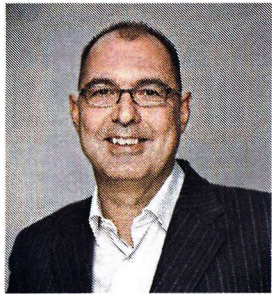


## Great Diversity and Few Opportunities: Overcoming Institutional Discrimination



**Ayad Al-Ani** <sup>1,2,3</sup>

*"[...] it is very important to have a network to get into school or to get a job-it is not enough just to send your résumé in."*

*Saunders, 2011, 239.*

Empowerment in the context of refugee issues also means looking on options of participation for refugees in different job markets. But not as an act of solidarity. Skills, competencies and creative approaches of individuals should be targeted in the same way as for the 'old inhabitants' in European countries. The change in working structures leads to a general transformation of the job market. Breaking down institutional borders is a challenge which offers insights for a new understanding about how working conditions and accessibility can be changed in the 21st century.

## Exclusivity challenged

States, companies, and schools can only exist if they employ some kind of exclusivity. If everybody may enter an institution - these organisations would arguably disintegrate due to a drain of resources and complexity generated by the conflicting targets of opportunistic members. In other words, open institutions would lead to a "tragedy of the commons" (Hardin 1968): if everybody could participate and use institutional resources these would diminish and everybody will lose in the end. This is the legitimisation for deploying the often complex procedures and processes one has to negotiate in order to enter an institution. It is noteworthy, however, that some of these procedures are formal (grades, achievements ...), and some are more informal, not visible or - even worse - those we are unable to influence (place of birth, postal code ...) reflecting existing inequalities and biases within a society. These entry criteria are usually in constant discussion and are the result of the bargaining power of different interest groups (Olson 1982). With the inflow of a huge group of newcomers, who in many ways do not appear to comply with the formal let alone the informal criteria, we can suppose that this group will have difficulty entering important institutions (schools, universities, companies). If entrance is possible at all, it will - we surmise - only be possible in institutional segments, which offer less quality, income and status. This has always been the universal fate of immigrants. However, considering the huge number of refugees that have now entered Europe within a very short time frame, Western society finds itself, in its entirety, challenged and stretched by a "refugee bulge" in an unprecedented way. If nothing changes, it is feared, this new population segment may be forced to exist in isolation, disconnected from the rest of the society creating its own peculiar sub-culture that will be considered as threat or menace to society; evoking all sorts of antiliberal repercussions (cf. Wallerstein, 1995, 142f.). The Turkish community in Berlin's Kreuzberg quarter is in many ways an example of this negative scenario. Not being able to become German citizens for a long period of time and therefore blocked from developing their own businesses, achieving academic success or having a say in political representation, this isolated group created a grotesque caricature of their home country's culture in a kind of "time warp"

1. Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society, Berlin.

2. Chair of Business Information Systems and Electronic Government, University of Potsdam.

3. School of Public Leadership, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

(Saunders, 2011, 245).<sup>4</sup>This paper in the context of the project “The Moving Network” seeks to show that new institutions based on inclusivity are possible. These new platform-organisations are driven by the self-managed capacities of its “free producers”. Thus, the underlying message in the context of the current refugee discussion is that these individuals can and – recognising the limited capacities of the state – must be considered potentially active producers of private and public goods and services and can be integrated into traditional institutions via adapted interfaces.

### Are open institutions possible?

With the advent of new forms of collaboration that are constituted in cyberspace we now have different organisations that might lend themselves to overcoming some of the current restrictions. This is so, because these network organisations have a central attribute, whose characteristics differ from those of traditional organisations: Their network effect makes resources more valuable the more they are used (Bauwens, 2007). The more people visit a web site, the more relevant it becomes. The tragedy of the commons is reversed.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, people who join each other via the internet as free producers or peers to form collaborations using platforms to exchange information and work deliverables usually create and use a common, an idea, a line of code, a learning script, a massive open online course that can be used without any restrictions. In addition, many of these peer-to-peer (p2p)-productions like Open Source collaborations or Wikipedia are inclusive, geared towards the usage of a surplus of self-directed and self-identified skills and resources not absorbed by traditional institutions and utilised in the past for passive consummative and isolated behaviour (watching TV etc.) (Shirky 2011; Benkler 2006).

---

4.The Turkish writer Dilek Güngör noted that Turkish woman moving to this enclave were “[...] shocked to find themselves forced to wear headscarves by their mothers-in-law, sharing a flat with their husband’s family, and to see that Turks in Germany were 20 years behind those in Istanbul [...]” (Hurriyet 2007)

5.For some economists, like Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom, this came as a novel which she nevertheless later on acknowledged: “[...] open access to information is a horse of a much different colour than open access to land or water [...]. With distributed knowledge and information the resource is usually nonrivalous.” (Hess/Ostrom, 2011, 13)

There are often no entry criteria and the role and reputation of the joining free producer is strictly evaluated by his/her performance (meritocracy).<sup>6</sup> In summary, these new kinds of inclusive organisations seem very much geared towards the absorption of skills and resources from refugees and also of the surplus of the society in general which can be directed towards providing services and support for this group.

### New forms of productions for refugees

This concept in its many shapes and forms can now be employed to create services that enable refugees to advance in a society and also integrate them as producers, creating learning effects, income and credentials that would not be available in traditional institutions.

*Education:* Traditional universities and other higher education institutions enforce formal and informal entry hurdles that serve to keep refugees and newcomers away. New educational platforms that use open educational resources (OER) will be more open to these target groups and may potentially serve as an intermediary between this group and formal education.<sup>7</sup> In addition, resources produced by citizens wishing to support the educational path of refugees can be made available using platforms that match supply and demand.<sup>8</sup> Of course, in all these forms of educational offerings, refugees can also be integrated as producers who create, refine and offer assistance.<sup>9</sup>

*Jobs:* Increasingly, companies constitute themselves as platforms, transforming peers into employees or rather free-lancers. Despite this commercialisation of the former P2P production, the principle of meritocracy prevails in

---

6.For an overview of protocols and procedures of these peer networks see Jemielniak (2014, Pos 513ff.). Some of the protocols are specially meant to facilitate the integration of newcomers, like (DNB): Do Not Bite Newcomers, or (ASG): Assuming Good Faith.

7. See here the example of the Kiron University that offers education to refugees that could be used as a credit in formal education once necessary requirements have been brought by (Pauli 2015). For an overview of available OER see Bhaskar (2013).

8. For the principle of making available the surplus of skills and motivation within a society to support educational activities see Gelernter (2012). A good example is the “Granny Cloud” already in use to provide online support from British “grannies” to students in India and South America (The Granny Cloud, n.d.a.).

9. This also leads to the requirement of opening up libraries that feature blueprints and content to be downloaded for free (Al-Ani, 2016, 238).

many of these companies meaning that they are inclusive (anybody can join) and evaluate their producers mainly on their contribution and not on past performance (credentials, degrees ....), making them ideal for contributors lacking formal requirements. Besides the income generated here as a marketing creative, IT developer or software tester, the credentials developed on those platforms can also be capitalised in the traditional economy (Al-Ani/Stumpp, 2015).<sup>10</sup>

*Public & Social Services:* A large part of the initial activities for accommodating refugees has been delivered in a self-organised and self-directed manner in the best of p2p traditions - in a way that has perhaps surprised even the political establishment. It is to be expected, that this kind of service delivery will also be made more effective and delivered via platforms that "upload" offerings of services, and assets for refugees (rooms, coaching, conflict resolution, advice). It is increasingly likely, that refugees will also become producers on these platforms helping others and also creating their own platforms.<sup>11</sup> Thereby, not only supportive capacities are increased and social costs minimised but also credentials and skills are generated that can be used in other sectors of the economy (cf. Al-Ani, 2016, 236ff.). Similar tools could be used by political actors to integrate the political voice of the refugees, connecting them with traditional political institutions.<sup>12</sup>

### Connecting with traditional institutions

While these new forms of inclusive organisations may provide easier access, possibilities for supplying services and products, and building up much needed capabilities and credentials, a connection to established institutions

10. Some of these platforms are already experiencing a presence from the Arab world. The German based innovation platform jovoto.com for instance, has more than 600 of its 30.000 creatives coming from Arab countries (Al-Ani 2015).

11. This is a general tendency of the 'Digital City': "The networked city sees citizens as 'co-designers, co-producers and co-learners,' with government." (Bollier, 2016, 6). For a first platform from refugees for refugees offering support and practical advice in Germany see Zukar.org (n.d.a.).

12. These tools are already available (e.g. nationbuilder.com, n.d.a.) and could be easily adapted. For an evaluation of the situation in Germany see Hackmack (2014).

(companies, universities) makes sense. Not only can companies profit from skills and ideas that haven been developed in the "p2p world", the fabric of society can benefit if its different segments become connected; reducing social friction and costs. The following examples show how these interfaces and bridges may be set up.

*Opening of Higher Education:* at some point it becomes necessary for universities to alter their entry protocols and accept different entry criteria form a variety of societal segments. The most famous example in this regard was the decision of France's Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, known colloquially as Sciences Po, which has trained two out of the past three French presidents, to open up for underprivileged students. Normally students would seek admission based on their grades or test results. Sciences Po singled out 85 secondary schools serving disadvantaged areas which were simply told to send over their best students for Sciences Po's review. The schools provided whatever financial aid necessary (Horn 2012). Using this example, it would makes sense for universities and higher education institutions to offer similar adapted entry procedures to ease the integration of refugees.<sup>13</sup>

*Opening of the firm:* traditional firms are already in the process of adapting to the needs of the digital economy and seek to integrate p2p production in order to capture the productivity and innovation of the Crowd (Al-Ani/Stumpp/Schildhauer 2014). Refugees that started their career as producers of the p2p economy could become part of the firm's value creation using these new inroads: traditional companies co-opt ideas, solutions and innovations that have been generated outside their boundaries and try to add them to their portfolio (Al-Ani, 2013, 126ff.). This development could make it easier for refugees to enter the firm. In addition, companies could also create new forms of collaboration geared towards the segment of refugees. A good example is the use of mentoring programs that connect employment-seeking

13. Of course this would come at a price of heating up the debate about levelling of quality standards. This discussion also took place in France: "Critics accused the school of flashy political correctness, and of losing sight of excellence while focused on cosmetic issues." (Horn 2012)

refugees with contacts within a company easing the collaboration and making the entry procedure more reflective of the personality of the candidates and additionally triggering learning effects for all involved.<sup>14</sup>

Connecting beyond borders: Collaborations and start-ups created by refugees in their host countries could be used to connect with similar organisation and firms in the MENA region, making them even more attractive for Western companies who are in constant search for innovations and markets: The upcoming rebuilding of the Arab economy could be a focal point for these firms and connections to traditional Western companies could serve as a bridge to this attractive market.<sup>15</sup>

### **Conclusion: If nothing else matters**

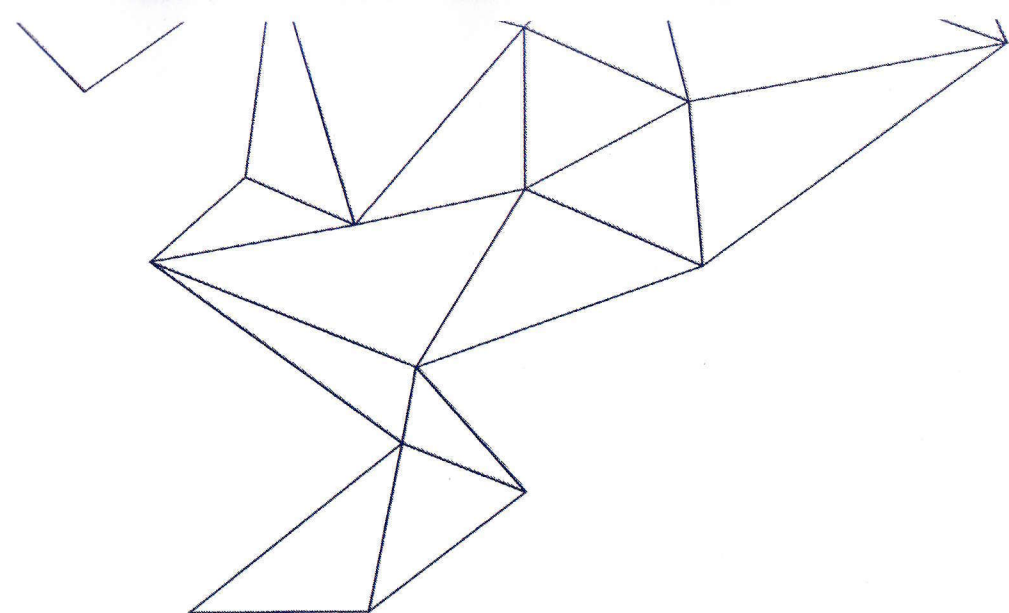
The institutional changes described here are by no means a self-executing process. It is an equation with many variables and with an uncertain outcome: "We are in a systemic burofication, which means that very small actions by groups here and there may shift the vectors and the institutional forms in radically different directions" (Wallerstein, 1999, 132). Nevertheless, the rational for institutions to adapt must be made clear. That is - segregation and discrimination ultimately prove poisonous to a society which is built upon principles of equal opportunity, suffrage and security. Returning to the example of Sciences Po, remarkably, it was the fear of ending up in a hierarchical, caste-like society, which drove its former president to start his ambitious transformation.<sup>16</sup> The current refugee crisis makes it even more urgent to start similar undertakings in all relevant sectors of the society.

---

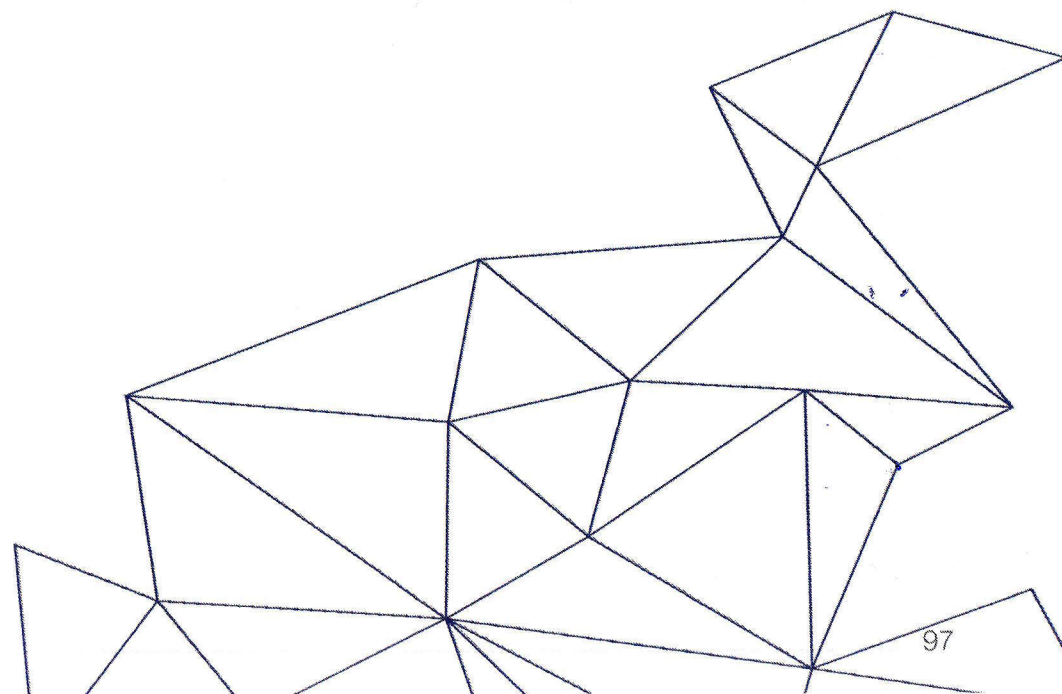
14. For an example of such mentoring projects in Germany see Hamburg's Impact Dock (n.d.a.) program.

15. See here the example of a platform for Arab start-ups that builds interfaces to German companies: Zenith Talk (n.d.a.). Platforms of this kind could be used as well to "upload" start-ups in Germany with a refugee background connecting them to Arab and German companies.

16. He forwarded the following reasons: "Le premier est d'affaiblir la légitimité de ces formations. Qu'une élite puisse devenir synonyme de caste, qu'un enseignement d'excellence puisse apparaître comme une simple machine à reproduction sociale, et c'est le pacte républicain qui n'est pas tenu." (Le Monde, 2001)



*Segregation and discrimination ultimately prove poisonous to a society which is built upon principles of equal opportunity, suffrage and security*



## Literature

Al-Ani, A. (2013), Widerstand in Organisationen. Organisationen im Widerstand. Virtuelle Plattformen, Edupunks und der nachfolgende Staat, Wiesbaden.

Al-Ani, A. (2015), What Role for Civil Society, State Institutions, Entrepreneurs and Non-State Actors after the Arab Spring, in: Zenith Winter 2015, pp. 104-105.

Al-Ani, A. (2016), Government as a Platform? Public Virtual Structures for Service Delivery and Participation as Elements of a Renewed Public Administration, in: Minderman, G. & Reddy, P.S. (Eds.), Innovation for the Urban Age. Innovative Approaches to Public Governance For the New Urban Age, The Winelands Papers 2014, Den Haag, pp. 225-244.

Al-Ani, A. & Stumpp, S. (2015), Motivationen und Durchsetzung von Interessen auf kommerziellen Plattformen. Ergebnisse einer Umfrage unter IT- und Kreativ-Crowdworkern, HIIG Working Paper 5/2015, retrieved on 02 January 2016: [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2699065](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2699065) ().

Al-Ani, A., Stumpp, S. & Schildhauer, T. (2014), Crowd Studie 2014: Die Crowd als Partner der deutschen Wirtschaft, HIIG Workingpaper 2/2014, retrieved online: [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2437007](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2437007) (02.11.2015).

Anderson, C. (2013), Makers. Das Internet der Dinge: Die nächste industrielle Revolution, München.

Bauwens, M. (2007), Placing P2P in an Intersubjective Typology, retrieved on 29 October 2015: [http://p2pfoundation.net/3.4\\_Placing\\_P2P\\_in\\_an\\_intersubjective\\_typology](http://p2pfoundation.net/3.4_Placing_P2P_in_an_intersubjective_typology).

Benkler, Y. (2006), The Wealth of Networks. How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom, New Haven CT.

Bhaskar, S. (2013), 10 Open Educational Resource (OER) Tools You must Know About, retrieved on 05 February 2016: <http://edtechreview.in/e-learning/511-10-open-education-resource-oer-tools-you-must-know-about>.

Bollier, D. (2016), The City as a Platform. How Digital Networks Are Changing Urban Life and Governance, retrieved on 15 February 2016: <http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/documents/>

CityAsPlatform.pdf.

Dickel, S., Ferdinand, J.P. & Petschow, U. (2014), Shared Machine Shops as Real Life Laboratories, in: Journal of Peer Production, Issue 5, retrieved on 31 October 2015: <http://peerproduction.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/shared-machine-shops-as-real-life-laboratories.pdf>.

Fab Lab Lünen (n.d.a.), Freifunk für Flüchtlinge, retrieved on 11 February 2016: <http://blog.fablab-luenen.de/2015/08/freifunk-fuer-fluechtlinge/>.

Fab Lab Neckar-Alb e.V. (n.d.a.), Flüchtlinge, retrieved on 10 February 2016: <https://www.fablab-neckar-alb.org/?tag=uechtlinge>.

Gelernter, D. (2012), Hausfrauen, Polizisten – jeder ist als Lehrer geeignet, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Nr. 33, 08. 02. 2012, p. N5.

Hackmack, G. (2014), Demokratie einfach machen. Ein Update für unsere Politik, Bonn.

Hardin, G. (1968), The Tragedy of the Commons, in: Science, No. 13, December 1968, NO 162. Jg., pp. 1234-1238.

Hess, C. & Ostrom, E. (2011), Introduction: An Overview of the Knowledge Commons, in: Hess, C. & Ostrom, E. (Eds.), Understanding Knowledge as Commons, Cambridge MA, pp. 3-27.

Horn, H (2012), One French School's Secret for Making A rmative Action Work, in: The Atlantic, 9.4.2012, retrieved on 25 February 2026: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/one-french-schools-secret-for-making-a-rmative-action-work/255612/>.

Hurriyet (2007), Germans Can Be Also Turks, Says a Berlin Author, retrieved on 10 February 2016: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/germans-can-be-also-turks-says-a-berlin-author.aspx?pageID=438&n=germans-can-be-also-turks-says-a-berlin-author-2007-05-15>.

Impact Dock (n.d.a.), Cross Mentoring. retrieved on 20 February 2016: <http://impact-dock.de/cross-mentoring/>.

Jemielniak, D. (2014), Common Knowledge. An Ethnography of Wikipedia, Stanford, CA.

## CONCLUSION

Thus far it has been a very interesting and rewarding journey. The whole group has been extremely pleased by the valuable data that could be gathered, the people that could have been met and the interesting and positive feedback from the community that was shared.

In setting the theoretical framework evolving around the key concepts of Empowerment, Participation, Multipliers and Integration, it was extremely helpful to acknowledge and contemplate to the different theoretical works that evolve around those specific topics. In thoroughly scrutinizing the secondary research, the group had a well defined understanding of the difficulties, but ever so more the advantages of an empowered community, which is in effect confident, inclusive, organized, co-operative and influential.

The Bop-Ambassador case study has been incredibly useful to understand how to enable the creation of future prospects inside of one's self. Instead of trusting in the term "solidarity", the project aims at presenting a valid future perspective towards an open and powerful community, which has proven that coordination and exchange of knowledge are a renewing process for cooperation and stability. By empowering the individual, it is now quite safe to say that this individual will itself empower others.

The networking approach clearly shows that these interconnections are used for the better, helping a whole community to strive for new goals and giving themselves the support clearly needed. But instead of clinging to themselves, keeping within their cultural and societal boundaries, building again structures of parallel-societies and modern "ghettoism", we now find here a unique way of opening up the possibilities of a shared communal life rather than coexisting in the same place.

Le Monde (2012), Sciences Po: égalité des chances, pluralité des chances, retrieved on 15 February 2016: [http://www.lemonde.fr/enseignement-superieur/article/2001/03/11/sciences-po-egalite-des-chances-pluralite-des-chances\\_1680130\\_1473692.html#Y4jUvOL-RzTQ73ds4.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/enseignement-superieur/article/2001/03/11/sciences-po-egalite-des-chances-pluralite-des-chances_1680130_1473692.html#Y4jUvOL-RzTQ73ds4.99).

McAfee, A. (2015), Why Today's Finland Needs 18th-Century France's 'Super-Smarts' for Economic Growth, retrieved on 05 January 2016: <http://blogs.ft.com/andrew-mca-98/2015/08/01/what-todays-finland-and-18th-century-france-teach-us-about-economic-growth/>.

Nationbuilder.com (n.d.a.), Software for Leaders, retrieved on 20 February 2016: <http://nationbuilder.com/>.

Olson, M. (1982), The Rise and Decline of Nations. Economic Growth, Stagnation and Social Rigidities, New Haven.

Pauli, R. (2015), Die Pionier-Uni, die nur 400 Euro pro Flüchtling kostet, in: Zeit Online, 11.09. 2015, retrieved on 19 February 2016: <http://www.zeit.de/studium/uni-leben/2015-09/uechtlinge-studium-kiron-universitaet>.

Saunders, D. (2010), Arrival City. How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping our World, London.

Shirky, C. (2010), Cognitive Surplus, How Technology Makes Consumer Into Collaborators, London.

The Granny Cloud (n.d.a.), About, retrieved on 01 November 2015: <https://granny-cloud.wordpress.com/>.

Wallerstein, I. (1995), After Liberalism, New York.

Wallerstein, I. (1999), The End of the World as We Know It, Minneapolis MN.

Zenith Talk (n.d.a.), retrieved on 14 February 2016: <http://www.zenithonline.de/deutsch/zenith-talk/>.

Zukar.org (n.d.a.), About Us, retrieved on 15 February 2016: <http://zucar.org/>.

## Teachers for Life

*Empowering refugees to teach and share knowledge*

[www.the-moving-network.de](http://www.the-moving-network.de)

[info@the-moving-network.de](mailto:info@the-moving-network.de)

Visual identity design: Dana Alomari

Brochure design: Pegah Redjai Sani

Cover design: Hasan Abdulnabi



The Moving Network

