male refugee, with his son acting as an interpreter, it was explained that the son arrived in France before his parents and two siblings and consequently determined his family's trajectory

[The family] came from Turkey by plane to France, Paris. They got a Visa D from the French embassy in Ankara for France because their son was already here. They waited for the visa for one year and six months in Turkey, lived out of savings, [their daughter] was studying Turkish. The reason for coming to France was that their son was already here by himself. They showed the passport and went through immigration. They didn't have to answer any questions. (Interview_7)

Another cohort of participants in the study who travelled by plane to France were the Albanian nationals, as they have the right to travel through the EU on a tourist visa for three months. Once in the country of destination, they apply for asylum. For example, an Albanian woman (Interview_9) explains that she flew from Albania to Frankfurt, in Germany, and from there she carried on by train to Metz.

A 42 year old woman from Burundi explains how after having come to France on a tourist visa, she decided to go to Norway to lodge an asylum application, where her brother was living. In Norway, she was sent back to France, as detailed below:

She arrived in Toulouse in August 2016, but when the political situation in Burundi changed, she decided to apply for asylum in Norway, where her brother is. She went to Norway and lodged an application. She was put in in a refugee camp, was fingerprinted and sent back to France, to Lyon. In France, the police were waiting for her (it was difficult) to facilitate the process, she went through the back doors, as her visa for France had expired in the meantime, and then they let her go. (Interview_10)

Her the criminalisation of her mobility is highlighted by the police escort, part of a coercive regime, and her entry in France through the back doors.

Nonetheless, many migrants who do not have the option of flying into France, embarking on perilous land journeys represent the only viable alternative. Such is the case of an Eritrean asylum seeker whose first country of entrance was Italy, via Sudan and Libya. Below is an extract from the interview with

him, in which he detailed his failed attempts at crossing the Italian-French border at night through the forest.

When he arrived in Italy, the police handed him a piece of paper on which it said that they had 24 hours to leave the territory. He realised that they were not welcome there. In Italy he tried several times to go to France, but it was not possible, because in France, in the first village you arrive, there is the police, which sent them back to the border, in Italy. (...) [He crossed the border] at night, through the forest, as they had slimmer chances to be caught by the police. (...) The police was present in the first village in France and sent him back to Italy. [Since it was impossible to get to France via Italy], he went to Switzerland and from there he got to Germany via train (without a train ticket). (...) He was in Germany for five months, where he was fingerprinted and told that he had to return to Italy. He took the train to Paris without a train ticket, but there was no inspection on the train. In France, once his identification procedure was completed and Italy told the French authorities that he was not wanted back, nine months later, he was able to lodge an asylum application. (Interview_5)

The above quote shows that migratory trajectories reflect the closure of borders, with migrants engaging in new routes in order to reach their destination.

Getting to France is itself a difficult journey when legal status puts the participants in a vulnerable position if confronted by police. For example, a Yemeni interviewed, after spending some time working in Turkey, went to Denmark by foot and public transport via Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Austria and Germany. After 2.5 years in Denmark, where his asylum application was rejected, he decided to come to France to lodge another claim. To do so, he had to go back to Germany. Below he details the choice of the bus over the train when crossing the Danish-German border, in order to avoid the police checks he would have otherwise been subject to had he travelled by train:

“When you cross the Danish-German border by train, there are checks”. He crossed the Danish-German border by bus, then he took the train and went all the way to Metz by train. (Interview_8)

Therefore, the respondents found ways to get across the borders by avoiding increased security flagged up by smugglers or friends. Border patrol has the power to reject irregular migration and the migrants make use of their social capital in order to avoid being caught, which would impede them from reaching the final destination.

Nevertheless, the barriers experienced once arrived in the country of destination seemed to be less porous, during the encounters of agents of the *Préfecture* and the police.

Indeed, participants' interactions with border agents are not limited to the sphere of territorial borders. Borders and the ensuing bordering processes are also present in the daily lives of those interviewed, during their interactions with state actors, such as agents of the *Préfecture* and the police. An Albanian participant interviewed (Interview_1), whose application for asylum had been rejected both by OFPRA and CNDA during appeal, decided to apply for a residence permit as a self-employed translator. However, his application was dismissed by the *Préfecture*, which, according to the respondent, had not read it, and when they finally did, it did not correspond to his particular case, as in the letter it was mentioned the presence of children, whereas he is childless and single. After he made them aware of this oversight and sent the application back, he was told that his folder was missing. He then sent them another letter and was finally informed that his application for a residence permit was rejected. The bureaucratic barriers experienced lead him to question the expertise of the staff:

Administrative process here take a while, but they work. But the answer of the Préfecture is not up to the standards. Maybe the officials working there are not qualified. I have also had French friends saying “Don’t be surprised, it is common for us too to send out the same application three times”. (...) In the tax office, the social system, the Healthcare system, the Health insurance (...) things work, are well explained. But it is just the Préfecture.

While he experienced no difficulty in coming to France in December 2016 with a tourist visa, three years later his presence on French soil is still uncertain, despite his attempts to live a legal life which implies the compliance with the tax system:

Today I pay everything: taxes, charges, phone, everything, but I don’t have a residence permit. I am in the system, but [I have no] residence permit. (Interview_1)

Another interviewee from Bosnia and Herzegovina talks about the power in the hands of the agents from the *Préfecture* when dealing with his case on the basis that he was not “nice”. Power here stems from the agent’s ability to decide who is allowed to have their residence documents renewed or not on the basis of social cues rather than legal documentation:

*When he went back to the Préfecture to get another *récépissé* [residence document], the official was angry. The French person he went with said that “He didn’t want to [give you another one] because you are not nice”. Then [another French person] called, and spoke with people in the Préfecture and he got the *récépissé*. (Interview_2)*

Similarly, a Congolese migrant whose asylum application has been rejected and is now in the process of awaiting for a decision on his residence permit talks about the administrative barriers he has experienced in France, obstacles which he attributes to his race:

There are [administrative] borders here, [as you can tell from] my journey. Moreover, when you are black, you can feel it. We are not welcome here [from an administrative point of view]. (Interview 4)

In contrast, one of the main reasons a female respondent from Albania chose to come to Metz with her daughter and mother was because she had heard that the administrative process were easier in Metz as opposed to other parts of the Moselle county.

Moving on to respondents’ encounters with the French police, the following Congolese and Guinean participants testimonials are indicative of the power the French police have to stop and search people who might be suspected to be irregular migrants and not carrying identification documentation. One informant reported that:

He is forced to live clandestinely. All the time he fears to be arrested, to go to prison. As if he stole something. (Interview_4)

Another interviewee said:

It happens often [that I’m stopped by the police]. When I don’t have my [residence permit] on me, I show [a photo of my residence permit] on the mobile phone and they leave me in peace. (Interview_3

)Talking about his interactions with the police, another respondent stated that:

He was stopped by the police and asked to show his documents. Then the police called the Préfecture. (Interview_6)

The fear black respondents have of police is not unfounded, with research in the United Kingdom showing that, compared to white people, black people are disproportionately stopped and searched

and sentenced to immediate custody by police forces (Shiner et al. 2018). Nevertheless, fear of police is not reported only by black participants. One asylum seeker from Yemen, who has been granted refugee status since the interview was conducted, talks about the strategy that he has put in place in order to avoid being stopped by police officers in Europe. One of the first elements he highlights is the role that physical appearance plays in escaping contact with the police:

“In Luxembourg you need to be well dressed, you don’t get stopped and searched. Appearance is important. (...) “If we have a big piece of luggage, not well dressed, we can get checked, but if we try to blend in, there are no problems”. (...) On the street [in France], he has never been stopped and searched, he dresses well, puts his sun glasses on, tries to avoid eye contact. (Interview_8)

Another strategy mentioned by the participant was to avoid contact with people altogether, such as train agents and the police. Instead, he would buy train tickets from the ticket machines, avoid eye contact with the police, and he generally avoids travelling to other countries where border checks are in place, as illustrated below:

Between France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany there no border checks. He knows people who’ve been searched at the French – Swiss border. He limits his movements when it comes to border crossing while he has an ongoing residence request. (Interview_8)

All the participants interviewed whose asylum claim had been rejected were trying to find other legal routes to stay in France, such as on medical or professional grounds. Having an immigration application with the *Préfecture* meant that, if they were stopped by police they were not going to have their stay in France questioned, as they were complying with the law. The below statement is compelling in this regard:

She was in a car with three other people and they got stopped by the police in a town in Lorraine. But she had already applied for a residence permit. The police called the Préfecture and saw that she had an ongoing application, so she had no problems. “We always need to have an ongoing application” to be in France legally, “to be covered”. (Interview_9)

Borders are thus the result of border work performed by multiple institutions with which migrants deal with in their quotidian lives.

4.3. Everyday lived experiences of borders and bordering practices in the housing and employment sectors

4.3.1. Asylum seekers’ and refugees’ access to housing

While all the female asylum seekers and refugees interviewed were provided with accommodation as soon as they arrived in Metz, a common challenge experienced by most single male respondents in this study was the limited access to housing. Several of them alternated periods of rough sleeping with periods of being placed temporarily in shelters, as evidenced by the comments below in which the respondents detail their housing trajectories:

[When he first got in France, he called 115 [emergency housing hotline], but he never found accommodation.] I was in CADA, I have never been offered accommodation by the state. During the winter 2016-2017, there were 80 people at the Metz train station: pregnant women, women with small children, families who were at the train station all day long. I started French classes in January 2017, so I wasn’t always there. There were always people there and the 115 wouldn’t find a place. At midnight the police would come to take them out of the train station and they had nowhere to sleep. That winter

was very cold in Metz (...) -13,-14C. At times they would sleep outside of Centre St Jacques, but at night the police would go there and wouldn't let them sleep there either. End of January 2017, the department of Metz opened a military barrack in Montigny. In the barrack you would still need to call 115. They should have been open at 21h, but they'd let people outside until 23h. 115, I don't know, would select the people. There were also drug addicts, French homeless women, they would all sleep there. At 6am, they would come and get you out by 7am. It went like this until 16-18 March, when they took everyone out, and end of April the Blida camp opened. But I am not going to talk about the living conditions there, because there were no living conditions. It was a very difficult winter. (Interview_1)

He was given the 115 number. He called, was told to go to a certain address at 11 o'clock, there was an available bed in a shelter. The next day he called, but there were no beds available. (...) The biggest challenge was to find a place to sleep at night, he was for 7 months between sleeping on the street and in various shelters. The administrative process for the asylum claim works fine, the health system works fine too, but finding accommodation was the hardest thing. Even now, in the shelter, the conditions are not good (not clean, not safe). (Interview_8)

Some male participants considered themselves lucky to have found available accommodation through Welcome Metz. Through this network, which has been active since 2016, single asylum seekers can live with host families. This network proves itself equally useful in terms of forging contacts likely to support the asylum seekers in the administrative process by accompanying them to the *Préfecture*, or even offering them employment.

In general, access to accommodation for families or single women was easier than for single males. For example, a family of Syrians first spent some time in Paris while their asylum claim was being processed. Once they received subsidiary protection, they had to move out of the accommodation they were in. Due to the family comprising of five members, the only accommodation they were offered was outside of the Greater Paris region, mostly in isolated places, where it was impossible for children to attend school. They were eventually placed in a flat in Metz, as detailed below:

They spent some time in Ile de France. The son was living there with his cousins. Then they asked for a CADA, were given a house in [Ile de France], and stayed there for nine months. Accommodation was only for asylum seekers. His parents received the residence permit for refugees, so they couldn't stay on in the same house. They tried to stay in Ile de France, but there were no houses available. They were told that the only option was to look for something outside of Ile de France. There were big houses in isolated places, not in cities, they could have gone for. They wanted to be in a place where the children can go to school. CADA said they found a flat in Metz. The father knew of Metz as he has friends here. The social assistants said Metz was the best choice. "It wasn't really a choice, it was a bit mandatory [the only option]". (Interview_7)

Several participants gave accounts of feelings of non-belonging to the area they were living in based on the population mix or the unwelcoming character of the mainstream. The participant below details her and her family's experience in a small village in Central France, where the local population were afraid of them because they were foreigners:

[Upon their arrival in France], they spent two weeks in a shelter in Paris. Then, they were transferred to a very small village, in a CADA. They were foreigners, everybody knew them. "They were afraid of us because they did not know what we had done before". (Interview_13)

They now live in the city centre of Metz, a neighbourhood they like and they have not experienced any encounters with racism.

A participant from Congo explains how, when he first arrived in France, he was begging on the streets of Paris. By mistake, he took the train to a commune in Lorraine instead of the overground to circulate in Paris. Once in the village, he felt out of place due to the absence of black people. His uneasiness is triggered by the lack of people he can relate to:

In [this village] there were no black people, there was nobody (...). In Paris I was with black people, I was at ease. (Interview_3)

This indicates that factors such as availability of housing, housing conditions, but also public hostility are some of the obstacles asylum seekers and refugees experience in France.

4.3.2. Refugees' and asylum seekers' access to the labour market

Turning now to the participants' employment trajectories, it is worth noting that only a very small number of those interviewed (two out of the 13 respondents) indicated that they were in employment.

As stated in the previous section, asylum seekers are allowed to work in France in theory, however, in practice, the administrative hoops deter them from either applying or getting a work permit. This was evidenced in an interview with a female refugee who found a job as a cleaner through contacts, but had been unable to find employment during her time as an asylum seeker:

It is difficult to find a job as long as you are an asylum seeker because "they make many requests to discourage you. Who will manage to provide all those documents..." (Interview_10)

Although she does not intend to stay in her current job, at the moment she is using it as a source of income for when her husband and children will join her through the family reunification path. Also, after having worked for nine months, she can get the jobseeker's allowance and do a funded training course which will give her better career prospects.

Networks also facilitated the jobseeking process for an asylum seeker, who is currently working in a bakery, despite having studied computer science back in Guinea. One of the lucky few, he managed to get the work authorisation fairly easily, one month after his asylum application was lodged. Having a job also allowed him to get a room in a shelter for young workers (*Foyer de Jeunes Travailleurs*), since he could afford to pay the rent himself. Moreover, just a week before the interview he found out that his asylum application had been rejected, and at the time of the interview he was enquiring about the legal possibilities available to him in order to stay on in France. He concluded that if he gets rejected during the appeal too, he is considering going down the work route and apply for a work permit which will hopefully allow him to stay in France.

Several respondents talked about their volunteering activities which enabled them to both help the others, but also to forget about the uncertainty of their situation. Through volunteering the participants also overcame the loneliness they would have otherwise experienced, as detailed below:

He volunteered in several associations in order to "donate my time instead of staying here, having a desire to share". He volunteers on a daily basis. "That helped me to think of something else and not about my situation". And that allowed him to "help, to donate my time". (Interview_4)

4.4. Lived experiences of im/mobility

4.4.1. Everyday mobility practices

Many of the participants interviewed in Metz, particularly the refugees, who have the right to travel outside of France, engaged in mobility practices to the neighbouring countries, mainly Luxembourg and Germany.

During a women's meeting at COMSYR that one of the researchers attended, the Syrian women retraced their migratory trajectories from Syria to Metz as well as the reasoning behind the choice of Metz. For one of the women present, Metz was chosen due to the fact that it was very close to Germany, where her children were, which meant that she could see them on a regular basis. Asked whether she might consider moving to Germany to be even closer to them, she explained that she would not leave France, but that her children could come here to Metz, instead, if they so wished.

Furthermore, cross border mobility is a mundane everyday practice made possible by the lack of border checks, as evidenced by the following testimonials. The respondents therefore replicate the cross-border mobility practices of the residents of Metz, who go to Luxembourg for professional reasons or to buy petrol.

I have been several times to Luxembourg (...) by car and bus. There have been no controls. (Interview_1)
Since they [as a family] got the refugee status, [the father] has been to Luxembourg for petrol. (Interview_7)

The respondents have knowledge of the rights conferred to them by the refugee residence permit, which allows them to exercise their right to free movement in the Schengen area, from which Great Britain is not part of, as the below respondent reports:

I even went to Luxembourg [to find a job] (...) in sales. (...) I submitted some CVs. [It is easy to cross the border] because I have the refugee card. I just went to Luxembourg because we are so close to Luxembourg. Everything around here, Belgium, Germany, Europe, I can go easily with that card. But for Great Britain I need a visa. (Interview_3)

The understanding of the participant from Interview_3 regarding his right to work in Luxembourg is, obviously, erroneous, as refugees only have the right to work in the country which grants them refugee status. His view might be influenced by the daily lives of the residents of Metz, many of whom engage in cross-border mobility for professional reasons.

The absence of border checks between France and Luxembourg, as well as the high numbers of French citizens commuting between Metz and France even meant that one of the participants in the study from Bosnia and Herzegovina, decided to do the same. After having his asylum application rejected in Luxembourg, he continued to live there with friends, where he was working in the building industry, whilst at the same time starting a fresh asylum application in Metz. He explains that the geographical proximity between Luxembourg and Metz meant that he could lodge another asylum application in a new country, whilst not worrying about searching for a place to stay in Metz. He would come to Metz regularly for his appointments. At the time of the interview he was living in Metz, having found accommodation through the 'Welcome network'.

4.4.2. Secondary movements

The factors influencing asylum destination choice varied greatly amongst the people interviewed in Metz. While for some of the respondents France was a second choice, for others, their decision was influenced by numerous reasons, as this section will unveil.

For example, the informant from Interview_1 came to France in 2011 on a three months tourist visa and then he lodged an asylum application, which was rejected. For him, too, the reasoning behind the choice of France was justified by the fact that his family are already here: *I came to Metz because my sister and mother are here (...) but I do not know what they chose Metz or France [for]. (Interview_1)*

However, the interviewee from Interview_9 explained that the choice of France was due to her language proficiency in French, and that of Metz was due to the presence of an Albanian community: *She came to France because she speaks French. She came to Metz because she found online that there are many Albanian people here. (Interview_9)*

Nonetheless, for the participant from Interview_13, the main factors that influenced the decision making regarding the choice of the country in which she would apply for asylum was the presence of family. With this in mind, they initially tried to go to Kuwait, Libya and Egypt. However, since none of these countries let them in, they applied for an asylum visa for France and Switzerland from Lebanon. They eventually decided to come to France, as the French authorities were the first ones to issue them a visa, and because of the relatively easy process of acquiring French nationality, compared to the Swiss system. She argues that:

People say that in France it is better [than in Switzerland] to get French citizenship. (Interview_13)

This shows that decisions regarding the choice of the destination country are not taken lightly. Rather, the policies which are likely to influence their settling in the long term are carefully considered.

A Syrian male in his fifties who has been in France since 2017 with his wife and two children, followed his son here, who arrived first with two cousins. The son, who at the time was under 18 years old, explains that their preferred country of destination was the United Kingdom because he likes England and speaks English, but it was impossible to find a smuggler in Germany who would facilitate their travel to the United Kingdom:

Our initial plan was to get to the UK, but couldn't find a smuggler. Many people wanted to go there. It is for the best that we didn't go, because a month later the Brits closed their doors to refugees and they all stayed outside of Britain, in Calais. (...) In Germany a French person said that whoever wants to come to France could do so for free. The cousin said that he would like to [go to France], but was told that he can't because he doesn't have the consent letter from parents for me [the underaged boy]. The cousin called the father to get a consent letter. (Interview_7)

The man and his family came to France by pure chance: had his son stayed in Germany or managed to get to the UK, they would have all tried to join him there.

For a Bosnian man, who had his asylum claim rejected in the Netherlands and Luxembourg, the chances of having his asylum application granted influenced his decision-making with regards to France. According to him, the recognition rates in France are relatively high, compared to other countries in the European Union:

In France we do not have many chances to get refugee status, but is still something, 15-20%, which is better than in other countries. (Interview_2)

A Congolese man who left the Congo for political reasons, was rather evasive regarding the reasons behind his choice of France, where he arrived in 2016. When asked questions about his migratory journey, he said: “[t]he trajectory is complicated”.

By default, he should have gone to Germany via Metz, and in the end, he decided to stay in Metz due to the presence of co-nationals. He could have easily gone to Marseille. The final destination was not important, “what was important was to be safe.” (Interview_4)

With safety being the main pull factor, the choice of the host country becomes less significant. However, with the presence of social networks, who can provide information and support and thus lower the risks associated with the vulnerable position, many asylum seekers find themselves motivated to lodge an asylum application in France, rather than continue to Germany. However, his asylum claim has been rejected and has now applied for a residence permit.

Various asylum seekers interviewed who had all arrived in France via Italy mentioned that the reception conditions in Italy made it clear that they had to carry on their journey somewhere else. For example, a 22 year old Nigerian woman who was pregnant when she arrived in Italy, talks about the lack of a reception system in Italy, which means that she was not taken care of and ended up sleeping rough on the streets, which made her and the baby’s father try their luck in France. The comment below illustrates this:

In Italy she was given no medication, although she was pregnant, no accommodation. She and the baby’s father were sleeping on the streets. (Interview_11)

Former colonial links between France and African countries often influence asylum seekers’ decisions. This is due to familiarity with the language, as well as culture.

A man from Guinea whose asylum application had been rejected a week before our meeting, contrasts rather vehemently Italy to France. The reception conditions from Italy as well as the attributed knowledge of Africa in France explained his stance:

He was in Italy for one year. He tried to take some Italian language classes, but there weren’t any available. He didn’t lodge an asylum application due to the language barrier and he wanted to come to France, which “would know our problems, Italy doesn’t know anything about the problems that Africa has”. Moreover, in the little Italian village he and his brother were in, there was no healthcare. They were not encouraged to stay there. (Interview_6)

The final destination can thus change multiple times throughout the migratory journey. However, during the interviews it emerged that employment opportunities, cultural similarities as well as the presence of family are the main factors which would stop the participants from engaging in onward movements.

A 30 year old Yemeni whose asylum application has been rejected in Denmark and was currently waiting to find out whether he would be granted refugee status in France said that if he had the choice, he would stay in Turkey and would not try to come to Europe. Despite having been in Europe for five years, he still does not have refugee status, which makes him consider that he would have been better off staying in Turkey, due to the cultural similarities between Turkey and Yemen:

He would not do it again, he’d have stayed in Turkey if he knew that he’d go through all of this. Turkey is similar to Yemen, in the Middle East. (Interview_8)

The same Yemeni participant also talked about the importance of access to the labour market, which means that, if he could turn back time, he would have not embarked on the journey to Europe. Rather, he would have stayed in Turkey, where it was easy to find employment, as opposed to Europe, where he experienced the effects of work restrictions due to his status as asylum seeker.

[In Turkey] it is easy to find a job. In Turkey he had a job, it was lively, he had something to do when he woke up in the morning, he had an activity. Here, in Europe, he's waiting, is not doing anything during the day. (Interview_8)

Given the migratory trajectories the participants have experienced, as well as the somewhat vulnerability that they associate with their nationality and/or refugee status, several respondents consider applying for a French nationality. A French passport is conducive to mobility for both personal and professional reasons, as shown in the below quotations. An interviewee tells that French nationality would enable her to both work and travel to different countries:

I will take on the French nationality because it's part of my rights. I would have the chance to be able to move if the situation in Burundi will not become stable, if at some point I want to work in another country. (Interview_10)

The respondent is determined to get the French passport particularly since she was unable to travel to her mother's funeral in Sweden because she had not received her refugee residence permit, despite having the status. She also explains how one of her sisters who travelled from Canada to Sweden also missed the funeral, as her plane transited through Great Britain for which she did not have a visa. As such, she had to change the route via Denmark, in order to get to Sweden, where she finally arrived but after the funeral. These events made her conclude that French nationality has a practical benefit, of allowing its possessor to freely engage in cross-border mobility.

At the same time, a French passport is also perceived as an entitlement to immobility, an entitlement unlikely to be lost. The right to immobility conferred by French citizenship is contrasted to the uncertainty attributed to the refugee status, in case French authorities ever decide to make her and her family leave France

With the refugee status, she does not feel "safe", "I feel that one day, they [French authorities] will tell me to leave". (Interview_13)

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter established that bordering practices are performed at national borders, during the reception of asylum seekers, as well as during the daily encounters with state and private actors. Nevertheless, these barriers are experienced unevenly by the informants, depending on their social locations, with single men being more likely than women or families to experience obstacles to access to accommodation and negative experiences during their interactions with the *Préfecture*. Similarly, black respondents reported that they are being stopped and searched by police. Moreover, by exploring the mobility practices of the asylum seekers and refugees interviewed, it found that mobility is an everyday practice for the participants interviewed, which means that borders might not deter them from engaging in cross-border movement. However, during interviews with the participants, it emerged that in several cases, border controls deterred them from arriving in the first country of choice. Thus, while borders may not impede peoples' migratory movements, they have the potential to alter their journeys. This is hardly surprising, but an interesting element that emerges is the

informants' flexibility to adapt to the presence of border checks and consequently engage spontaneously in new migratory movements which had not been considered initially.

5. An analysis of the links, or the lack thereof, between the management of mobility and that of borders

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the four main findings of this study which highlight the interaction between borders and the mobility of the refugees and asylum seekers interviewed.

5.2. Borders and mobility

The first finding of this study provides additional evidence that borders do not prevent migrants from engaging in cross-border mobility. Rather, they change migrants' trajectories, which need to adapt to the border reality. As such, new routes emerge, such as reaching France via Switzerland rather than Italy, or getting to Germany via a bus rather than a train, in order to avoid contact with the border police. This was evidenced in an interview with Véronique Etienne, President of the *Fondation Abbé Pierre*:

Peoples' movements change. We see that they go through Spain now, they do not pass through Italy anymore. The Mediterranean route has already changed. (...) France [has] the border police, but what does it change? For the migrants, it makes no difference, well, they need to be more careful. This has a lot of impact on Bayonne now. [Migrants] arrive now through Bayonne.

This view was also illustrated by the interviewee from Interview_4, who would have applied for a visa to come to France, rather than asylum, but the difficulty of the process and the low success rates, dissuaded him from doing so:

He would have applied for a visa, but it is very difficult, because Europe is a fortress. Nobody can impede a person to emigrate when their life is at stake. (Interview_4)

This highlights that despite the absence of legal ways for migrants to reach Europe, living in uncertainty (or even illegality, in some cases), is still more desirable than living in life-threatening circumstances.

5.3. The geographical location of Metz fosters mobility for professional and personal reasons

Many asylum seekers decide to come to Metz because it allows people to travel to other EU countries, to visit relatives. Other informants reported during the interviews that the geographical proximity to Luxembourg meant that they have already applied for jobs in Luxembourg, having been unsuccessful in France:

(...) I have been applying for jobs a lot in the past 4-5 months in France and Luxembourg... It is not difficult [to work] in Luxembourg because the company makes all the documents for you if you get a job in Luxembourg, firstly. Secondly, I have a company, I can be a subcontractor. Since I don't have experience in France it is not that easy and I applied for all jobs: waiter and project manager (...) but I haven't heard back. I also applied for a job at the University of Luxembourg (...) in the warehouse, but they haven't got back to me, I applied for a traineeship... (Interview_1)

Moreover, although it might be premature to talk about onward movement in the case of the below interviewee, the quotation offers a glimpse into the decision-making process in deciding to settle in a specific city in the host country. This might be indicative of a planned future onward movement to Belgium, due to family considerations, although at the time of the interview there was no mention of it:

Whilst initially in Montpellier, she asked to be transferred to Metz as her eldest sister as well as her children will join her sister's husband in Belgium. She asked to come to the Grand Est in order to be able to visit her family in Belgium, when they will get to Europe. (Interview_8)

5.4. The interplay between Dublin and Schengen in the everyday

This study has identified that the suppression of Schengen and consequently the presence of the border police at physical frontiers has been enforced disparately across France. At the Italian-French border, the border police consistently send the migrants who try to reach France back to Italy. However, in Moselle, due to the high level of cross-border movements between France and the neighbouring countries, this is not done, which fosters the movement of migrants.

Moreover, while asylum seekers are not permitted to travel to other countries if their application is being processed in France, in practice, the absence of border passport controls makes the border crossing relatively easy. Nonetheless, the Dublin regulation translates into uncertainty in the long term with regards to participants' legal status, as well as poor reception conditions, with many male asylum seekers being homeless for long periods of time.

5.5. Geographical journeys become legal journeys

In this section, three migratory trajectories, as told by the respondents themselves, which best represent the cohort of respondents from Metz (based on the migratory routes and/or the respondents' nationalities) are detailed, in order to make sense of the fragmented journeys of the individuals interviewed.

Trajectory No. 1: A 30 year old Guinean man. Together with his brother, they left their country of origin on the 16th of February 2016 because of family reasons, and wanted to go to Libya, where they thought they could work. A lorry driver took them to Mali, where they spent ten days helping people with their luggage in order to save some money to carry on their journeys. They continued their journey to Burkina and Niger (Agadez). Here, they were supposed to pay the drivers in order to cross the desert and arrive in Libya. However, since they did not have any money, they managed to hide behind some people and get on the cars. In Libya, everyone was sent to a shelter, and while those who had paid for their journey to Libya were let go, those who had not, like the respondent and his brother, were sent to prison for two days. They were then moved to another city where, for around two weeks, they were tortured with electric shocks and beaten up. Once the Libyans realised they were not going to pay because they did not have the money, they were forced to do masonry work from 6am until 10pm every day. Here, they met some Africans who told them that once they would finish the masonry work, they would get killed by the Libyans. At night, they managed to escape and arrived in Tripoli, and some Africans offered them a place to sleep in a hotel. One day, some Libyans came to the hotel and took them to the boats which went to Italy. Although they did not want to go to Italy, the Libyans would tell them "you either die in Libya, or at sea". The inflatable boat they went in was carrying 125 people and it started to sink, but a boat (which was not Italian) saved them and took them to Sicily, in Italy. In Italy, they were fingerprinted and sent to the shelter. He was very sick, but he was never taken to the hospital. He tried to take Italian classes, but could not find any. They worked in the black market, fruit and vegetable harvesting for an Italian. They would earn €2,50 per hour. After one year in Italy, they decided to go to France as "France would know our problems, Italy doesn't know anything about the problems that Africa has". They took the train to Ventimiglia, then walked through the forest at night and finally arrived in France. From Nice, they went by train to Marseille, but they arrived here the same day that a woman got stabbed,

so they decided that they did not want to stay in Marseille. They finally decided to go to Metz as in Italy they had met an African who had already visited the city. They arrived in Metz on the 31st of March 2017, and they slept on the streets for three nights. Interview_6 applied for asylum and in March 2019 he was informed that his application was rejected. He is now in the process of appealing. (Interview_6)

Trajectory No. 2: A 30 year old Yemeni man. He fled Yemen in 2014 because he started having problems with the rebels after the government collapsed. He went to Turkey on a tourist visa, where he stayed for four months. Once the visa wasn't valid any longer, he worked illegally in a printing company and was stopped and checked several times by the police and he knew he couldn't stay in Turkey for much longer. He went to Greece by boat with an illegal network. Here, the authorities gave him a document saying that he was in Greece and that he has one week to leave. They took fingerprints, but only for crossing into the country, not for asylum. He then went on to Macedonia, where he got the same type of document. From Macedonia, he went to Austria via Serbia. Austrian authorities were at the border. He and the group he was with, were taken by train to a shelter, then took them to the German border by train. At each stage of the journey there was a group of policemen taking them to the next train in order to get to the German border. Sometimes they were violent, they would be beaten by the police. He wanted to go to Denmark. The group he was with talked a lot about Denmark because they knew people there and because the reception of asylum seekers and migrants is thought to be better than in other European countries. However, when he got to Denmark, he realised it wasn't the case. He stayed in Denmark for 2.5 years, applied for asylum, it was rejected. The only nationalities who were likely to get asylum were the Syrians. He was in a shelter, was taking Danish classes, but he wasn't very focused when he learnt that his asylum claim was rejected. But it was mandatory. He came to France because many asylum seekers who got rejected in Denmark came to France because France accepts to study again your asylum claim, despite a rejection in another EU country, whilst other countries such as Germany wouldn't. He came to France by public transport (bus, train), although many people travelled by plane because in Schengen, you only need a plane ticket, not an ID. He crossed the Danish-German border by bus, because if you try to get to Germany by train, there are checks. From Germany, he took the train and went all the way to Luxembourg and then on to Metz by train in April 2017. In Metz, he was told that if Danish authorities are happy with them to study again his asylum claim, they will do it. But if they say that he didn't behave well in Denmark, they'll send it back to Denmark. The Danish authorities agreed for his application to be lodged in France and he was authorised to make an asylum claim in France one year later, in April 2018. During the winter of 2018, he was on the street for almost 7 months, with occasional stays in shelters. Before, he was in Blida. Since November 2018 he's been in the shelter he is currently in. His asylum claim was rejected on the 5th of December 2018 but after an appeal in March 2019, he got the refugee status. (Interview_8)

Trajectory No. 3: A 28 year old Bosnian man. He left Bosnia in 2014 because of the political and economic downturn in the country. He first went to the Netherlands, where he had family. He stayed there for six months, applied for asylum and he was rejected. He says only Syrians are successful because of the Syrian war. Then he went to Germany, but the police caught him, was fingerprinted and went by himself back to the Netherlands because the presence of family and friends. He finally arrived in Luxembourg via Belgium, without a train ticket, got a fine. He travelled with two other friends. He came to Luxembourg because he had no other options, since Belgium is not a good place because many asylum seekers sleep on the streets. In Luxembourg, he worked on a building site for a Yugoslav employer who gave him accommodation. The police sent him to [the Structure d'hébergement d'urgence au Kirchberg in] LuxExpo and then back to Germany. He came back to Luxembourg, where he applied for asylum and was not successful. He continued to live in Luxembourg for one year and

claimed asylum in Metz, as it was close to Luxembourg, where he had accommodation. He is currently living in Metz, with people from the Welcome network and is waiting for decision on his asylum application. If he is rejected, he is considering going back to Bosnia, he doesn't want to go to other countries because he needs to start from scratch and "I'll just lose my age, nothing else". (Interview_2)

These excerpts from interviews with three informants provide important insights into their migratory trajectories to France. They illustrate that while France was not initially perceived as a country of destination, various negative experiences on the way determined the respondents to consider coming to Metz. For the participant from Interview_6, forced labour in Libya, followed by precarious reception conditions in Italy meant that France was seen as the only option, due to its colonial past in Africa. France was also the only alternative for the informant from Interview_8 was left with, since he believed that other countries would not examine his application, since he was a Dublin case. Finally, the reason why the interviewee from Interview_2 decided to come to Metz is because he exhausted all the asylum options, and decided to try one more country before returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina. These testimonials provide empirical confirmation that migrants' trajectories are of a dual nature: geographical before arriving in France, and legal upon arrival in France. Indeed, if the first part of the journey is mainly characterised by border crossings, once in France the journey takes the form of an administrative battle to regularise their stay and receive the refugee status, as a result of the boundaries experienced in their everyday lives.

6. Final conclusion

The present study was designed to determine the interaction between borders in the everyday lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Metz. It has found that generally, borders have interfered with some respondents' journeys to the extent that they have had to modify their migratory journeys in order to reach the country of destination, even if that meant settling for a different country than the one they initially had in mind. With regards to Metz in particular, the participants' mobility practices are rooted in the everyday, pointing to the mundane character of cross-border movement.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that throughout their migratory trajectories, migrants' journeys evolve from geographical journeys, in order to reach France, to legal journeys, in order to get regularised. Indeed, research has identified the ongoing nature of migrants' journeys, which do not end once they arrive in France. The migrants interviewed talked extensively about the never-ending journey they have experienced, which started with their departure from the country of origin but which did not end once reaching France. During their narration of the migratory route to France they would focus on the various geographical stages of the journey and the challenges encountered, such as the presence of police. However once in France, they shifted the focus of their story to the administrative obstacles experienced in their daily lives. This indicates that the process of arriving at destination is both geographical and administrative. On the one hand, it is represented by the physical borders that the migrants need to cross in order to arrive in France. On the other hand, it is reflected by the boundaries they encounter once in France, and which they need to traverse in order to be able to stay in France legally.

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8. List of Abbreviations

AIEM - Association d'Information et d'entraide mosellane (the Moselle Association for Information and Mutual Assistance)

CASAM - Collectif d'Accueil des Solliciteurs d'Asile en Moselle (The Moselle Collective for the Welcoming of Asylum Seekers)

CEAS - Common European Asylum System

CNDA - Cour nationale du droit d'asile (the National Court for the Right to Asylum)

DIRECCTE - Direction régionale des entreprises, de la concurrence, de la consommation, du travail et de l'emploi (Regional organisation of the enterprises in charge with competition, work and employment)

EU - European Union

CADA - Centres d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile (Housing centres for asylum seekers)

CCAS - Centre Communal d'Action Sociale (Centre for Social Action)

COMSYR - Comité d'Aide humanitaire au Peuple syrien (Committee for Humanitarian Support for the Syrian People)

HUDA - Hébergement d'Urgence des Demandeurs d'Asile (Emergency housing for asylum seekers)

OFPRA - Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (French Agency for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless people)

OFII - Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration (French Agency for Immigration and Integration)

LDH - Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (Human Rights League)

PAF - Police aux frontières (border police)

SPADA - Structures de premier accueil des demandeurs d'asile (first reception centres)



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