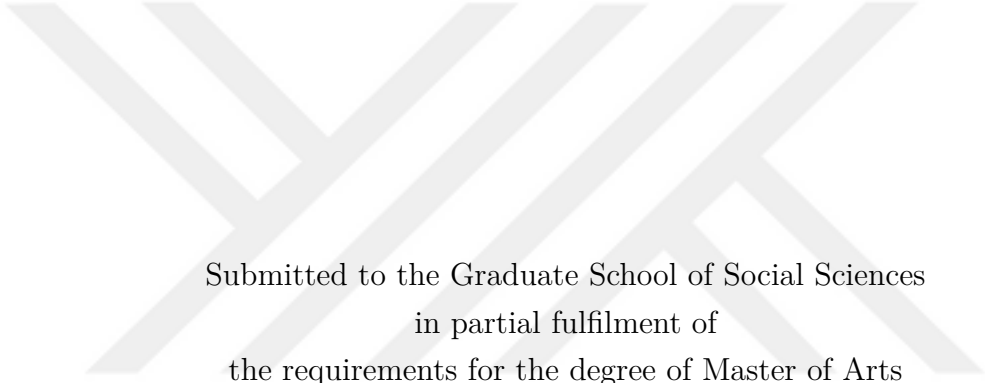


**RETHINKING CIVIL SOCIETY IN TURKEY: THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE SYRIAN NGOs AND TURKISH STATE**

by
HİBA IRMAK



Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Sabancı University
December 2021

**RETHINKING CIVIL SOCIETY IN TURKEY: THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE SYRIAN NGOs AND TURKISH STATE**

Approved by:

Asst. Prof. Ayşecan Terzioğlu
(Thesis Supervisor)

Asst. Prof. Aslı İkizoğlu Erensü

Assoc. Prof. Didem Danış

Date of Approval: Dec 15, 2021



HİBA IRMAK 2021 ©

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

RETHINKING CIVIL SOCIETY IN TURKEY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SYRIAN NGOs AND TURKISH STATE

HİBA IRMAK

CULTURAL STUDIES M.A. THESIS, DECEMBER 2021

Thesis Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Ayşecan Terzioğlu

Keywords: civil society, Syrian refugees, learning, political participation,
immigration governance

This thesis aims to explore Syrian civil society formations, with a particular focus on the Syrian NGOs in Istanbul. The research will mainly concentrate on the relationship between the Syrian refugee NGOs and the Turkish state by underlying: (i) The learning process of civil society in Turkey and their experiences in the field and interactions with refugees (ii) the basic dynamics and strategies of interaction between Syrian NGOs and the state mechanisms (iii) the state mechanisms and the impacts of Syrian NGOs in understanding the link between civil society and state in Turkey. The study intends to point out their basic problems in Turkey and the role of Syrian immigrant NGOs in providing services and a sense of belonging and solidarity among Syrian refugees. Indubitably, the study aims to scrutinize the ongoing political, social and economic dynamics in the civil society of Turkey and how the Syrian NGOs are situated, in order to clearly understand the role of Syrian associations. Throughout the thesis, Syrian refugees' perceptions, experiences and their self-representations are scrutinized in tune with their process of learning in two levels: learning the concept of civil society and learning Turkish civil society. This research argues that Syrian NGOs in Turkey are in the process of learning the concept of civil society within Turkey. Additionally, it delineates the Syrian NGOs' experience of civil society, enabling certain ways for refugees to establish their own political participation and strategies to deal with the state power in Turkey.

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE’DE SİVİL TOPLUMU YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK: SURIYELİ DERNEKLERİN TÜRK DEVLETİ İLE İLİŞKİLERİ

HİBA IRMAK

KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, ARALIK 2021

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ayşecan Terzioğlu

Anahtar Kelimeler: sivil toplum, Suriyeli mülteciler, öğrenme, siyasi katılım, Göç yönetimi

Bu tez özellikle İstanbul’daki Suriyeli sivil toplum kuruluşlarına odaklanarak Suriyeli sivil toplum oluşumlarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, Suriyeli mülteci sivil toplum kuruluşları ile Türk devleti arasındaki ilişkiye ağırlıklı olarak (i) Türkiye’de sivil toplumu öğrenme sürecini, saha tecrübelerini ve mültecilerle etkileşimini, (ii) Suriyeli sivil toplum kuruluşları ve devlet mekanizmaları arasındaki etkileşim temel dinamikleri ve stratejilerini, (iii) devlet mekanizmalarını ve Türkiye’de sivil toplum ve devlet arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamada Suriyeli sivil toplum kuruluşlarının etkilerini temel alarak odaklanacaktır. Çalışma, Türkiye’deki mültecilerin temel sorunlarına ve Suriyeli göçmen sivil toplum kuruluşlarının hizmet sunmadaki rolüne ve Suriyeli mülteciler arasındaki aidiyet ve dayanışma duygusuna dikkat çekmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Şüphesiz bu çalışma, Suriyeli derneklerin rolünü net bir şekilde anlamak için Türkiye toplumunda süregelen siyasi, sosyal ve ekonomik dinamikleri ve Suriyeli sivil toplum kuruluşlarının toplumda nasıl konumlandığını incelemeyi amaçlamıştır.

Tez boyunca, Suriyeli mültecilerin algıları, deneyimleri, benlik temsilleri, öğrenme süreçleriyle uyumlu olarak iki düzeyde incelenmiştir: sivil toplum kavramını öğrenme ve Türk sivil toplumunu öğrenme. Bu araştırma, Türkiye’deki Suriyeli sivil toplum kuruluşlarının Türkiye’de sivil toplum kavramını öğrenme sürecinde olduğunu savunmaktadır. Ayrıca bu tez, sivil toplum deneyiminin, mültecilerin siyasi katılımlarını ve Türkiye’deki devlet gücüyle başa çıkma stratejilerine odaklanmaktadır.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by thanking my participants for accepting to help this research and talking sincerely with me. I am extremely grateful for their patience and collaboration. I hope this thesis can be a decent contribution for their adventure in Turkey.

I am very grateful to Ayşecan Terzioğlu, who encouraged me in every step of this research and accepted to become my thesis advisor. I should also express my respect to Didem Daniş and Aslı İkizoğlu Erensü, whose constructive suggestions helped me a lot to find my way throughout the research.

I guess I could not have finished this thesis without my husband's unconditional support and patience. He helped me in every step without hesitation and provided valuable comments. Lastly, I am deeply thankful to my parents and sisters for their endless encouragement and motivational speeches.



*To the displaced people of the world
To the daisies of my balcony*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. The Context of the Research	2
1.2. Terminology	3
1.3. Theoretical Framework	5
1.3.1. Civil Society and State.....	6
1.3.2. Civil Society and Turkey	9
1.4. Methodology	11
1.4.1. Interviews	12
1.4.2. Participant Observation and Media Analysis	15
2. SYRIAN NGOs AND CIVIL SOCIETY	17
2.1. Civil Society in Syria	17
2.2. Overview of Syrian NGOs in Turkey	21
2.3. Missions of the NGOs.....	24
2.4. The Syrian NGOs' Perception of Civil Society	26
2.5. Hierarchies within the Syrian NGOs.....	29
2.6. Rediscovering Syrians and Syrianness: Fragmented Identities	31
3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SYRIAN NGOs AND TURKISH STATE	35
3.1. Laws and Regulations Concerning Syrian Refugees in Turkey.....	35
3.2. Learning and Teaching about Turkey.....	38
3.3. Religion as a Common Ground: Islamic Brotherhood	43
3.4. Ambivalent State: The Strategies of Governance	45
3.4.1. Changing Methods of Governance	46
3.4.2. New Perspectives of Governance	47
3.4.3. We Are Between the Feet: Uncertainty as Mode of Governance	50
3.4.4. Brief Evaluation	52
3.5. The Event of July 22: The Syrian NGOs as Political Subjects	53

4. CONCLUSION	58
4.1. Concluding Remarks	58
4.1.1. Limitations and Further Directions	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	61
APPENDIX A	68



1. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, I participated in Meetings of Harmonization (Uyum Buluşmaları), which were held by the National Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) and United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), with the aim of presenting general information about Turkey's policies of integration and citizenship. I had no idea about the content of this meeting, but I was motivated to learn more about the issue of Syrian immigration and its governance in Turkey. Since 2011, Turkey has faced a considerable human flow from Syria, due to the civil war. Estimated number of immigrants is around 4 million, which impels Turkey to take an urgent action in order to provide basic necessities for these immigrants, such as housing, education, employment and health care services (UNHCR, 2020). I found that meeting as a typical example of how Turkey interprets and manages the situation. The plan of the meeting was simple: The speeches by Istanbul's governor and director of migration management, introduction of basic human rights of Syrians in Turkey and some general information about requirements of Turkish citizenship.

The most remarkable aspect of the meeting was its setting rather than the program flow. The entire setting of the meeting of harmonization was a lucid representation of hierarchy between Turkish State and the Syrian immigrants. Although the meeting was about the social conditions of the Syrian immigrants, I could not find any clue about it, except for the oriental Arabic music that was performed live by Syrian artists during the event. Projected slides were Turkish and most of the speakers were Turkish, there were also some officials who were the representatives of UNHCR in Turkey, which obscured the voices and the images of Syrian immigrants. After the meeting, I have decided to shift my focus from Turkish perspective to Syrian perspective and to focus on the forms of social solidarity among Syrian immigrants in Istanbul.

1.1 The Context of the Research

The mass uprising in Syria, in 2011, has quickly turned to a war through the interference of the international powers, such as the US, Russia, Iran. Along with the thousands of casualties, the war has triggered social and economic collapse of the country and given rise to mass immigration to different countries (Erdoğan 2018). High numbers of immigrants have primarily immigrated to the neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Since the war, Turkey has hosted over 4 million refugees and outstripped the other countries, which host the Syrian refugees (İçduygu and Şimşek 2016). Turkey has been incapable of serving these refugees in a quick and efficient manner. For this reason, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a key role in providing services and designing efficient ways to deal with the huge number of Syrian refugees (Erdoğan 2018). Even though Turkey has developed its immigration policies and regulations in recent years, NGOs have been important actors in the field for ten years.

Particularly after the EU-Turkey deal in 2016, funds for humanitarian aid flowed from the European Union to Turkey and have led to the proliferation of numbers of NGOs that provide services to immigrants in Turkey (Nimer 2020). The deal and the economic support have changed the atmosphere of civil society in Turkey and transformed the relationship between the state and NGOs. It has led to more active civil society in Turkey in terms of service provision. On the other hand, it has also intensified the state domination over civil society (Danış and Nazlı 2019).

The vibrant environment of civil society has also brought about an increase in the numbers of new actors in the field. In this context, Syrian refugees have also been significant actors by establishing their own NGOs. According to article 93 of the Turkish Civil Code (Law No:4721), every individual who is a citizen of Turkey or has a residence permit, has the right to establish and participate in NGOs in Turkey. In addition to this legislation, the fourth article of the Codes of Turkish Associations differentiates foreign associations from Turkish associations according to the principle of territory instead of citizenship. In other words, if an association is established in Turkey, it is assumed as a Turkish association regardless of the citizenship of the founders (Adıgüzel 2017). These regulations have accelerated the establishment and development of Syrian associations as service providers and important elements of Turkish civil society.

This research seeks to explore Syrian civil society formations, with a particular focus on the Syrian NGOs in Istanbul. The research will mainly concentrate on the

relationship between the Syrian refugee NGOs and the Turkish state by underlying: (i) Syrian refugees' learning process of civil society in Turkey, including the NGO experiences, including the field and interactions with refugees (ii) the basic dynamics and strategies of interaction between Syrian NGOs and the state mechanisms (iii) the state mechanisms and the impacts of Syrian NGOs in understanding the link between civil society and state in Turkey. The study intends to point out Syrians' basic problems in Turkey and the role of Syrian immigrant NGOs in providing services and a sense of belonging and solidarity among Syrian refugees. Indubitably, the study aims to scrutinize the ongoing political, social and economic dynamics in the civil society of Turkey and how the Syrian associations are situated in that framework, in order to clearly understand the role of Syrian associations in informing those dynamics.

Additionally, it aims to analyze Syrian refugees' experiences in a comprehensive lens, not only focusing on their adaptation process to Turkey or Turkish civil society, but also their learning process of what civil society is. Since these refugees could not be a part of a civil society before, due to the despotic regime of the Asad family, their experiences in Turkey also reflect their introduction with the notion of the civil society. Throughout the research, Syrian refugees' perceptions, experiences and their self-representations are scrutinized in tune with their process of learning in two levels: learning the concept of civil society and learning Turkish civil society. This research argues that Syrian NGOs in Turkey are in the process of learning the concept of civil society within Turkey. It furthers the argument by adding that the experience of civil society enables certain ways for refugees to establish their own political participation and legal visibility to deal with the state power in Turkey. Challenging the stable and generalized representation of refugees, this study seeks to portray the refugees as a flexible and dynamic people, who can construct and deploy their own strategies to handle their engagements of civil society (Malkki 1995).

1.2 Terminology

The refugee status has been a controversial issue in the Turkish legal field since 1951. Turkey signed the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 protocol, keeping the geographical limit (Reservations and declarations to the 1951 Refugee Convention 1951). The main impetus of the convention was to define the refugee status and

determine its legal ground by the Member States of the United Nations. Turkey ratified the agreement by specifying the European region as the mere location, where it can receive refugees from (Özçürümez and İçduygu 2020). Nonetheless, immigrants who seek refugee status in Turkey are mostly from other regions, hence their legal statuses remains in limbo. The ambiguity of refugee status in Turkey has spawned serious problems for Syrians, who fled from the war in 2011. In 2014, under the regulation of Temporary Protection, Syrian refugees were enabled to obtain a particular status (Akcapar and Simsek 2018).

The literature of Syrian immigration in Turkey provides various terminologies to define Syrian comers. For example, they are identified as immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers (Akcapar and Simsek 2018; Efe 2019; Gürsoy and Ertaşoğlu 2019). This research identifies Syrian comers as refugees because although they cannot acquire refugee status in Turkey, their internationally recognized status corresponds to the refugee status. According to the UNHCR, a refugee is “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group, or political opinion.”(UNHCR 2021) Even though Syrians are not identified legally as refugees in Turkey, the pattern of forced immigration and impossibility of return put them in accord with the universal definition of refugee.

Another complicated part of this research might be the description of Syrian NGOs, which needs further clarification for the rest of the research. After entering the field, I realized the lack of homogeneity and consistency in categorizing these NGOs. Since these organizations have been established in Turkish territory, they are recognized as Turkish NGOs. During several interviews, participants rejected the identification of ‘Syrian NGO’ and they insisted on the label of ‘Turkish NGO’. Irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, they adopted the Turkish legal definition to describe and settle their position in Turkish civil society.

Another point is about the ‘Syrianness’ of these NGOs. Although most of the members of these NGOs have Syrian backgrounds, it is difficult to claim a homogeneity in terms of nationality. The administrative body of some organizations consists of different nationalities, such as Turks, Jordanians, Iraqis. Hence, one must be careful in evaluating these NGOs as entirely Syrian NGOs. For instance, Arabness has a significant part in establishment and coordination, in fact, some of the founders are Arabs from different nationalities who just want to serve for the Syrian cause. These two points have profound importance to determine the conceptual track of these NGOs. Recent studies have devised their own conceptual frameworks to analyze these NGOs. Whereas Ulaş Sunata and Salih Tosun (2019) classify these

organizations as refugee community organizations, Ahmet Yaman (2016) and Yusuf Adıgüzel (2017) categorize them as Syrian associations or Syrian-led associations. Although the institutional categorization of the participants is salient and valued, this study will keep the categorization of Syrian NGOs as a conceptual tool because the common characteristics of these associations are that they all provide services to Syrian refugees in different fields, such as healthcare, education, legal advocacy and the majority of the members, including the founders, are Syrians. For this reason, the concept of Syrian immigrant NGOs in this study can be understood as NGOs, which provide services and take care of Syrian refugees.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The concept of civil society has been a subject of debate in terms of its trajectories, values and scopes. There seems to be no uniformity in its definition until now. Nevertheless, the most prevalent definition of civil society was conceptualized by oft-quoted Michael Walzer as “the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks- for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology- that fills this space.” (1992, 1). With respect to this definition, civil society has been considered as a realm of collective participation, which is voluntary and revolves around shared principles and concerns.

The outbreak of peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe has reinvigorated the significance of civil society and voluntary participation for political rights (Edwards and Foley 1998). Civil society was perceived, particularly by the liberal scholars, as a trigger for the change in authoritarian Socialist regimes of Eastern Europe (Gla-sius et al. 2004). Soon, non-state or non-governmental organizations have become celebrated phenomena and these organizations have been interpreted as bulwark of liberal understanding and democracy (Hall 1996). Nevertheless, the concept of civil society remained without consensual definition until the 1990s. The 1990s witnessed a solidified understanding of Capitalist market and democratic values due to the collapse of the Soviet Union (Edwards 2011). The triumphs of liberal mindset and democratic political systems have spurred a mainstream perception of civil society, which is distant from the state and the carrier of the democratic principles (Kaviraj, Khilnani et al. 2001) .

This study conceptualizes civil society as a society that contains voluntary partic-

ipation and not part of neither the family nor the state nor the market (Gellner 1994). The preliminary interest of the research is to focus on non-governmental organizations that are established voluntarily and have no economic relations with any political sovereign power. Although it is difficult to evaluate the degree of autonomy in a fully-fledged way, the main criterion is not to be directly funded by the state and to provide the necessary space for civil participation and cooperation (Sievers 2010). The ideal perspective on non-governmental organizations suggests complete independence from state domination. Nonetheless, in practice, it is difficult to define the boundaries of the political relations, particularly in terms of Syrian NGOs. Since Syrian immigration is a delicate issue in the political sphere of Turkey, the state always appears as an important actor in the field (Demirtaş 2020).

1.3.1 Civil Society and State

The nexus between civil society and state has a salient realm in civil society literature. Civil society functions within the state context and encounters the state mechanism in different fields such as service provision, activism and social rights. As Edward Shils asserts:

"The state lays down laws which set the outermost boundaries or the autonomy of the diverse spheres and sectors of civil society; so, civil society from its side lays down limits on the actions of the state. Civil society and the state are bound together by the constitution and by traditions which stress the obligations of each to the other as well as their rights vis-a-vis each other." (2003, 293)

Especially the political atmosphere of Eastern Europe in the 80s sheds more light on the role of the state in the discussion of civil society (Edwards, 2011). The literature of democratization grapples with the role of NGOs as agents of democratization and sustainers of democratic values, such as human rights, tolerance and pluralism. The wide literature that focuses on civil society and state mostly describes civil society as the antithesis of despotism (Doyle 2017).

At this point, it is significant to categorize the literature to two approaches: orthodox and critical. The orthodox approach has represented the ideal of democratization, underscoring the role of civil society as the buttress of egalitarian regime and rule of law. This school dates back to essays of Adam Ferguson and his successors.

He interpreted the rise of civil society as a reaction to the burgeoning dominance of the state (Van Dijck et al. 2017). The orthodox literature has purported that civil society must be independent from the state in order to secure individual rights and democratic values (Beichlet et al. 2014). In a similar vein, civil society has been understood in a position that countervails state domination. Civil society and its languages and images have represented free individual and non-violent society (Keane, 2013). In addition to this, Jurgen Habermas has insisted on the necessity of the structure of civil society for deliberative democracy and productive public debates. Habermas have asserted that active citizenship is the integral component of a healthy civil society (Welton, 2001). Here, active citizenship has been ascribed to effective political subjectivity and participation within civil society (2001, 30).

Another aspect of the literature has underscored the national context of civil society. The nation-states have been coeval with modernity and play a significant part in cultural homogeneity, which according to Ernest Gellner (1994) evokes the idea of 'common good' for society. In a similar vein, Shils (2003) argued the idea of nation and nationalism conjures up the collective consciousness for civil society. Here, Shils considered nationality as a positive factor that leads to civility and mutual understanding (2003, 296). Another scholar, Michael Walzer (2003) argued that the national approach has provided the most suitable context wherein civil society can function because nationalism presupposes collective identification and participation as an organic system in the society. Being a citizen is commonly understood by these scholars as a precondition of the civil society culture. The rise of civil society in Eastern Europe is also strongly attributed to proliferation of national sentiments and reaffirmation of ethnic ties (Mentzel 2012).

On the other hand, particularly after the advancement of empirical research on civil society, some scholars have approached the concept critically. The critical perspective dates back to essays of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci (2003) emphasized the importance of civil society in production of Capitalist power relations and he did not consider civil society apart from the state and its political aspirations. Instead of regarding civil society as a tool for liberal thinking and freedom, Gramsci framed the concept as a tool that can carry interests of the dominant class and their hegemony (2003, 193). Recently, several scholars have followed the critical path through questioning the basic assumptions of the concept of civil society. The critical understanding of civil society is suspicious of the putative separation between state and society (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). They claim that civil society has been enmeshed in the political sphere and power relations. They consider that the orthodox perspective of civil society has failed to recognize the intrinsic power relations (Wiktorowicz 2000).

Secondly, the scholars of postcolonialism criticized the orthodox approach due to its centralization of the western experience as the core interpretation of civil society (Gupta 2004). They have compared the experiences of other regions, such as Africa and MENA, with the western examples to delineate the fluctuating and heterogeneous interpretations of civil society (Chatterjee 2004; Mamdani 1996). They claim that the transformation of power structure from colonialists to nationalists was not able to expand a platform for free civil society. Rather they observed conjunction between state and society, which has subverted the orthodox understanding of state-society relations.

Admitting the significance of this literature, this research seeks to understand Syrian NGOs' perceptions and practices of civil society. Since the conditions of Syrian refugees have been strongly bound by the political atmosphere of Turkey, such as legal status and rising hostile political discourses toward Syrian refugees, Syrian NGOs tackle multiple problems that make their civil society experiences particularly significant. Although there have been studies that inquire into the Syrian-led NGOs, they mostly deal with the issue of integration and networking among NGOs, lacking NGOs' own civil society experiences and active participation in civil society (Adigüzel 2017; Easton-Calabria and Wood 2020; Sunata and Tosun 2019; Yaman 2016). On the other hand, this study portrays the NGOs as significant actors and deeply analyzes NGO members' own visions, relations and experiences within the field.

Besides, this research might challenge the national frame that has been designed by orthodox scholars. Through eschewing the national glance toward civil society, the research aims to explore the possibilities and limitations of being civil society organizations in Turkey, which are led by Syrians. Although these associations are technically "Turkish" associations, these NGOs fall in a different category apart from the national frame and they mostly voice their problems and demands from out the doors of citizenship. This research can fill the gap in the literature by projecting how Syrian NGOs approach the concept of civil society and how they position the state within their visions of civil society. Additionally, it questions how the Syrian NGOs can take an active part as political subjects as outsiders of national collectivity. Keeping heterogeneous perceptions and experiences of Syrian NGOs in mind, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on Syrian refugees in Turkey and the wider academic literature of civil society by demonstrating the different approaches and methods of civil society practices, which might play a part in critical interpretation of orthodox-national-western perspective of civil society.

1.3.2 Civil Society and Turkey

Civil society in Turkey has always had its own ebb and flow in relation to the state. The state culture that was inherited by the Ottoman omnipotent understanding of the state, has continued during the early days of the republican era and state ideology dominated the public sphere (Mardin 1969). The new regime promoted secular values along with strong national sentiments to induce civic participation. Civil society, which is considered as the gear of democracy, could not fully develop in Turkey until the multiparty system (Kalaycıoğlu 2002). Despite the existence of multiple associations and foundations in the 60s and 70s, they were enmeshed in political strife and fettered by the strong state surveillance (Yerasimos 2000). The 1980 coup might be considered as a turning point in the development of Turkish civil society. The military coup ceased the activities of different NGOs and thwarted the democratic progress of the country (Keyman and Gümüşçü 2014). Nevertheless, it also triggered the importance of civil society as a force against the state and made different segments of the society (liberals, leftists, middle class) support the European Union and adopt a western attitude toward state-society relations. Especially after the 1990s, the people who are oppressed by the state, such as Kurds and Islamists, have engaged in civil society organizations and challenged the national and secular claims of the Turkish state (Yerasimos 2000).

In spite of the dynamic socio-political atmosphere of Turkey, the development of civil society cannot catch this dynamism. Different studies claim that the development of civil society is still proceeding and needs time to correlate with the western perspective of civil society (Seçkinelgin, 2004; Kuzmanovic, 2012; Doyle, 2016). Şerif Mardin claimed that the political elites have a potential to manipulate the civil, which is always affected by political discourses. Furthermore, Yael Navarro-Yashin (1998) has asserted, civil society and state have not been separate entities in Turkey, especially after the 1980s because of the rise of Islamists in the public sphere. According to her, the discourse of civil society has been used by different political parties to reach a legitimate power in Turkey (1998, 8). The statist mentality in Turkey prevents NGOs from exerting a considerable influence vis-a-vis the state (1998, 21).

Particularly after the 1980s, due to the rise of neoliberal tendencies, the state ushered in an institutionalization of civil society, its basic motivation was enhancing the democratic image of the Turkish state in the Western political arena (Keyman and Gümüşçü 2014). The initiatives of the state indicate the vertical axis in the nexus between state and civil society rather than a horizontal axis (Yerasimos, 2000).

The state has always played the leading part in shaping and reconstructing the institutions of civil society for its national and international aspirations.

The pragmatic use of civil society as leverage in developing intimate relations with the European Union in the 2000s has shifted the idealized version of civil society. As Fuat Keyman and Ahmet İğduygu have contended (2003), civil society cannot be considered as the ultimate product of democracy, since it can be easily manipulated and abused by different actors, both the state and the agents of civil society. The main pitfall of Turkish civil society has lied in the passive citizenship in Turkey. Passive citizenship implies an understanding of civil society as a network of organizations instead of a platform to change the socioeconomic and sociopolitical structures and encourage new social policies (Zubaida 2001). Although recent years have witnessed a proliferation in numbers of NGOs, their capacity to wield power and improve the democratic sphere have not increased (Doyle 2017).

The dominant role of the state can be traced in its relationship with immigrant NGOs, as well. Turkey, since its foundation, has tackled mostly the Turkish or Turkmen immigration and has promoted the national discourse and cultural interpretation of Turkishness through these associations (Toumarkine 2000). Having Turkish ancestors and roots have been the coin of the realm to access state acceptance and to gain residence permit (Danış and Parla 2009) . A closer stance on the immigrant associations in Turkey has displayed that these associations are strongly influenced by the political changes and structures (Toumarkine 2000).

Nevertheless, especially after the rise of neoliberalism, new techniques of governance have been adopted by Turkish state, as well. State has followed a path of collaboration with civil society actors, instead of forming a vertical relationship. The state has cooperated, especially, with organizations, which targets social service provision to accentuate the effects of inequalities caused by the dynamics of neoliberalism (Can 2007; Isik 2019).

With respect to this, this study delves into the role of Turkish state in dealing with the Syrian NGOs. Namely, it seeks to understand what kind of strategies are used both by the Syrian associations and the state bureaucracy to negotiate on certain issues, such as legal and social problems that are related to citizenship and daily life in Turkey. Since in Turkey, the state and the civil society are strongly connected with each other, these strategies are also important to determine the future of Syrians in Turkey. Besides, this research might fill a gap in the literature through exploring the reactions of the Syrian associations to the shifting discourses of the state in terms of Syrian immigration. Although the Syrian NGOs in this research were founded in different periods, they all witnessed the changing discourses above mentioned,

so their reactions and forms of adaptability to these discourses are significant to evaluate their relationship with Turkish civil society.

1.4 Methodology

In order to acquire an in-depth and thorough understanding of the associations founded by Syrians, I have planned to conduct ethnographic research. My research depends heavily on two techniques that are highly used in ethnographic research: Interviews and participant observation. I sought to devise these techniques together in order to analyze the field through different dimensions. The fieldwork was conducted with 12 Syrian NGO participants, for five months in 2021. I analyzed 9 Syrian NGOs, which were established between the years 2012 and 2019. I preferred to analyze the NGOs, which serve in different fields. The research comprises service fields of humanitarian aid, education, healthcare, psychological assistance, youth development, student cooperation and intellectual development. Looking at different fields has been useful to understand the different roles and functions of Syrian immigrant associations.

Syrians have been in Turkey for almost ten years and they have found associations in different cities of Turkey; however, I decided to limit my scope with Istanbul because Istanbul is the biggest and most diverse city in Turkey, providing a culturally heterogeneous environment with multiple solidarity networks for Syrians. As a result, Istanbul is also the most suitable city to reach Syrian immigrants who differ from one another in terms of service fields. According to my preliminary survey, 170 Syrian associations exist officially in 2017 in different districts of Istanbul (Adıgüzel 2017). Unfortunately, I could not find more recent research about the numbers of Syrian NGOs in Istanbul; however, I surmise that the number has not increased dramatically due to Covid-19 period. District of Fatih has 84 of these NGOs, which is the highest number in Istanbul. Fatih is considered as a historical and conservative district, due to its residents' everyday life habits and political votes in local elections. This conservative gist is significant because it makes Fatih an inviting place for Sunni Muslim Syrian immigrants. Fatih is also appealing for immigrants because it has been the center of transit immigration for decades and serves as a fruitful space for trade and economic transactions (Kaya and Kırac 2016). Similarly, Başakşehir and Üsküdar might also be assumed relatively more conservative districts, which also appeal to Syrian Sunni Muslim community.

Due to the conditions of lockdown, I limited the participants and conducted interviews with NGOs, which are officially recognized, have regular and intensive digital access and actively use the digital media accounts. The significant part is that the most active digital accounts belong to Syrian Sunni Muslims. Since Sunni Syrians are the majority among other groups who immigrated to Turkey, NGOs mostly represent Arab Sunni Syrians. The second reason, which will be discussed in the third chapter, Sunnism appears as a shared ground with the government and conservative groups in Turkey. This ground might enable Syrian Sunni NGOs to act more actively in Turkish civil society than other refugee groups who emigrated from Syria. For this reason, I carried out the fieldwork in conservative districts Fatih, Başakşehir and Üsküdar. Another reason for conducting interviews in these locations is the use of snowball technique to find my participants.

Although I primarily limited my participants according to their digital access, after entering the field, I realized that it is not enough to find participants. Therefore, I also engaged in snowball technique to establish the connection of truth. I also categorized the NGOs into two groups: large-scale and small-scale. Large-scale NGOs mostly have higher economic and institutional capacity, and branches in different cities of Turkey. On the contrary, small-scale NGOs are mostly local NGOs and have limited funding. I carried out the fieldwork with 4 large-scale NGO members and 8 small-scale NGO members. Instead of their size and capacity in providing services, their access to state actors also differs. Whereas large-scale NGOs have the access to upper levels of the Turkish government, small-scale NGOs have limited contact with state officials. On the other hand, although the categorization of large-scale and small-scale NGOs has been useful to frame their capacity, it must be noted that these NGOs are evolving and the transition between small-scale and large-scale NGOs has been in a state of flux.

1.4.1 Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 NGO employees. Although I have mostly conducted interviews with the founders of the NGOs, I have also arranged meetings with 3 volunteers and 1 NGO employee. The approximate duration of the interview was one and half hours. All of the participants were older than 18 and their ages were between 22 and 60. To carry out these interviews, Research Ethic Council (SUREC) approval of Sabancı University was received. For this reason, participants were asked to fill out and sign an informed consent form and their voices

were recorded with permission. In order to protect privacy of the participants and consider their precarious positions in Turkey, the names of the participants and their associations were omitted from the research and independent numbers were given to the participants. Due to the predicaments of Covid-19, I conducted online interviews with some of the participants. I conducted online interviews with 4 participants. Even though online interviews were efficient in terms of arranging the suitable time for meeting, some of the interviews were compromised by poor internet connection of the participants. I conducted seven physical interviews, mostly in NGO buildings. Only one of the participants was interviewed in a cafe. It was noteworthy because he was extremely cautious about the interview and he mostly talked in a silent tone to prevent other people in the cafe from listening to his answers. His silent tone was an important indicator of distrust of Syrian refugees toward other people in Turkey.

I categorized three sets of questions, every set comprises a different scope. In the first set of questions, I intended to understand the personal accounts of the participants, their previous experiences in the field of civil society in Syria and Turkey, and their current experiences in their associations. I focused on the stories of establishment of the associations, their functions and scopes and their economic funding. I also wanted to learn more about the regular days in the associations and how the participants interact with the service receivers. Through these questions, I sought to understand how they perceive and make sense of their experiences and what kind of practices they engage during the day in the associations. The second set of questions is more about the relationship between the NGOs and the state. I specifically asked questions about their interpretations of state discourses and regulations toward Syrian refugees and their predictions about the future of Syrian refugees.

My additional aim was to understand their own relations and interactions with the state officials and institutions such as the National Directorate General of Migration Management. In addition to this, grasping their insights into their own positions within the Turkish civil society was a salient task of my research. Their interpretations of Turkish civil society in a comparison with the Syrian civil society provided invaluable findings for my research. Lastly, the third set of questions was limited to the process of Covid-19 and the lockdown. Through these questions, I aimed to examine the changes that the participants have experienced during the lockdown and how it has affected their own activities and interactions with the service receivers. After the interviews, I transcribed and coded them through the MAXQDA program. Coding through MAXQDA has been useful to quantify the particular codes and analyze them more systematically. It has also prevented unintended errors in coding that might lead to researcher bias. Certain codes such as “learning”, “uncertainty” and service” appeared as the most common codes as a result of the transcription.

The language barrier is one of the significant obstacles in interviewing with Syrian participants. However, my knowledge of Arabic language facilitated the communication and solved this obstacle. Not only the language but also my personal roots, as a daughter of a Syrian father, enabled the access to these associations. For instance, one of my participants complained about the abundance of research about Syrian refugees. He told me that he had been tired of the endless participation requests of the researchers. Then he added that he had accepted my request because of my personal roots that might make me understand him and Syrians better. Whereas having a Syrian background has enabled my insider role as a researcher, being a Turkish citizen and non-immigrant paved the way to an outsider role. Although the dual positionality might be difficult to manage, it has its own benefits too (Haraway 1988). While my insider role facilitated the data collection process and built trust between the participants and me, my outsider role as a researcher reinforced me to ground my data according to the principles of ethnographic research, concerning the micro (refugees' personal accounts and experiences) and macro (social, political and economic structures) relationships.

Nevertheless, Syrian communities in Istanbul still remember their problems of insecurity and distrust in Syria caused by the authoritarian regime in Syria. For this reason, my personal roots were insufficient to access every Syrian NGO employee. Hence, firstly I started conducting the research by contacting NGOs that are familiar to me. Then these participants introduced me to other NGO employees. I noticed that personal networks have a more significant part than Syrian roots or speaking Arabic. Some of the participants wanted to know my Syrian NGO networks to form a mutual trust before the interviews.

Unfortunately I could conduct interviews only with two female participants. The male participants held a lead in this research. Most of the founders and available members of the NGOs are male and few NGOs have female presidents. This condition created burdens for me too. As a woman researcher I experienced difficulty in accessing the founders and members of the NGOs. I had to reach different persons -mediators- to introduce me to the participants. Again snowball technique was useful to reach the male participants and conduct interviews with them. Thanks to my father and husband, I reached several male participants for the research.

1.4.2 Participant Observation and Media Analysis

Participant observation has been considered as the integral part of ethnographic research. Nevertheless, due to the Covid-19 lockdown and high number of Covid cases in Turkey, I engaged in a hybrid methodology in terms of participant observation. Along with a limited participant observation, I also dealt with digital ethnography and digital participant observation. Digital ethnography can be defined as a method of ethnography, which adjusts the techniques of conventional ethnography to analyze the online materials, communities and interactions (Boellstorff et al. 2012; Calian-dro 2018). For physical participant observation, I visited 4 associations physically, observed the daily activities, listened to the seminars and interacted with different individuals. I visited mostly the NGOs, which are located in Fatih and Başakşehir, these districts are important hubs, where Syrian residents mostly live or spend their days. Having a Syrian background again helped me to encounter a hospitable environment during my participant observation in the NGOs.

In terms of digital participant observation, I examined the digital media accounts and websites of the NGOs. I followed their posts, watched videos they shared and followed their interactions with service receivers mostly through ‘comments’ section. Although not every NGO uses the digital media in the same quality and frequency, analyzing the digital contents has opened new gates to evaluate their institutional representation and their dynamic relationship with the service receivers. I sought to follow events of the NGOs online and participate as an observer. Especially after Covid-19, the NGOs have started using their digital media accounts actively, which helped me to observe their multiple events and interactions.

A significant advantage of digital ethnography methods in comparison to the conventional one is that the observer can trace the previous posts and interactions and can discern the continuities and ruptures in discourses and activities of the NGO. In contrast to the physical participant observation, digital participant observation enables temporal analysis. In other words, it is a practical method to observe social and political transformation of the NGOs throughout the years. In terms of their websites, since websites are not as dynamic as the digital media pages, what I concentrated on these sites are mostly the texts, visual and auditory materials.

My main impetus was how these associations reflect their institutional visions, activities and trajectories on the site. The absence of a standard format of websites gave an important clue about the scale and pace of institutionalization of the NGOs. I furthered my investigations through analyzing their interactions with other NGOs that are interested in immigration and humanitarian aid. This analysis yielded an

effective understanding of relations and complemented the interviews by generating a wide picture of the field. Throughout the study, I also followed the media of Syrian immigrants in Turkey, especially YouTube channels and podcasts. Even though Syrian NGOs are invisible in Turkish media, they are extremely active in Syrian immigrant media. They frequently participate in these channels to introduce themselves, explain their services and communicate with Syrian refugees in Turkey. Lastly, I engaged in textual analysis to deepen my understanding and to provide comprehensive knowledge about my fieldwork through discursive analyses of Syrian NGOs' visual and auditory posts and publications.



2. SYRIAN NGOs AND CIVIL SOCIETY

2.1 Civil Society in Syria

In one of the episodes of a popular Syrian TV show, *Maraya* (mirror), the officials from the Military Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat) of the Syrian government were able to follow every step of a suspect, even his dreams. This satirical show reflected the inner fears of the Syrians, since, until now, they strongly believed in the omnipotent surveillance of the service that is empowered under the Asad regime. November 1970 is a significant date for Syrian history because it marked Hafez Al-Asad's ascension to power through a military coup (Cleveland 2004). Soon, Asad accepted the constitution of 1973, which recognized his sovereignty and expanded his rights. He became president, the general secretary of the Ba'ath party and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces (Lobmeyer 2007). He also eliminated his rivals or silenced their dissident voices. The system that he established was based on the relationships of patronage and nepotism, favoring the loyalists and excluding the rest. Even the elections were designed to keep Asad in power because of the incapability of opposition parties, therefore, the results were always in favor of the Ba'ath party. (Cleveland 2004).

The notable success of Asad's reign was his ability to deprive Syrians of freedom of speech and protest. Even though the number of associations increased in his era, the associations were obliged to perpetuate Asad's propaganda and must adhere to the ideology of the Ba'ath regime (Lobmeyer 2007). Taking part in these associations was a representation of allegiance and a tool to become an "acceptable" citizen. According to the historical accounts, between one third and one fourth of the society were members of these associations (Hinnebusch et al. 1989). Nevertheless, these ratios have not demonstrated development in the understanding of the civil society in Syria. These associations were perceived as hubs for individual network-

ings rather than collective institutional entities. The basic aim of these associations was to promote the national fraternity and raise communitarian sentiments instead of advocating individual freedom and democratization (Lobmeyer 2007). Although in the 1970s the state endorsed the liberal policies (infita), it was limited to the economic sphere and targeted the economic well-being of the peasants and workers (Cleveland, 2004). After a gradual and relative improvement in the national economy, the state faced economic stagnation, followed by the venality of the high officers and impoverishment of the poor (Lobmeyer 2007).

The major socio-economic problem of the Syrian state was its segregated society, through religious sects and economic classes (Viger 2018). Before the reign of Hafez Al-Asad, the Sunni majority represented the urban bourgeoisie class and controlled the economic activities, especially trade (Hinnebusch 1993). The biggest danger for the Ba'ath was the bourgeoisie class that challenged the emerging political dominance of the regime. According to Raymond A. Hinnebusch (1993), the resistance to Asad's authority was based on the traditional urban market and religious institutions. The Sunni doctrine, along with the middle-class sentiments, embodied indignation over the radical, socialist and secular politics of the regime (1993, 250).

On the other hand, Nusayri communities (a sect of Alawiye), lived in rural areas and were distant from the financial and political centers (Cleveland 2004). In order to break the power of the Syrian urban class, Hafez Al-Asad, who was also a Nusayri, empowered Alawi communities and pulled them to the center (Hinnebusch, 1993). Soon, the Asad regime was perceived by the majority of the middle-class as a corrupted administration because of his overuse of Nusayri ties and discriminatory practices in terms of the bureaucratic recruitment (Hinnebusch 1993, 255). Nevertheless, Asad skillfully took advantage of the sectarian conflict to avert a collective uprising against his regime. Particularly in the late 70s, the Asad regime fortified its power through Alawi bureaucrats and Damascene merchants, who pledged loyalty to the regime (Hinnebusch 1993, 254).

Although the regime tried different methods to strengthen its position through semi-liberalization policies and moderate relationships with the merchant class, the early years of the 1980s revealed a dreadful face of the regime. There was a constant tension between the regime and political Islamists, which was mostly represented by the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria (Cleveland 2004). Muslim brothers embraced the doctrines of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and mobilized rapidly in mosques and traditional market spaces (suq) in order to challenge the state power. Their organizational scales and skills caught the regime's eye and made it take harsh measures against the Muslim Brothers (Hinnebusch 1993).

In 1980, the regime's violent attacks on the center of the movement, the city of Hama, resulted in a massacre- between 25000 and 40000 people were dead- and silence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria (Lefèvre 2013). The attack was the result of the conflicting ideologies between the Asad regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. The upshot of the 1980 massacre is significant because it has a huge impact on memories of the research participants. Since most of them are pious Muslims, even if they do not have organic links with Muslim Brotherhood, they considered the event as the end of religious and social gatherings. The police officers often reprimanded different forms of gatherings due to the possibility of dissenting activities. One anecdote from Nebil is noteworthy to understand the regime's perspective:

“A couple of months ago, a Syrian doctor told me an interesting story. He told me: ‘...when we were students in the University of Damascus, our professor taught us how to measure blood pressure and then sent us to a nearby district to put our knowledge into practice. My friends and I visited several houses and asked the residents whether we could measure their blood pressure or not. Suddenly, we saw a police car approaching. After they asked the reason of our visits, they warned us and prevented our training’. I guess this is a good summary of social gatherings in Syria.”

After the event, the state controlled every social action, censured the press and suppressed the religious associations and syndicates. The notion of civil society was discharged because the state emptied the notion of ‘society’ and penetrated into every aspect of the social life (Rabo 2005). Although mosques (masjids) also lost their power in the public arena, they remained as a significant source of socialization and resistance. In fact, some of the participants recognized them as a prototype of civil society in Syria. One of the participants, Khalid, said:

“Masjids were important for us. There were some meetings inside the masjid, where we were able to communicate with the younger generation. It was an important experience for me.”

The massacre is important to understand the patterns of Syrian immigration to Turkey, as well. After the event, many Syrians emigrated from Syria due to the state oppression. Some of the participants of this research also emigrated from Syria after 1980 and settled in Turkey because of its proximity and cultural similarity. In fact, they have influenced the contemporary Syrian NGOs and facilitated the process of NGO establishments.

In spite of horrific memories of the past, the reign of Bashar Al-Asad began with a moderate understanding of governance and signs of liberalization. Unlike his father, he studied in the west and had a more liberal perspective for Syria (Sarı 2011). He accelerated the liberalization process in Syria and had better relationships with the bourgeoisie class of Syria (Sarı 2011, 55). Nevertheless, economic liberalization did not overlap with social and political liberalization. Bashar Al-Asad constantly emphasized the uniqueness of the Syrian state through its own perspective of democracy and state, pointing out the continuity of his father's strategy of governance (Atlıoğlu 2007). Although he pioneered the establishment of different civil society organizations, they were mostly pertaining to rural development and agriculture. Similar to his father's, his reign limited the activities of NGOs concerning civil rights and individual freedom (Sarı, 2011). Until 2011, civil society was restricted to economic cooperation instead of political activism (Atlıoğlu 2007).

Syria's state-society relations have always been in a struggle. Civil society organizations have been under the severe control of the state (Ibrahim 1997). For this reason, the participants' main claim is the lack of civil society in Syria. For instance, Nebil stated as following:

“Especially after 1954, remnants of the Ottoman waqfs were closed and this left no room for civil society, it decreased the trust for a civil society. Generally, there are three options: Strong state, strong civil society; strong state, weak civil society; weak state, weak civil society. Unfortunately we had neither state nor society. This meant the eradication of civil society... In the 1980s there were few attempts to establish small-scale associations but the state did not allow it. If you would conduct this interview in Syria, you could be interrogated by a Muhabarat official.”

Over and above, Najib and Reda think the lack of civil society and unequal opportunities as the main trigger of the Syrian war:

“Unfortunately in Syria there was no civil society because the hand of the state was over everything. The uprising and the war started because of it. People did not go out on the street to fight their state, but they went for freedom, for democracy and in return they only got bullets... We are trying to elevate the concept of civil society. If we can go back to our country we will bring this culture with us too.”

“Most of the Syrians who immigrated to Turkey had a satisfactory life.

They did not need many things to sustain a living. I mean, life in Syria was comfortable and cheap and Turkey is much more expensive than Syria. Hence, we cannot talk about economic motivation here because there was no problem of economic sustainability. The Syrian revolution was not based on an economic revolution. There was corruption, it is true, but the main reason was the problem of freedom. People needed freedom.”

The ideal of freedom has been significant for the participants and the main motivation in aspiring to form their own civil society organizations. Whereas they describe their past in Syria as a dark period due to the high state control, they are hopeful for future of their community.

It is wrong to make a clear-cut distinction between pre-2011 and post-2011 because there were different resistant movements and spaces such as masjids (Brownlee 2015). What changed after 2011 is that collective action prevailed and enabled a larger-scale of politicization in Syria. The outbreak of the revolution brought about the notion of mass uprising and different forms of resistance and activism (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2013). For instance, although most of the participants never engaged in civil resistance movements before, they actively participated in the rallies and mobilized their economic and social resources to topple the Asad regime. The important part of this research is that none of the participants engaged in civil society organizations before 2011. For this reason, their experiences of carrying out the NGO practices in Turkey have a significant impact on the crux of this research.

2.2 Overview of Syrian NGOs in Turkey

To begin with, most of the Syrian NGOs are located in Fatih district. The founders perceive Fatih as a hub for Syrian immigrants and a place that reminds them of Syria. According to Majid:

“Although Fatih can be too crowded, I think it protects our culture. The restaurants, the shops... all remind me of Syrian heritage.”

Since the participants of this research are pious Syrian immigrants, their main preference has been the conservative districts, such as Fatih, Üsküdar and Başakşehir,

where the fieldwork was done. While some NGOs have rented small flats for their activities, some of them have rented the whole building. In this point, it is significant to distinguish between an association and a foundation. Although the two are assumed as civil society organizations that provide services, their legal definitions are different. Whereas an association (*dernek*) can be founded by at least 7 persons, a foundation (*vakıf*) must depend on property held on trust (Hersant and Toumarkine 2005). Establishing a foundation clings heavily to the economic resources of its founders. For this reason, it is more difficult to form a foundation but it has more benefits in terms of capacity and scope (Hersant and Toumarkine 2005,10).

Only one of the participants was a member of a Syrian foundation, so this research relies dominantly on the Syrian associations rather than foundations. The difference between capacities of the foundation and the associations in the research is discernible through physical and digital observations. For instance, the foundation, which provides services in the field of education, has the necessary classrooms for supporting courses and exam preparations, meeting rooms and dorms for these students. It also awards scholarships annually, especially to Syrian high school students in order to complete their education and pursue a career. On the other hand, the picture changes when small-scale associations are examined. For instance, one of the small-scale NGOs, which is in the healthcare field, transformed a small workplace into an association and divided the inner space into cramped rooms to take care of the service receivers.

Although the foundation and other large-scale associations have many opportunities, they cannot escape the regulations that are imposed by the government. For instance, during the lockdown period, while the large-scale associations postponed their activities; the small-scale associations continued with their activities and did not adhere to the rules of physical distance within their associations. One possible explanation is that the large-scale NGOs mostly have formal relations with ministries and municipalities that distinguish their position from the rest of the associations. The formal relationship with these institutions has also expanded the gap between large-scale and small-scale NGOs in terms of service provision. Reda from a small-scale NGO stated as follows:

“We had some medical drugs and we wanted to give them for free or a center to distribute them, in the Syrian-Turkish border. Unfortunately some problems occurred there. We had to do it with a larger NGO and with more people. So we faced setbacks and difficulties. It would be a good opportunity because it was a great service for people there and we wanted to serve it for free and in large quantities. These kinds of prob-

lems make service provision harder for small-scale associations. Due to this, large-scale associations seem to work harder and they become dominant and they also receive more donations. When funders plan a new project they immediately communicate with the large-scale associations, therefore, they receive a huge amount of funding opportunity, they become bigger and we become smaller. It is wrong, small-scale NGOs must also receive a huge amount of funding.”

In spite of the advantages and disadvantages of these NGOs, it must be noted that Syrian NGOs, either large-scale or small-scale, are in progress. In other words, they have lacked formalization in the process of organization. Even in the more formal NGOs, there are deficiencies in providing certain information for receivers. The comment boxes of the NGOs are always full of basic questions that are unanswered. In a similar vein, the boundary between institutional and personal identities has been blurred in the digital media. Especially in small-scale NGOs, while one post might announce a new event, the consecutive one might express a political stance. Additionally, the language also differs according to the posts. An Arabic post might be followed by an irrelevant Turkish post. Not only digitally, but also physically these NGOs need more organizational tools to provide their services. For instance, in one of my visits to an NGO, which provides services to Syrian female refugees, I saw a young girl who was sitting in the room of the administrator. After a short conversation, she told me that she had no place to live in Istanbul and she would stay in the administrator’s house until finding a place. Apparently, the administrator could not find a place for her to stay and they lacked the necessary sources to provide shelter for her or any other female refugee.

During the interviews, the participants were reluctant to talk about their financial sources. In general, however, their fundings can be divided into two parts: international and national. In terms of international funding, these NGOs receive funds mostly from the Gulf states, such as Qatar, or from Syrian NGOs that operate in the US or European countries, such as Sweden or Germany. On the other hand, national donations are received mostly by large-scale Turkish NGOs or official institutions, such as the Red Crescent.

2.3 Missions of the NGOs

Since Syrian refugees have escaped from a war, the preliminary task of NGOs has been providing the basic services to refugees. For this reason, most of the NGOs in the research serve in humanitarian aid as a subsidiary role. Especially NGOs, which were established in the early years of immigration, targeted the field of humanitarian aid. NGOs, which were established in 2012, mostly functioned in cross-border humanitarian activities. They distributed clothes and food in Gaziantep or opened education centers in Kilis for Syrian children. Nevertheless, NGOs that were established after 2015 have not targeted cross-border humanitarian aid in the first place. They mostly focused on urban areas where Syrians live or work. After 2015, NGOs started to delve into other fields such as education, healthcare and advocacy and specialized in these fields. The earlier Syrian NGOs were established by Syrians who have been in Turkey since 1980. These Syrian immigrants have played an active role in the process of NGO establishments, service provision and formation of official connections.

Although the NGOs serve in different fields and differ in terms of scale and scope, they all consider education as a significant component of their services. Along with their particular services, the NGOs also try to educate the refugees in certain topics. While the NGO of healthcare explains the structure of the Turkish healthcare system and its subdivisions, the NGO of psychological aid provides basic courses for psychological well-being for refugees. Additionally, since they have been unanimous about the legal problems faced by Syrian refugees, they regularly explain the state regulations and update legal information for refugees. Understanding and explaining the regulations of the Turkish state toward refugees have been the common mission of the Syrian NGOs, distinguishing them from the rest of the NGOs in Turkey. Nevertheless, particularly in the early years, the NGOs themselves could not understand the legal codes and regulations due to the language barrier. For instance, many associations paid high penalties because they could not follow the regulations concerning Turkish associations.

Even though the NGOs have learned how to deal with their own legal problems, they have continued to struggle over the legal ambiguities in the conditions of refugees, since the legal problems have also influenced the extent of the services. Nebil explained the situation as follows:

“The legal realm is problematic in Turkey. For example today we are

talking about Syrian refugees, but when we ask what are the basic rights of these refugees in Turkey, we receive a dark answer. Refugees in Turkey are not accepted as legal refugees. Hence, they don't have the similar rights of refugees in other countries. They are under temporary protection but we have no idea about the rules and responsibilities of this status. The status of temporary protection is under the control of the Turkish president and he can change it whenever he wants. This status is not an accurate status, for instance, we cannot say that after 10 years you can be a Turkish citizen. We have no idea about the future. There is a complete inaccuracy in terms of the rights and responsibilities."

Along with tackling legal uncertainties, Syrian NGOs also aim to protect Syrian identity through its language. Although in the first years of the immigration they put maximum effort into teaching Turkish language, after the closing of private Arabic schools, they began teaching Arabic to the younger generation. Approximately, every participant expressed the importance of Arabic to protect their Syrianness. Reda stated as follows:

"Today students know how to speak Turkish but they forgot Arabic. What will happen if peace comes and they go to their country? What will they do, the children who cannot speak Arabic? How will they use the language? It is a problem and we should admit that there are problems in terms of education here."

Even though the NGOs serve in different fields, they all have a program for Arabic courses and they encourage the young Syrians to attend. However, NGOs are also keen on teaching Turkish language to facilitate the process of belonging. They consider the language barrier between Turks and Syrians as the major source of tension and they strive to solve it through courses about Turkish language and providing some tips about appropriate behaviors in Turkey. As Majid expressed:

"We learn many things here. For instance, talking loudly on a bus is not a rude thing for Syrians. So, we teach them and tell them that this is inappropriate and then they avoid it. There are situations that cause problems in the adaptation process but this is not because Syrians are rude, only because they do not know the appropriate behaviors for Turkey and we should teach them."

2.4 The Syrian NGOs' Perception of Civil Society

Although civil society is associated with active citizenship and voluntary participation in general terms, its local meanings and roles change contextually (Helliker 2012). It must be noted that the postwar conditions have shaped the perceptions and practices of Syrian NGOs in Turkey. For this reason, their perspectives on civil society mostly include volunteerism and service provision. They view civil society as an opportunity to serve people either economically or socially. The concept of service (*khidmet/hizmet*) was uttered by the service providers frequently to define their own understandings of civil society. According to the participants, civil society is a realm of sacrifice and a duty that must be overcome by people who have the ability to do it. Although they agree on the voluntaristic side of civil society, most of them perceive working in NGOs as a responsibility. For instance, Nebil considers civil society as follows:

“Every person has his/her own personal responsibilities wherever he is. Besides, he also has social responsibilities. We can call it *zakat*. For example, *zakat* of knowledge or *zakat* of experience. Why should we be active in these NGOs? Because they are a vehicle and the most important thing is to transmit your knowledge to different individuals. I can be in this NGO one day and in another one tomorrow. Therefore, the important point is that the person must know his duty and how to perform it for society. Although there are other realms to help people, NGOs remain the most important place for service provision.”

The concept of responsibility has a salient role to shed more light on the perceptions of the participants because it outweighs the voluntaristic side of civil society. The conditions of mass immigration and inefficacy of the Turkish state concerning the Syrian refugees, especially in the early years of immigration, have compelled the participants to be part of the NGO activities in order to help and support the refugees. The sense of responsibility is also supported by religious discourses, such as *zakat*.

Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam, which prescribes helping the needy through money or property, under the conditions of Islamic law. The extended version of *zakat* also implies helping the people through different assets other than economic ones, such as transmitting knowledge or experience (May 2013). Several participants emphasized the importance of civil society by referring to religious discourses. Apart from their piety, one important reason is that their civil society experiences were

confined in masjids and stimulated by religious texts and narratives in Syria. As I mentioned above, masjids in Syria were the centers of collective activities and services. Obviously, religious doctrines have been a strong incentive to conceptualize their contemporary experiences of civil society.

On the other hand, the participants also consider civil society as a field of learning and opportunity to build an understanding of civil society among Syrians. Due to the relative absence of Syrian civil society, they interpret their experiences in Turkey as opportunities to develop new skills and networks. Several participants, such as Najib described civil society as a tradition that should be grasped by Syrians, as well:

“There were no institutions in Turkey, which can represent us, represent Syrians. We are trying to be the voice of Syrian refugees. By doing this, our aim is to elevate the concept of civil society among Syrians who have no idea about it. If we can go back to our country, we will maintain this culture of civil society.”

The weakness of civil society in Syria also triggered the enthusiasm among Syrians, especially in the early years of Syrian immigration. According to the participants, many NGOs were established quickly, thanks to the legal code of NGOs in Turkey, and individuals also participated in different activities and programs of Syrian NGOs. They considered it as an opportunity for solidarity and collaboration among Syrians. Nevertheless, due to the high numbers of needy refugees and lack of necessary fundings, many NGOs closed their doors and ceased their activities. The participants of this research, however, insist on the necessity of NGOs not only for needy refugees, but also to promote the values of civil society and collective action. Despite their lack of experience in the field of civil society, they claim that they have provided many services. According to Reda and Nabil:

“I should express that Syrian associations have played a significant role, both for Syria and Turkey. They have done it despite many problems and obstacles. The reason is that Syrian community was deprived of civil society and when they realized this realm is available here, they have done their best and have provided solid services, as if they had one hundred years of experience.”

“NGOs are not merely about services. For instance we do not aim to provide our services to one hundred people. Our purpose is to establish

a culture. We want to establish the belief that we can work together. Although we are from different occupations and regions here, we have one purpose: creating a culture. After the war we strongly felt the absence of civil society culture and it caused difficulties for us.”

Although they did not elaborate more on what they meant by the culture of civil society, they emphasized the values of collective action and voluntary participation for the well-being of society. Since none of the participants had experience of civil society in Syria, they have spent a lot of time learning the basics of NGOs, such as designing projects, assigning volunteers and controlling the budgets. Nabil stated the following:

“We consulted different groups and organizations about systematizing our NGO services and activities, including Turks. Since Syrians have no experience in this field, we had to learn how to produce new projects. We took courses about project designing for five months. We learned the basic rules of it. We also analyzed the structures of several American, Arabic and Turkish NGOs and we learned how to plan our own agenda.”

Syrian NGOs grasped different technical resources and knowledge to produce their own social projects. These knowledge also contributed to their own perception of know-how of civil society. According to Omar:

“We benefited a lot from the experiences of Turkey and other international organizations in our progress. They have provided considerable contributions for our understanding of civil society. Syrian NGOs have developed through the methods of Turkish and international organizations. For instance, several Syrian NGOs are partly funded by international organizations; and, demands and procedures of those organizations differ from the rest because their procedures are longer and more complex. These NGOs learned a lot from them.”

While traditional understanding of civil society has concentrated on voluntary participation as much as individual rights and democratization, members of Syrian NGOs described civil society mostly as service provision (Chambers, Kymlicka et al. 2002). The basic reason for it is the postwar conditions of the refugees in Turkey and their urgent need for services. Another reason is the civil society environment wherein they provide their services. Syrian NGOs have strong ties with Turkish faith-based NGOs, which represent Islamic approach to welfare. Instead of counter-

balancing state power, they mostly cooperate with it and mostly focus on charitable giving as a method of religious engineering (Isik 2021). Charitable activities appear as the dominant scope of these faith-based organizations. Their understanding of community sharing and charity have also influenced Syrian NGOs' perspective of civil society. During the interviews they associated civil society with waqf tradition, elaborating on the religious perspective of civil society rather than the perspective of democratization. Nevertheless, Syrian NGOs cannot be understood merely as hubs of humanitarian aid and charity activities, as the concept of service provision has wider meanings for the participants. Service provision has not entailed only humanitarian support for Syrian NGOs, but also providing legal assistance, protecting Syrian culture and communication with the state for certain problems of Syrian refugees in Istanbul. The important part is that their experience of civil society in Turkey enables them to envision a future in Syria where they want to erect the culture of civil society.

2.5 Hierarchies within the Syrian NGOs

Civil society has been associated with democracy and democratization, promoting certain values of basic human rights and the notion of equality (Gellner 1994; Walzer 2002). Although the concept of equality is as ambiguous as the concept of civil society, multiple scholars entailed that having similar rights and opportunities to access social, economic and political resources can be assumed as basic tenets of equality in civil society. Civil society organizations are also considered as important spaces to learn and practice equality (Habermas 1996).

On the other hand, the Syrian NGOs represent a hierarchical structure when it is compared to traditional understanding of civil society. The primary reason for it is the difference among their legal status in Turkey. For instance, most of the founders or service providers have already obtained Turkish citizenship. The difference in legal status is a significant factor that thickens the boundaries between the service providers and receivers, signifying a legal gap between these groups. Due to the service receivers' ambiguous legal condition, they heavily depend on instructions of service providers in receiving aid or finding jobs.

Moreover, since the Syrian NGOs dominantly have relied on humanitarian aid and the participants unanimously associated civil society with providing service and ed-

educating Syrian refugees in different fields, they naturally have maintained a vertical relationship with their service receivers. During my participant observations, I noticed that most of the visitors were service receivers. Additionally, most of the conversations between service providers and receivers were contingent to the process of service provision. In fact, digital media pages are full of pleas for economic and educational support. Particularly during the Covid-19 lockdowns, the bond between service providers and receivers has been loosened. When I asked one of the participants about service receivers, he answered that they mostly engaged in digital communication with them and did not get to know them well.

The boundary between service providers and receivers also produces the perception of ‘civilized us’ and ‘uncivilized them’. Service providers mostly represent the educators who teach the service receivers how to survive in Istanbul. On several occasions, I heard different accusations against ‘uncivilized Syrians’. For instance, Najib criticized the Syrian refugees who do not obey the registration law and stay in a different province from his or her registered province. Some of the participants also criticized Syrian refugees due to their disinclination to integrate ‘properly’ into Turkish society. They described that one of their missions is to educate Syrians who cannot properly adapt to Turkish society. According to Majid:

“Unfortunately we do not know the blue-collar Syrian workers in Turkey and we cannot reach them entirely. Although we educate the younger generation and teach them, we cannot reach the Syrian workers. Unfortunately, Turkish people only see these workers and get an overall idea about Syrians.”

On the other hand, some NGOs try to break the boundaries between service providers and receivers through organizing reciprocal activities. According to Hamid:

“We want to limit the number of our participants within the NGO because we want to do activities together. We want the refugees to come to our place and drink tea and have conversations together. We want to arrange cinema days to discuss certain movies together.”

It is clear that breaking boundaries is restricted to arranging activities instead of rethinking and changing the structural boundaries between service providers and receivers.

Sally Kohn (2011) has classified the concept of equality to two categories: liberal and

radical equality. Whereas liberal equality is attributed to works of liberal egalitarian scholars, radical equality might be considered as a critique of liberal equality. Liberal equality is basically a descendant of Neo-Tocquevillian liberal political thought that excludes the factors of class, race and gender in analyzing the concept of equality (2011, 233). On the contrary, radical equality recognizes the structural inequalities and intends to destroy any form of inequality that hinders the aim of universal equality (2011, 234). Despite shortcomings and complexities of these approaches, the literature of civil society has had constant debates over twists and turns of equality within civil society, mostly advocating the pillars of radical equality as a solution (Cohen, Arato, and Cohen 1992).

Although reaching complete equality is a utopian project, scholars mostly agree that the ultimate purpose of civil society is to fight against all forms of political, economic and social inequality (Kohn 2011). Nevertheless, the civil society associations might also be a reproductive space of inequality, as well. As Iris Marion Young (2020) has posited, civil society or public space cannot be understood only in terms of negotiating or contending identities, but also as convoluted relations and hierarchies. With respect to this, Syrian NGOs also contain their own complex interactions and hierarchies. In fact, Syrian NGOs have represented a heterogenous and more intricate set of relations among Syrian refugees.

2.6 Rediscovering Syrians and Syrianness: Fragmented Identities

Collective action has been acknowledged as an indispensable factor of civil society, which is what the Syrians also lack the most in Syria (Edwards 2011). Engaging in civil society in Turkey has supplied an opportunity to learn how to act collectively with their Syrian brothers and sisters. Almost every participant found this opportunity as a first step to reconstruct the delayed Syrian fraternity. Establishing the NGOs and working collectively have not only strengthened the bonds among Syrians in Turkey, but these have also enabled Syrians to interact with people from other countries, such as the US, Sweden or Germany. They have strong ties with organizations that were established in these countries and they have reciprocal partnerships in different projects. According to Nebil:

“In Syria, the mentality of *Muhabarat* was dominant. This mentality prescribed that every individual must work alone, must stay alone. This

decreased the level of trust among Syrians. The capacity of collaboration among Syrians decreased at serious levels. In Syria, it is commonly said that: ‘if three persons are sitting together one of them must be from Muhabarat.’ This situation prevented us from acting collectively.”

The desiccated civil society in Syria has prompted an enthusiasm to participate in Syrian NGOs in Istanbul and join networks and solidarity groups that are formed by Syrians. On the other hand, the ardent intentions of taking part in these NGOs or in any kind of collective action cannot be construed as flawless in terms of their interactions. For instance, some NGOs try to dominate other smaller NGOs and create a hegemony over them. Additionally, sometimes, their ideological positions might cause divisions among them. Besides, interestingly, some of the Syrian service receivers cannot trust the NGOs when they do not include Turkish members. It might be because of the distrust that is inherited from the fear of Muhabarat. For example, Hamid stated as following:

“I think that Syrian receivers find NGOs that contain Turkish members more reliable than NGOs that only contain Syrian members. Many Syrians claim that NGOs that are solely led by Syrians might steal their money and run off. For instance when I asked Syrians about our association, they said that ‘we find your association stronger than others because there are Turks around.’”

Another significant point is that these NGOs also play a significant role as spaces for reconstructing a Syrian identity. The collective action and their current conditions in Turkey have paved the way to reconsidering Syrianness. The more Turkish digital media and political parties attack Syrian refugees, the more they emphasize the industrious Syrians and tell Syrians’ success stories. In a similar vein, the way they explained their mission as a civil society organization is changing the image of “Syrian beggars” to a decent and honorable image of Syrians.

Although scholars analyzed refugee-led NGOs as facilitators of belonging to Turkish society (Sunata and Tosun 2019), these NGOs also function as agents of reviving Syrian identity. They construct their own national narrative to describe Syrian identity. For instance, Nebil stated as following:

“Syria is the first place where people participated in trade. We can trace it back to Phoenicians. Our collective memory shows that we have a friendly relationship with civilization. When you walk through the streets of Damascus, you realize the heritage of Romans or Umayyads.

All of these remnants shape our collective memory. It gives energy to Syrian people. When I look at the US, I see that the most successful doctors are Syrians. We as Syrians have the potential but unfortunately the political structure in Syria prevented this.”

This description of Syrianness also provides two levels of distancing. At first, it makes a distinction between the rich history of Syria and the image of rural and underdeveloped Syrian refugees. Secondly, it distances Syrians from the ethnic discriminatory discourse in Turkey. There has been an ongoing conflict between Turkishness and Arabness in the public discourse of Turkey. This collision stemmed from the national historical narrative of the Turkish republic, depicting Arabs as betrayers of the Ottoman state and as a backward community (Terzioğlu 2018). The emphasis on Syrianness paves the way to construction of contrast between Arabness and Syrianness.

In contrast to the mainstream image of Syrian refugees as indolent people, they underscore the industriousness of Syrian refugees not only in Turkey, but also in different regions of the world. That is, hardworking Syrians are necessary to rebuild Syria and develop it politically and economically. Majid stated as following:

“Every individual loves his or her homeland and wants to return some day. Even if you are in Turkey, as a Syrian you should think of Syria, you should serve your country.”

As regards, Syrian-led NGOs are significant spaces for reconstruction of Syrian history and identity to cement solidarity among Syrians and to own a similar perspective of the future. Nevertheless, here, the question of “which Syrianness?” arises as a significant tool of distinction to understand the categories of identification. In fact, their descriptions of collective identity and Syrianness differ in different aspects. While the participants mostly consider Sunni Islamic identity as the core of their perception of Syrianness, they also perceive pre-Islamic period as a significant symbol of their collective past. On the one hand, they referred to Islamic discourses and narratives as glues of their social existence. For instance, Mahmood and Majid consider The Syrian Islamic Council, which was established by religious Syrian intellectuals in 2014 in Istanbul, as a potential representative of Syrian refugees. On the other hand, they used pre-Islamic images frequently to support the idea of hardworking Syrians. In other words, they have contesting views and narratives of Syrianness, which represent their heterogeneity and fluent identifications. As a result, while these NGOs pave the way to collective identification of Syrianness, they

also become a significant platform to observe the boundaries and identity categorizations among Syrian refugees.



3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SYRIAN NGOs AND TURKISH STATE

3.1 Laws and Regulations Concerning Syrian Refugees in Turkey

Regarding Syrian immigration in Turkey, a detailed periodization is a must to understand the changing state discourses and policies toward the Syrian immigrants. The periodization of Syrian immigration in Turkey can be divided into three phases. At the first phase, Syrian immigrants were defined as guests and until 2013, the state could not develop sufficient institutions for immigrant governance (Demirel 2015). Especially in the early days of the immigration, the government deployed a religious discourse to define the new relationship between the host and immigrant communities, using the concepts of *muhacir* and *ansar*. This discourse was ascribed to early Islamic history, when Muslims from Mecca (*muhacir*) immigrated to Medina and were hosted by Muslims of Medina (*ansar*). With respect to this historical anecdote, the government adopted this analogy to remind the religious commonality between Turks and Syrians and to create a bond between immigrants and local residents on the basis of Islamic premise (Polat 2018).

Despite these transient attempts, the number of Syrian immigrants rose and their ambiguous legal status remained the same. In 2013, the law on Foreigners and International Protection was passed in order to formalize the legal aspects of Syrian immigration. This law also enabled the formation of the National Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) under the ministry of the interior. This step has been important to control the Syrian immigrants: their mobility regime, socio-legal and socio-economic conditions (İçduygu and Şimşek 2016).

The second phase was about the consolidation of state control. According to Seçil Dağtaş (2017), after 2014, with the help of “The Temporary Protection Regula-

tion”, the state took the main control of the immigrant governance and took new steps in providing a temporary legal right for their status. The status of Temporary Protection has entailed “status on a group basis, Syrian nationals were granted the right to legal stay, protection from refoulement, and access to basic humanitarian services, yet were discouraged from making individual applications for international protection through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).” (Dağtaş 2017, 662). The status of Syrian immigrants was converted from guests (misafir) to temporarily protected immigrants, under the control of the Turkish state. In this process, Turkey also diminished the role of UNHCR to gain the ultimate power in deciding the legal status of Syrian immigrants (Dağtaş 2017). This new status has brought about an ambivalent understanding of Syrian refugees’ legal rights. Although the state granted some of the citizen rights, such as access to education, healthcare and exemption from residence permit (Decision number: 2016/29656), Syrian refugees’ long term residency has remained in liminal position and caused a state of precarity (Akçapar and Şimşek 2018).

The year of 2016 might be a turning point for this periodization. The EU-Turkey deal has changed the path of immigration governance in Turkey. According to the deal, the European Union guaranteed granting 6 billion Euros to prevent the irregular immigrant flow from Turkey to its territory. In other words, the deal has aimed to deter the refugees from immigrating to European countries (Baban et al. 2017). It has transformed the perspective of the state toward immigration management and has impelled it to increase control over the service provision to benefit from the funding (Nimer 2020). With respect to the more systematic approach after the deal, the state also closed the temporary education centers for Syrian children and rendered the Ministry of Education as the main coordinator of the refugee education; it has regulated the healthcare services for refugees and recruited Syrian healthcare employees (Özçürümez and İçduygu 2020). The state has also used the rhetoric of integration and harmonization, especially at the bureaucratic level. As Saim Özcürümez and Ahmet İçduygu (2020) stated, especially after 2016, the initial foundations of the integration program (Uyum Programları) began under the control of the National Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM).

Especially after 2018, the officials have understood that a significant proportion of Syrian immigrants will stay in Turkey, despite the possibility of peace in Syria. This perception has increased the discourse of harmonization; however, the integration programme has not yet sufficiently developed (Özçürümez and İçduygu 2020). On the one hand, the state has recognized the permanent existence of Syrians in Turkey and followed steps to incorporate them into the host society. On the other hand, it has tightened its grip on refugees and limited their space (Erdoğan 2019) . In

2019 some reports claimed that after a wide range of identity checks, the government officials repatriated several Syrian refugees to Idlib (war region). Although the government officials rebuffed these allegations, findings of different NGOs and media agencies corroborated the reports (Leghtas 2019). In the same year, the state authorities published a regulation, which decreed relocation of refugees according to their place of registration. According to this order, refugees who work in Istanbul but registered in a different city must reside and work in the registered city (Istanbul Governor's Office 2019-44).

The perception of Turkish citizens toward refugees has also changed through the years. Whereas in 2016, 72 percent of Turkish citizens did not perceive Syrian refugees as a serious problem, in the 2018 survey, 80 percent of the citizens supported refugees' return to their homeland (Gibárti 2021). The economic downfall of Turkey might be assumed as a strong motive behind the survey of 2018. Syrian refugees have appeared as a scapegoat of the economic problems and were considered as a burden for the Turkish domestic economy (Karasapan 2019).

The state discourses have also changed from positive undertones to more ambivalent one. On the one hand, the state has executed the naturalization process for Syrians. On the other hand, the president delivered questionable speeches. For example, on 8 February 2019, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said: "We would like brotherly refugees to return to their home land. We are not expected to keep 3.5 million here forever. They already intend to return to their land. Some of them can stay here, it is a different case..." (Erdoğan 2019, 22). In 2020, Turkish state opened its western borders and challenged the deal between the EU and Turkey. Refugees who aimed to immigrate to Europe were wedged between the borders of Turkey and Greece (Smith 2020). They have been political leverage in the conflict between Turkey and Europe over the international refugee influx. Taking into account the different social and economic difficulties of Covid-19, the conditions of Covid-19 and lockdown have exacerbated Syrian refugees' conditions in Turkey due to the language barrier and uncertain legal and social conditions, producing new forms of vulnerability and precarity.

3.2 Learning and Teaching about Turkey

Since the early years of the Syrian immigration, Syrian NGOs have been significant spaces of learning. Beside their learning process of the concept of civil society itself, they have had to learn the basic mechanisms of Turkish civil society along with the state apparatus. Although in the early years of Syrian immigration Turkish state was caught off guard and could not easily manage the basic social and legal regulations for Syrian refugees, after the establishment of DGMM in 2013, the state began to take control over the refugee crisis in Turkey (Erdoğan 2019). Particularly after 2016, one can notice more centralized governance of Turkey in refugee issues at an institutional level, especially in the institutions of healthcare and education (Özçürümez and İçduygu 2020). The significant part is that these developments have a considerable impact on Syrian NGOs, as well. Since Syrian NGOs play a crucial role in studying the Turkish regulations and transmitting them to refugees, their perceptions and experiences have shaped their own interpretations of Turkish state and civil society.

To start with the participants' perception of civil society in Turkey, all of them consider Turkish civil society as a productive field for social and political debates. Salwa, Mahmood and Najib's statements are significant examples of it:

“In Turkey, civil society is developed because people have freedom here, political freedom, ideological freedom.”

“In Turkey, the state has facilitated everything for good civil society. When I was in Jordan, it was impossible to establish an association, it was unofficial.”

“In Turkey, people have a thousand different associations and they can have their own voices.”

These statements clearly demonstrate that participants, despite the different social and legal problems they have faced, perceive Turkish civil society as a field of opportunity for Syrian refugees to embody their own voices. The most important reason for it is that establishing an NGO is perceived a simple process in Turkey. For instance, Mahmood who immigrated to Turkey from Jordan praised the convenience

of establishing an NGO in Turkey, adding that in Jordan Syrians could not establish an NGO.

Likewise, they mostly have a positive attitude toward the Turkish state and almost every participant declared their gratitude for the Turkish state and society's hospitality. They emphasized the enduring improvement of the Turkish state's policies toward Syrian refugees. Some of the participants, such as Usama, described Turkey as a fruitful country and evaluated the immigration governance of Turkey positively:

“We have a good relationship with Turkey. This country is full of diversity and the state has always been benevolent. We do not experience any problems here in Turkey. We only feel gratitude.”

The striking point is that large-scale NGOs mostly have better relations with the Turkish state in comparison to small-scale NGOs. Since large-scale NGOs have more capacity to access resources, they can engage in different projects with different ministries or institutions of the Turkish republic, such as the Ministry of Youth or the Red Crescent. Nevertheless, having good relations did not prevent some large-scale NGOs from presenting a critical picture of the Turkish state's discourses and regulations about Syrian refugees. A quotation from Omar, a member of a large-scale NGO, might give more clues about the critical picture:

“We have to thank Turkey a lot but there are also some problems that must be fixed. Unfortunately, some news and media contents are prejudiced against Syrian refugees, they produce much misinformation about Syrian refugees and their economic conditions. For instance, recently I visited a state institution and I saw pamphlets there, which include correct information about Syrian refugees. I told them that we could distribute these pamphlets through our voluntary students. The official told me that we did not prefer this, if a person wonders this information he or she can come and take a pamphlet. However, you should transmit the information, you cannot wait for a person to come and get it. We all agree on the hospitality of the Turkish nation but it is wrong to consider the Turkish state as the sole service provider for Syrians. There are different international organizations that also help economically. Of course, I cannot deny the benevolence of the Turkish state but the wrong information about Syrian refugees deteriorates the relationship between Turks and Syrians.”

Participants who think similar to Omar have experienced competing narratives of gratitude and criticism during the interviews. Whereas they are thankful to the

government, they also realize the discontent of the power relation, which stems from the feeling of gratitude. Gratitude as an emotion implies a hierarchical relationship between the giver and receiver (Wernesjö 2014). In this context, participants as receivers of government's hospitality are also subjects of the power relation between the government and Syrian refugees. Perhaps, because of these challenging emotions during the interview, they were wary of their sentences and they mostly praised the government immediately after criticizing it.

Turkey's changing discourses toward refugees have not only influenced refugees, but also swayed the Turkish people toward ambivalent positions against refugees. The participants were aware of the perceptions and attitudes toward Syrian refugees and some of them criticized the state for it. Samir stated as following:

"I should say that I thoroughly understand the people in Turkey. If I were in their position, I would also be angry. Today, there is a perception that Syrian people do not pay for anything and then a Turkish person asks himself 'Why am I working hard and Syrians do nothing in my country?' The reason for this perception is the speeches of Erdoğan. He constantly talked about services provided to refugees in his campaigns. He actually wanted to address the west but Europe does not listen to Erdoğan, they do not care. Turkish people listen to Erdoğan and then they get the wrong impression about Syrians."

The tone of empathy in Samir's sentences might also be another representation of a hierarchical relationship. In this case, his sentences delineate another power relation: between Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees. Samir's answer indicates that government's benevolence is not enough for Syrian refugees to stabilize their conditions in Turkey. They also need the acceptance and benevolence of Turkish people. Not only in Samir's answers, but also in answers of other participants, the categories of Turkish government and Turkish people appear as distinct categories. According to them, reconciliation between Turkish government and Turkish people about Syrian refugees is a must in order to flourish sense of belonging among Syrian refugees. The government, per se, has not been enough for the participants to ensure their long-term legal and social stability in Turkey. According to Majid:

"We as NGOs must do our best to produce sense of belonging among refugees in Turkey but we do not have the necessary resources for it. Turkish people have the necessary resources, they have the schools and media. Without changing their perceptions it is difficult to change the conditions of Syrian refugees here in Turkey".

An important reason of expecting a "consent" from Turkish people is that the participants are well-aware that their legal conditions in limbo and they depend on short-term governmental decisions. Any change in the government might cause instability for them and result in a bigger social and political problem. For this reason, in the long-run, they consider Turkish people have the most important role for their socio-political and socio-economic conditions. Although the participants are well-aware that "Turkish people" is a generic term, they mostly referred to Turkish people as the majority of Turkish citizens, who reject long stay of Syrians in Turkey (Karasapan 2019).

Besides, one of the missions of Syrian NGOs is to explain the political and social life in Turkey. NGO members figured out that Syrian refugees have a vague idea about the socio-political life in Turkey. For example, Majid mentioned the importance of political concepts in Turkey:

“I feel that as Syrians we started to think of political issues after 2011. For instance, now young men and women should learn new concepts. For instance, they should know the meanings of democracy, liberalism, and secularism. These issues are significant now for the younger generation of refugees.”

NGOs also prepared different seminars to portray a more neutral image of Turkey for refugees since the early years of the immigration. Reda stated as following:

“We always tried to create a bond between Turkey and Syria. We tried to explain the social, economic and political conditions of Turkey in the correct way. When refugees came to Turkey they had either extremely positive or extremely negative views about Turkey. We prepared different workshops for it.”

These answers are extremely important because they delineate that the NGOs does not only provide educational services in their field, but they also feel obliged to explain the political concepts and political conditions in Turkey. Political life in Turkey opens up new conceptual windows for these participants to rethink of the concepts that they did not think in detail before.

Not only the seminars, but also the design of the NGOs reflect a sense of cooperation between Turkey and Syria. Symbols are significant cultural representations and tools of communication (Deringil 1993). Syrian NGOs use symbols to form a bond between Turkish and Syrian societies. For instance, I saw Turkish and Syrian (Syr-

ian revolution flag) flags in every NGO. The walls were full of the pictures of Turkish and Syrian cultural heritage, such as Hagia Sophia or the Mosque of Umayyads. In addition to this, in one of my visits, I entered the room of the founder to carry out an interview, I noticed the enormous coat of arms of the House of Osman. It might be interpreted as a manifestation of a common political and cultural past between Turkish and Syrian societies. In addition to this, it also orients with the government's Neo-Ottomanist perspective in politics, deploying Ottoman heritage and imperial nostalgia to form an interaction with former communities of the Ottoman Empire (Torbakov 2017).

It seems possible that the Syrian NGOs consider forging bonds between Syrians and Turks through affiliation with the government's discourses and practices. The most obvious example of it is their 15 July posts. Most of the NGOs celebrate it every year through sharing a post on their digital pages. The failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016 has turned to a day of commemoration and celebration. The government has constructed the narrative of 15 July by institutional and cultural modifications, especially in the public sphere (Altmordu 2017). It is remarkable that most of the digital media accounts of the NGOs celebrate 15 July but do not commemorate other national days unanimously. It projects that their practice of bonding with Turkish society has been mediated through the government's own ideology. The important part is that Syrian NGOs learn the basic rules of acting in Turkish civil society mostly from Islamic NGOs because of the shared Islamic values with these NGOs. According to Lütfi Sunar (2018), these NGOs act in the field as allies of the state with different forms of cooperation, abandoning the anti-state perceptions. Syrian NGOs have also carried out this tradition by adopting methods of Islamic NGOs in Turkey. Nevertheless, instead of focusing on how the government appears as a central authority in civil society, one must consider this alignment as a significant strategy of these NGOs to create a bond with the government. Since Syrian refugees have legally and socially precarious conditions, these symbols and rituals facilitate the communication process with the state to access the social resources, such as embarking on mutual projects with municipalities, and to keep a positive relationship with the government to endure its hospitality. As a result, it also facilitates the relative stability in conditions of Syrian refugees because these symbols also enable a more friendly and obedient image of Syrian refugees for the Turkish government.

3.3 Religion as a Common Ground: Islamic Brotherhood

Since this study covers the Sunni-oriented Syrian NGOs, their religious sect plays a key role in forming a tie with the Turkish state. Not only their sect, but also their use of religious discourses are significant to examine their own perceptions and practices in civil society. The religious discourses are significant in shaping their own vision of civil society. These NGOs also have entrenched the religious mindset in their service provision process. For example, in one of my visits to an NGO serving in the field of education and culture, I encountered the children who were memorizing the Quran. In another NGO serving in the field of psychological assistance, I realized that they mostly follow the religious interpretation of human psychology and well-being. The participants consider Islam as an integral part of their own culture and they try their best to transmit the religious knowledge to the service receivers.

It is not a coincidence that they also have a satisfactory relationship with religion-based associations in Turkey. They cooperate with them for different projects inside Turkey and on the borders of Syria. Their Sunni background might also have paved the way to access the state officials easier. For instance, some of the NGOs collaborate with different ministries and state organizations for their projects. Since its foundation, Turkey has followed homogenization policies in favor of Turkish Sunni identity. After the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power, Turkey has also become the bastion of Sunnism in the region and represented the championship of Sunni Muslim community (Gümüş and Eroğlu 2015). Notably, the Neo-Ottomanist foreign policies of Turkey has built an image of Sunni fraternity, which also accompanied with religious solidarity with Syrian refugees (Torbakov 2017). In the early years of the immigration, especially, Turkey relied on the “open-door policy” that emanated from the religious sentiments of the government, as well. The state appropriated the religious rhetoric of *ansar* and *muhajir* to reflect its hospitality (Polat 2018).

On the other hand, some of the participants criticized the discourse of *ansar/muhajir*, emphasizing its overly-romanticized connotations. They perceived the religious discourse as a political maneuver rather than a long-term planning of refugee governance. For instance, Nebil stated as following:

“Different discourses are deployed to manage the refugee issue in Turkey, such as the discourse of *ansar* and *muhajir*. Why did the government use these concepts, of course for Turkish public but we all know that the Turkish public is not a unified group of people. For instance, I realized that approximately 90 percent of the class do not go to Friday prayer in my university. When were these concepts used? In the period of the prophet to describe his companions (*sahabe*). So we can never reach that holy level. There are people who even do not know ablution and praying

in Turkey and we cannot use these concepts when we appeal to these people. For example, I cannot use religious discourses for a secular man, it is a meaningless attempt. I cannot tell him 'let's go to jihad'. Even the prophet himself did not use the concepts of *ansar* and *muhajir* until they immigrated to Madina, they were in a different spiritual mode and motivation. . . They also use the concept of misafir (guest) but they do not answer the question of 'until when?' a person can be a guest for 9 years? It is impossible."

Another problem of the religious discourse is to eclipse the basic problems that refugees face in their daily lives. Since Syrian refugees are not recognized as legal refugees in Turkey, NGOs have always grappled with the legal problems. The religious discourse, however, could not solve the legal ambiguities. Majid stated:

"Turkish people always ask us 'why did you leave your country?' We need pages to answer this question. Syrians are perceived as political leverage in Turkey. There is antipathy toward Syrian refugees and the Turkish government. God bless the government! It has big contributions but also... I think this discourse of *ansar*/muhajir is problematic. The best idea is the idea of law. What are the legal rights of refugees? For instance the Republic Party in Turkey does not want the discourse of *ansar*/muhajir, they do not want refugees, either."

Although these participants deployed religious discourses frequently to expose their ideological positions, they did not regard it practical to do so in political and legal spheres. They thought that Syrian refugees need more solid ground to refer to their rights and responsibilities within Turkey. Additionally, the assigned roles of *ansar* and *muhajir* have created a dual misconception. It has overshadowed the state's duty toward refugees by presenting the issue as a temporary host-guest relationship and, simultaneously, has concealed heterogeneous religious tendencies of Turkish society. In fact, the deployed religious discourse has also precluded the transparency between the state and its citizens. By not explicating solid plans about Syrian refugees and assigning new responsibilities, such as being *ansar*, the state has perturbed the citizens to question refugees' existence and duration of stay (Polat 2018).

3.4 Ambivalent State: The Strategies of Governance

Particularly since 2014, Turkish government has tightened its grip on the governance of Syrian refugees. It has developed a more systematic chain of control including different legislations, actors and institutions (Danış and Nazlı 2019; Özçürümez and İçduygu 2020). Nevertheless, acquiring “temporary protection” to refugees has been inadequate to define Syrian refugees’ legal rights comprehensively. That is, “temporary protection” has entailed an ambiguous set of rights that keep refugees in a liminal position and prevent them from long-term decision-making processes (Baban et al. 2017). In this context, Syrian NGOs have a significant part in receiving and voicing problems of Syrian refugees in Turkey. They act as mediators between the Turkish state and Syrian refugees through keeping a permanent interaction with different bureaucratic branches of the state.

The most important fact is that experiences of large-scale NGOs and small-scale NGOs differ from each other in terms of their relationships with the state. Again, since the large-scale NGOs have more capacity to engage in formal relations, they have more regular meetings with the state than small-scale NGOs. They might meet with higher ranking officials of the state, compared with small-scale NGOs. For instance, Omar, who is a member of a large-scale NGO stated as following:

“We have a perfect relationship with the Turkish state because there are always meetings between us and them. They provide us with different suggestions and we make our complaints. There is constant uninterrupted communication. For example, if there are new developments or questions, we immediately meet with them. . . We have a mutual relationship, which makes our interaction permanent.”

On the other hand, members of small-scale NGOs complained about intermittent interactions and evaluated the meetings as not fully efficient to solve the problems of Syrian refugees. For instance Reda and Mahmood stated as following:

“We had several meetings with different state officials and they took good steps in terms of state discourses and regulations. Different meetings happened between Syrian NGOs and the state, at different levels. The state also has interactions with other immigrant associations, such as Yemenis, Egyptians and Afghans. However, there are problems too. For example, I said that there must be an office of communication to discuss further issues about immigrants. This office should also be distant from bureaucratic intricacies. An office where individuals voice their own problems there. I thought that this is a good idea to solve the problems of refugees. I think that the state must facilitate the communication and must include different NGOs.”

“Sometimes the Turkish government takes steps that are not consulted properly. Even if these decisions seem as a source of solution, they cause more problems because the state has not consulted with refugees. There must be a commission for these problems. I admit that the Ministry of Interior has struggled to solve some of the problems but we need more action to solve the problems of communication.”

Despite the difference in experiences of large-scale and small-scale NGOs, they all have had a chance to meet with state officials to discuss the ongoing problems of Syrian refugees, such as work permits, residence permits or citizenship. In fact, not only NGOs have requested these meetings, but the state also has invited them to discuss related issues with these NGOs. These meetings and the whole chain of communication give clues about the state’s changing techniques of dealing with international immigration.

3.4.1 Changing Methods of Governance

External waves of immigration in Turkey have not been as many as the waves since 2011 (Ekşi 2015). Before 2011, Turkey did not provide a systematic plan for immigration governance due to small numbers of external immigrants. In the early years, Turkey accepted ethnically Turkish immigrants from Balkan region (Toumarkine 2000). Turkish ethnicity was the main criterion of acceptance because the Turkish Republic intended to relinquish the multiethnic structure of the Ottoman past for the sake of an ethnically homogeneous society (Dağtaş 2017). For instance, while before 1980 propagating Turkishness and opposing the communist ideology were sufficient for immigrant NGOs to maintain a stable ground, after the 1980s the situation reversed because of the vacillation in immigration governance (Toumarkine 2000).

After 1990 specifically, due to the relatively high numbers of immigrants from Bulgaria and Iraq and changes in foreign policy, Turkey was being reluctant in providing certain legal rights to these new immigrants (Danış and Parla 2009). The uncertainty of procedures, long processes of decision-making and lack of information were notable features of Turkey’s immigration governance of that period (Biehl 2015). According to Kristen Biehl (2015), the definitive mode of governance in that period was “governing through uncertainty”. That is, the state carried out a chaotic way of governance, which confined asylum seeking and demands of refuge among a bureaucratic enigma, ossifying the sense of liminality and causing constant distress among

new immigrants.

On the other hand, after high numbers of newcomers from Syria, the state has tended to modify its mode of immigration governance. 2013 was marked as a new era, in which Turkey has enacted a new status, temporary protection (Baban et al. 2017). Along with the establishment of DGMM, these developments have shaped the new era of immigration governance in Turkey. DGMM was established under the law on Foreigners and International Protection to manage the bureaucratic procedures and processes related to immigrants and refugees in Turkey (Law no 6458). The directory performs under the Ministry of Interior. The basic responsibilities of DGMM are as such:

“Developing business and processes to achieve compliance process; to identify stateless persons in Turkey and to carry out business and transactions related to these persons; to establish combat activities against irregular migration and to ensure the necessary coordination by both law enforcement units and relevant public institutions and organizations; to take existing measures by establishing migration managements.” (Karadal et al. 2021, 89).

3.4.2 New Perspectives of Governance

According to Didem Daniş and Dilara Nazlı (2019), the new approach of refugee policy in Turkey can be defined as “selective governance.” On the one hand, the state devolved some of its tasks, such as providing healthcare, to NGOs; on the other hand, the state has mostly dealt with NGOs that are aligned with the state. This new mode of governance has divulged that although Turkey has not been fully capable of providing adequate services to refugees, it has never abandoned the realm of civil society but developed new techniques to exert its power (Daniş and Nazlı 2019).

The meetings with Syrian NGO members, or harmonization meetings that held by DGMM are important hints to evaluate the existent interaction between the state and Syrian NGOs. State also has other devices to keep the communication with Syrian NGOs. According to Majid:

“I think Turkey wants to put Syrian refugees in one spot. They en-

couraged Syrian NGOs to form a platform. Turkey has considered this platform as a must because Turkey wants to communicate with Syrians and it thinks that this might be a useful way for healthy interaction. For instance, this platform text us in case the state changes a policy about refugees.”

Other participants mentioned the platform, too. They often referred to it when they explained their relationship with the Turkish state. Although I phoned the platform several times, I could not get any answer. For this reason, I do not have detailed information about its mission and activities. Nevertheless, I suppose that it is a significant example to interpret the state’s perspective toward refugee governance. As Michel Foucault (2008) claimed , the most effective way to govern the subjects is to create a “field of visibility”. Field of visibility is attributed to the disciplinary technique of the sovereign to govern its subjects. Foucault described it:

“A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation [...] He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribed in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.”(2008,7)

As regards, through the platform, the Turkish state aims to construct its own field of visibility, a field that the state can monitor its subjects. Invisibility has braced the possibility of violating actions and hazardous conditions in terms of control (Swerts 2017). The state, therefore, has enabled mediatory tactics to reach the Syrian refugees and control them through uniting the NGOs in one platform. In doing so, along with the state’s capacity to set the legal rules, the state has also marked the boundaries and set the norms of communication with Syrian NGOs. Instead of a classical vertical relationship, the state adopted a horizontal one, which lets the NGOs fulfill their activities and address their problems, but also stay within the field of visibility. Analogous to Foucault’s argument, Syrian NGOs have been aware of the responsibility of this relationship, they act within the field of visibility and never cross the lines of its boundaries. According to Omar:

“We must say that acting in accordance with Turkish state’s discourses and practices facilitates our tasks. Additionally, it helps us to use the resources in a correct way. There is an open system and set of procedures here.”

This approach has also paved the way to rethink the nexus between the state and the civil society in Turkey. Considering the dominant role of the state in the sphere of civil society, one can find a different perspective between the overarching tradition of civil society in Turkey and relationship of the state with Syrian NGOs. Despite a few cases, the Turkish state has been dominant in the civil society, which has bridled the possibility of separate state and society (Ibrahim 1997; Heper and Yildirim 2011). What is significant is that civil society in Turkey remains a challenging space for civil society actors. Since the event of 15 July, the state has tightened its grip on the sphere of civil society (Aras 2017). Especially after the parliament proposed new regulations on civil society to prevent illegal financial actions of terrorism in 2020, the civil society has become a new source of conflict (TUSEV 2021). According to the regulation, the ministry of interior has the right to start a prosecution, depose administrators and assign a trustee against suspicious NGOs (Law no.5253, 30/A). The law displays that the government did not only intend to hinder illegal transactions, but also to expand the rights of the ministry to detect and control the NGOs. Although establishing NGOs is a simple process in Turkey, as the participants suggested, the process of maintaining services is in jeopardy. Nevertheless, the dominance of the state toward contemporary civil society cannot be ascribed to a top-down relationship, but a more nuanced and horizontal one. The notion of cooperation might be essential to interpret the technique of governance between the state and civil society in Turkey (Can 2007). Neoliberal era has not marked the absence of methods of control and governance but their transformation through different modes of control (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001).

Adopting the neoliberal mentality, the Turkish state mostly cooperated with NGOs, which are aligned with the state discourses and practices (Damş and Nazlı 2019). With respect to the Syrian NGOs, the state has also adopted the technique of selective governance. On the one hand, it has delegated some of its tasks of service provision to refugee-led organizations. On the other hand, it has also controlled them through maintaining a field of visibility. Although I have limited information about the platform, when I analyzed the digital page of the platform I realized that it mostly includes refugee-led NGOs, politically and ideologically akin to the state. As I mentioned above, the shared religious ground plays an important role in shaping the relationship between Syrian NGOs and the Turkish state, reflecting a common political understanding. Accordingly, the state does not only select politically or ideologically related Turkish NGOs, but also select pro-government Syrian NGOs to cooperate within the sphere of civil society.

3.4.3 We Are Between the Feet: Uncertainty as Mode of Governance

“We are between the feet” is an old Syrian idiom, which refers to uncertain and precarious conditions. Several participants used this phrase to describe their conditions. Although the state has adopted new techniques of governance, uncertainty has remained as an important instrument in Turkey as a refugee governance. The experiences of some of the NGO members and service receivers have shed more light on the issue. DGMM as an institution has played a key role in representing the uncertainty. Several participants blamed the directory for its inconsistent and puzzling practices. When I asked about their view on DGMM, Hamid answered as following:

“I find it terrible! It is a chaotic place. I know their job is difficult but just visit Beyazıt. They treat people like animals. They behave toward refugees as if they are below animals. It is problematic. Not only in DGMM, but also in borders and airports. If they wanted to make someone an enemy to Turkey, they would succeed. They do not try to provide solutions. The directory has also become a field of opportunity for bribe takers, brokers. For instance, if you want to get an appointment from DGMM, you should wait for months; if you pay 200-300 Liras to a broker, you can get it in a few hours. If there is a solution, you should try to find it, not worsen it. I suppose that there are some discussions inside the directory about solutions, but in practice they do not solve the problems. We ask them questions about legal problems but we cannot get an answer. For example, there was a father whose registered place is Istanbul, but his family’s in Antalya. They suggest that the father must go to Antalya because the majority there. It is nonsense! His job is here, how can he go there?”

Similarly, when I asked other participants they described the directory as chaotic and not stable in its decisions. Conferring citizenship is another source of uncertainty in refugee policies. None of the participants knew the exact procedure to obtain Turkish citizenship. The procedure of Turkish citizenship was grounded on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, which prioritizes Turkish ancestry as the base of citizenship (Kirişçi 2000). In 2003 Turkish law amended its citizenship rule by providing a possibility of naturalization (Law no. 5901). The law guaranteed the right of naturalization for immigrants who fulfill the necessary criteria. The important part is that this law has been available only for regular immigrants, neglecting refugees, or irregular immigrants (Akçapar and Şimşek 2018).

Nevertheless, in 2016 the state modified its naturalization law by including the principle of “exceptional citizenship” (2016/9601). The basic motivation of this

exceptional rule is to keep Syrian refugees, who are capable of serving the Turkish state in professional fields, in Turkey. This revision primarily has targeted Syrian refugees who have high skills, economic capital and potential of investment in Turkey.

On the other hand, this amendment has its own uncertainties and dark parts in terms of its implementation. Although NGOs try to solve the ambiguities, they cannot succeed. According to Nebil:

“We do not understand the criteria of naturalization in Turkey. Some people can get it, though they do not deserve it. For example, I had a friend who is a doctor who graduated from Cerrahpaşa University and then completed his MA in John Hopkins. He applied for citizenship and he was rejected and we do not know the reason. While I was able to acquire it, another refugee with the same features cannot acquire citizenship.”

Likewise, Reda also criticized the uncertainty in the practice of naturalization. He stated as following:

“In our meetings with the officials, we mouthed our demands for more accurate procedures of citizenship. We emphasized the need for more coherent study of naturalization law. Some people can get citizenship, others not. For instance, a refugee without any education can acquire citizenship, but a doctor or engineer waits for years to receive a final decision. I think the officials cannot deal properly with this issue.”

Syrian NGOs have not only faced uncertainty at state level, they have also encountered uncertainties in other institutions, such as banks. In one of my visits to one of the NGOs, I found two members of the NGO discussing a matter. When I asked them, they explained to me the problems they have faced in opening a bank account. Mahmood explained it as such:

“As an association recently we aimed to open a bank account for our different purposes. When we went to the bank, they told us that they did not open a bank account for associations. How can we explain it? All of my activities are formal and legal. Despite that, we cannot manage it.”

Similarly Hamid also complained about the ambiguous procedures of the banks:

“As an official Turkish association, we go to the bank to open an account and they reject it. We do not understand the reason. It is thoroughly arbitrary. This association was established according to the Turkish legal code, how can they reject it? They said that they cannot manage the money traffic. If they cannot manage it, they can file a criminal complaint. It is not a proper solution because another bank can open an account. We do not understand the basis of this rule... For example, we tell our service receivers to open a bank account to receive cash-based assistance. When they go to the bank, the bank refuses to open accounts. I think they have to open bank accounts for refugees who have identity cards, which are registered by the Turkish state law.”

Biehl has defined uncertainty as “indefinite waiting, imperfect knowledge, and the volatility of legal status.” (2015, 58). As regards, NGOs and refugees’ experiences in the field have reflected the patterns of protracted uncertainty. In fact, the condition of uncertainty has not only been produced by the state but also by other institutions, such as the banks. Besides, uncertainty has spawned its unique order of disciplinary technique. These policies have trained the refugees to accept the uncertainty as a norm of governance and adhere to it for survival in Turkey. Although NGOs have more resources and access to legal support, they have been mostly unsuccessful in shortening the waiting duration.

3.4.4 Brief Evaluation

When two distinct modes of governance are considered, it is clear that the state has two levels of governance: governing NGOs and governing refugees. While the state has adopted the technique of selective governance to keep its control over Syrian NGOs and to maintain a visible realm for the activities of these NGOs, it has continued its technique of governing through uncertainty toward refugees, keeping up their legal, economic and social precarious positions. Analyzing Syrian NGOs is significant in this context because they represent the field of these two modes of governance. Although their relationship with the state has been mediated mostly through cooperation such as the platform or meetings or partnerships with municipalities and ministries, the NGOs also have to deal with the problems of the refugees whose liminal positions make tasks of Syrian refugee-led NGOs difficult to accomplish. The ambivalent governance of the state has created challenges for these NGOs whose preliminary task is to provide services to refugees. Although the state has been dominant in the civil society, Syrian NGOs have developed their

own strategies to deal with the state power. In other words, Syrian NGOs have the capability to create their own strategies and mitigate some of the problems of Syrian refugees. Particularly, the event of July 22, the announcement date of the policy concerning relocation of refugees in Istanbul, is a significant case to examine the active role of Syrian refugees to negotiate with these two distinct modes of governance.

3.5 The Event of July 22: The Syrian NGOs as Political Subjects

The state's new governance policy of Syrian refugees cannot be understood as a lack of reciprocal relationship. It is true that the state has designed its own governance technique to track Syrian NGOs and control them. However, the NGOs also use this field as an opportunity to communicate with the state and sometimes even as a tool of pressure for certain policies. Instead of reading the state's tradition of civil society or methods of refugee governance in a single perspective, which state always prevails, I offer to focus on the instances that civil society actors also use their role strategically to bargain with the state. Since the research concentrates on the Syrian NGOs' learning process of civil society, their strategies to tackle the state policies as civil society actors have a profound importance. This section discusses the role of Syrian NGOs in the following period of the decision of Governorship of Istanbul in 2019.

On July 22, 2019, the Governorship of Istanbul released a public announcement reminding the regulations of Temporary Protection (Istanbul Governor's Office 2019-44). The announcement urged refugees to move back to their initially registered provinces. The Governorship also intensified patrolling refugees to prevent illegal mobility in Istanbul. Since the announcement was issued by the Governorship of Istanbul, it was considered as a provincial concern instead of a national one (Erdoğan 2019). The important part is that this decision was associated with JDP's loss of provincial elections. The issue of Syrian refugees appeared as a heated debate during the campaigns of two opponent parties, JDP and Republican People's Party (RPP) (Tremblay 2019). Istanbul has outnumbered other Turkish provinces by hosting over 500 thousand Syrian refugees, which has forged the majority's discontent in Istanbul. For this reason, the JDP tended to relate the loss with the overwhelming existence of Syrians in Istanbul (Erdoğan 2019, 22).

Although since 2018, the state has generated contending discourses about refugees, the public announcement of the Governorship was an original regulation. In the same period, the state deported several refugees from the Öncupınar border (Leghtas 2019). All of these events represented ad hoc political decisions because relocating Syrian refugees was nearly impossible. Turkey has never applied a quota system like Germany and settlement of Syrians was contingent to their own decisions rather than a state categorization (Erdoğan 2019, 23).

In spite of the different arguments, it is accurate to argue that the state brought a different refugee policy to the fore. Although the state officials rejected the allegations of repatriating the refugees who were provided with temporary protection by the Turkish state, they never clarified the details of the deportation process (Leghtas 2019, 4). According to the participants, the event also displayed the possible tension that might arise from policy changes toward Syrian refugees in Turkey because the announcement caused social upheaval among Syrian refugees. Istanbul is the center of the labor market in Turkey and Syrian refugees in Istanbul perceived the idea of relocation as a trigger of potential economic problems. Additionally, not every member of a family registered in the same province, which also brought to mind the possible familial problems. There were different demonstrations that were led by mostly Islamist groups to express their collaboration with Syrian refugees in the crisis. These demonstrations were followed by counterrallies of ultra-nationalist groups (Tremblay 2019). The clash of multiple discourses and ideologies also incited an environment of uncertainty and fear for Syrian refugees.

As regards, Syrian NGOs played a significant role in the process by placating the tension among Syrian refugees and communicating with the state. Syrian NGOs arranged multiple meetings with DDGM and other state officials to discuss the crisis in detail and present their own solutions. Najib stated as following:

“We had problems with identity cards and registration. The state urged refugees to return to their registered provinces. We communicated with other Syrian NGOs and organized a meeting with DGMM and after that meeting they mitigated the measures. For instance, they conferred identity cards to Syrian orphans who did not have before. There were students who study in Istanbul but registered in different provinces, so the state officials transformed their place of registration to Istanbul.”

Omar also confirmed the meetings and interpreted them as successful:

“We have a strong communication with the state and we should thank

the Turkish state for this. It has provided enormous services and we arranged different meetings. They have listened to our problems and suggested solutions. For example, we had several meetings about the registration issue. When they understood the problem they tried to alleviate the problems.”

The platform of Syrian NGOs also served as a means of communication with the state. During and after the announcement they kept in touch with refugees to inform them about the latest updates of the regulation and to soothe their stress. According to Majid:

“There was a problem with identity cards. State ordered that refugees go back to their registered provinces. The state also deported several refugees to Idlib, even though they had proper documents of registration. Really awkward days! The state perhaps intended to evacuate Syrians from Istanbul. The platform sent multiple messages that night and followed the situation carefully. For example, some refugees were deported unjustly and they came back with the help of the platform. It is a useful institution, it has strong ties with DGMM.”

Although the regulation has not been abrogated formally and refugees provided with temporary protection must get permission from the governorship whether they want to visit another province or not, the state has mitigated the control and reduced patrolling refugees. July 22 has remained as an important date because the participants remember it as a story of success because they were successful at mitigating the regulations and rescuing some of the deportees. There might be different answers to the question of “why did the state mitigate the control?”. One possible answer could be that the refugees in Istanbul represent the highest amount of undocumented laborers and the state thought that their relocation might cause labor shortage in Istanbul. As an alternative answer, maybe the state realized the difficulty of relocation in practice and abandoned the idea.

What is significant is that this event has represented a form of political participation in terms of Syrian NGOs. Different scholars have considered civil society as a sphere of political action and collaboration (Walzer 1992). Civil society has ingrained discourses and values of political mindset, which also have framed the area of rights and responsibilities of individuals (Edwards 2011). In other words, it is a space to learn, teach and perform political participation within state boundaries. Similarly, Simone Chambers has specified the importance of civil society as “fostering a political culture in which citizens actively participate in public debate and consciously adopt the discursive attitudes of responsibility, self-discipline, respect, cooperation

and reproductive struggle necessary to produce consensual agreements." (1995, 177)

Yet the boundaries of civil society have long been tantamount to boundaries of nation-states. For this reason, civil society has been assumed as the space of citizens of a nation, excluding social groups that are not part of the nation (Hall 1996). Refugeeeness, in this context, appears as a distinct category, which implies both nationless state and statelessness. Giorgio Agamben (1995) has deployed the concept of "homo sacer", borrowing from Ancient Roman history to explain the separation between a depoliticized version of life, bare life, and politicized version of life that is ascribed to being a citizen. That is, refugees represent the bare life and nation-state represents the ground of politicization (1995, 115). Hence, nation-state has confined civil society wherein citizens engage in the politicized version of life. Although his arguments have merit to grasp the naturalization of nation-state order, they weaken the role of agency among refugees by reducing them to the form of bare life.

Different studies have demonstrated that refugees might also find a ground to perform their political subjectivity: they have been able to render themselves visible through different strategies (Wettergen and Wikström 2014; Swerts 2017; Kallio et al. 2019). Although refugees have been excluded from the national order through de-historicization of refugeeeness and elimination of their political capacity (Malkki 1995), refugees have been efficient political actors through different schemes of resistance.

In the case of Syrian refugees, Syrian NGOs serve as a potential actor to accelerate the political participation process of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Since Syrian refugees cannot acquire their international rights in Turkey, their legal position can be explained through the concept of liminal legality (Menjívar 2006). In other words, although Syrian refugees have a particular status provided with temporary protection, they lack a universal status of refuge that makes them legally proper subjects before the state. On the other hand, the Turkish law of associations has facilitated establishment of NGOs for Syrian refugees. According to this law, having a residence permit is adequate to establish or be a member of an association. For this reason, civil society organizations have been a field of opportunity for Syrian refugees to address their problems and more importantly to find an official respondent for their problems. Although Syrian refugees do not have a stable legal status in Turkey, Syrian NGOs have a legal status that is recognized by the state law. Additionally, these NGOs perform their activities and provide services within the rubric of "Turkishness", they are recognized as Turkish NGOs, which locates them in the exact space of "national" civil society.

Even though the state has constructed its own techniques of governance, the NGOs

also use it strategically to discuss their legal and social problems they have faced in Turkey. In other words, the field of visibility that was created by the state has been practical not only for the state, but also for the NGOs to create their own social visibility through the help of their legal visibility before the state. Although it is too early to discuss the political participation of Syrian refugees in Turkey in a full-fledged way, it is significant to recognize Syrian NGOs as spheres of learning to address their legal and social problems and to deal with them within the frames of Turkish civil society.



4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Concluding Remarks

Civil society has always represented an ideal, social and political project, to maintain the political culture, democratic values and equality within society (Edwards 2011). This research depicts the picture of a certain angle of civil society in Turkey by focusing on the Syrian NGOs. The Syrian NGOs have appeared as new actors in Turkish civil society and provided different perspectives on the social, legal and political issues in Turkish civil society. They have formed their own understanding of civil society, which has underscored the responsibility of service provision and collective action. Since the participants have never participated in civil society organizations in Syria, they have sought to form their own understanding of civil society, embracing the experiences of international and mostly particular Turkish NGOs. In doing so, they have also constructed their own perceptions of civil society, associational hierarchies and different categories of Syrianness, based on changing historical narratives. Syrian NGOs have been spaces of learning, belonging and taking political action for Syrian refugees.

Scholars have analyzed the state-society relations in Turkey by emphasizing the dominant role of the state (Altan-Olcay and Icduygu 2012). Nonetheless, the Syrian NGOs manifest alternative ways of dealing with the state power. The Turkish state has adopted two levels of governance pertaining to the Syrian refugees. Whereas it adopted the technique of selective governance to manage its relationship with Syrian NGOs, it has also continued the method of governing through uncertainty concerning Syrian refugees. In respect to this, Syrian NGOs appear as significant actors to mediate between these two distinct techniques of governance. On the one hand, the state has constructed its own field of visibility to communicate and control Syrian NGOs and refugees. On the other hand, Syrian NGOs have mobilized their

own strategies to address the problems of Syrian refugees. Although Syrian NGOs have tackled the uncertainties of legal and social conditions of the refugees, they have shaped their own practices and strategies to deal with the inner dynamics of state and civil society in Turkey.

In a similar vein, legal recognition of Syrian NGOs has opened up a field to discuss and solve problems of refugees who lack the solid ground for legal recognition. This study fills the gap in the literature by providing an alternative approach, which focuses on the experiences of Syrian NGOs and their relationship with the state in the field. It sheds more light on the opportunities and obstacles of these NGOs within Turkish civil society. Although it is too early to consider these NGOs as active political subjects, the study documents the negotiated relationship between the state and Syrian NGOs. It claims that while the Syrian NGOs devise their own technical and social know-how of civil society, their know-how skills depend on the dynamics of civil society in Turkey. Instead of approaching these NGOs as spaces of charity and humanitarian aid to refugees, one should reconsider them as emerging political actors within Turkish civil society.

4.1.1 Limitations and Further Directions

The main challenge of ethnographic research is that it is neither exhaustive nor representative. For this reason, it is difficult to capture an overall comprehension of neither Syrian NGOs nor Syrian refugees. The point is that civil society per se sometimes cannot represent the whole package of socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions of the vulnerable people, in this case, refugees. Partha Chatterjee has claimed civil society “will bring into the hallways and corridors of power some of the squalor, ugliness and violence of popular life. But if one truly values the freedom and equality that democracy promises, then one cannot imprison it within the sanitized fortress of civil society.” (2004, 74).

As regards, civil society itself is a secluded space that cannot represent the entire reality of the society. On the other hand, the participants of this research have contact with a large number of refugees, contributing to pointing out different legal, social and economic problems of refugees in Istanbul. I believe that their interpretations and experiences provide new insights into the complexities of the refugee-led NGOs and refugee crisis in Turkey.

Another point is that the research covers the Sunni Muslim Syrian refugee NGOs,

which are also not representative of the overall Syrian NGOs. As the study highlights, the shared religious ground has a profound impact on the relationship between the Turkish state and refugee-led NGOs. This study might lead to new avenues to investigate and discuss the conditions of other Syrian NGOs in Istanbul or Turkey, differing in terms of ethnicity, religion and sect.

Paul Connerton has identified cultural memory as “to remember . . . is precisely not to recall events as isolated, it is to become capable of forming meaningful narrative sequences.” (1989, 26). Throughout the research, I noticed that memories have a significant role in shaping the frames of civil society for the participants. Their memories and narratives of the Syrian past have reconstructed new routes for Syrian identity. Although refugees have been mostly studied through the dominant lens of host countries and their national scaffolding (Malkki, 1995), this research might lead to rethinking homeland identities, their reconstruction of the national past and their contribution to the sense of belonging.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adıgüzel, Yusuf. 2017. "Kentın Yeni Sivil Aktörleri: İstanbul'daki Suriyeli Dernekler." *MİLEL VE NİHAL inanç, kültür ve mitoloji araştırmaları dergisi* 12(2): 197.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 1995. We refugees. In *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures*. Vol. 49 Taylor & Francis pp. 114–119.
- Akcapar, Sebnem Koser, and Dogus Simsek. 2018. "The politics of Syrian refugees in Turkey: A question of inclusion and exclusion through citizenship." *Social Inclusion* 6(1): 176–187.
- Altan-Olcay, Ozlem, and Ahmet Icduygu. 2012. "Mapping civil society in the Middle East: The cases of Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39(2): 157–179.
- Altınordu, Ateş. 2017. "A midsummer night's coup: Performance and power in Turkey's July 15 coup attempt." *Qualitative Sociology* 40(2): 139–164.
- Andén-Papadopoulos, Kari, and Mervi Pantti. 2013. "The media work of Syrian diaspora activists: Brokering between the protest and mainstream media." *International Journal of Communication* 7: 22.
- Aras, Bülent. 2017. *State, Institutions and Reform in Turkey after July 15*. Istanbul Policy Center.
- Athoğlu, Yasin. 2007. "Beşşar Esad Suriyesi'nde Reform." *İstanbul: TASAM Yayınları* .
- Baban, Feyzi, Suzan Ilcan, and Kim Rygiel. 2017. "Syrian refugees in Turkey: Pathways to precarity, differential inclusion, and negotiated citizenship rights." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(1): 41–57.
- Beichelt, Timm, Irene Hahn, Frank Schimmelfennig, and Susann Worschech. 2014. *Civil society and democracy promotion*. Springer.
- Biehl, Kristen Sarah. 2015. "Governing through uncertainty: Experiences of being a refugee in Turkey as a country for temporary asylum." *Social analysis* 59(1): 57–75.
- Boellstorff, Tom, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, and Tina L Taylor. 2012. *Ethnography and virtual worlds*. Princeton University Press.
- Brownlee, Billie Jeanne. 2015. "The revolution "from below" and its misinterpretations "from above". The case of Syria's neglected civil society." *Syria Studies* .
- Caliandro, Alessandro. 2018. "Digital methods for ethnography: Analytical concepts for ethnographers exploring social media environments." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 47(5): 551–578.

- Can, Yasemin İpek. 2007. "Türkiye'de sivil toplumu yeniden düşünmek: Neo-liberal dönüşümler ve gönüllülük." *Toplum ve Bilim* 108: 88–128.
- Chambers, Simone. 1995. *Discourse and democratic practices*. na.
- Chambers, Simone, Will Kymlicka et al. 2002. *Alternative conceptions of civil society*. Vol. 1 Princeton University Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 2004. *The politics of the governed: reflections on popular politics in most of the world*. Columbia University Press.
- Cleveland, W.I. 2004. *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*. Agora Kitaplığı.
- Cohen, Jean L, Andrew Arato, and Jean L Cohen. 1992. *Civil society and political theory*. MIT press Cambridge, MA.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. 2001. *Millennial capitalism: First thoughts on a second coming*. Duke University Press.
- Connerton, Paul. 1989. *How societies remember*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dağtaş, Seçil. 2017. "Whose misafirs? Negotiating difference along the Turkish–Syrian border." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49(4): 661–679.
- Danış, Didem, and Ayşe Parla. 2009. "Nafile soydaşlık: Irak ve Bulgaristan Türkleri örneğinde göçmen, dernek ve devlet." *Toplum ve Bilim* 114: 131–158.
- Danış, Didem, and Dilara Nazlı. 2019. "A faithful alliance between the civil society and the state: Actors and mechanisms of accommodating Syrian refugees in Istanbul." *International Migration* 57(2): 143–157.
- Demirel, Cansu Akbaş. 2015. "Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler: Statüler ve Hükümet Politikaları." *Göçler Ülkesi* 1.
- Demirtaş, Birgül. 2020. "Syrian Refugees and Turkish Political Parties: Domestic Interests versus Universal Values." *Cover: Goran Jović, Ph. D., Assistant Professor, Faculty of Fine Arts, The University of Fine Arts in Belgrade, "The Battle of Kosovo", 2000, Belgrade, Serbia*. p. 150.
- Deringil, Selim. 1993. "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35(1): 3–29.
- Doyle, Jessica Leigh. 2017. "State control of civil society organizations: The case of Turkey." *Democratization* 24(2): 244–264.
- Easton-Calabria, Evan, and Jennifer Wood. 2020. "Bridging, bonding, and linking? Syrian refugee-led organisations and integration in Berlin." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* pp. 1–19.
- Edwards, Bob, and Michael W Foley. 1998. "Civil society and social capital beyond Putnam." *American behavioral scientist* 42(1): 124–139.

- Edwards, Michael. 2011. "Introduction: Civil society and the geometry of human relations." In *The Oxford handbook of civil society*.
- Efe, İbrahim. 2019. "A corpus-driven analysis of representations of Syrian asylum seekers in the Turkish press 2011–2016." *Discourse & Communication* 13(1): 48–67.
- Ekşi, Nuray. 2015. *Yabancılar ve uluslararası koruma hukuku*. Beta Basım Yayın.
- Erdoğan, Murat. 2018. *Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler*. İstanbul Bilgi Yayınları.
- Foucault, Michel. 2008. "panopticism" from "discipline & punish: The birth of the prison." *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 2(1): 1–12.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1994. *Conditions of liberty: Civil society and its rivals*. Hamish Hamilton.
- Gibárti, Sára. 2021. "Aiding Syrian refugees in Turkey: International approaches and domestic policies." *Security and Defence Quarterly* .
- Glasius, M., and H. Seçkinelgin. 2004. *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts*. New York: Routledge.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 2003. "From selections from the prison notebooks." In *The Civil Society Reader*, ed. V. Hodgkinson, and M. V. Foley. UPNE.
- Gümüş, Burak, and Deniz Eroğlu. 2015. "Partial integration of Syrian 'escapees' under the rule of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (JDP)." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 8(4): 469–487.
- Gupta, Vijaya Sunder. 2004. *Communication, Development and Civil Society: Essays on Social Development and Civil Society*. Concept Publishing Company.
- Gürsoy, Esim, and Leyla Deniz Ertayoğlu. 2019. "Syrian refugees' perception of barriers and bridges towards integration into Turkish society." *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 32(2): 128–141.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1996. "Between fact and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy (2. baskı).(Çev. W. Rehg)."
- Hall, John R. 1996. *Civil society: Theory, history, comparison*. Polity Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective." *Feminist studies* 14(3): 575–599.
- Helliker, Kirk. 2012. "Civil society and state-centred struggles." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30(1): 35–47.
- Heper, Metin, and Senem Yıldırım. 2011. "Revisiting civil society in Turkey." *South-east European and Black Sea Studies* 11(1): 1–18.
- Hersant, Jeanne, and Alexandre Toumarkine. 2005. "Hometown organisations in Turkey: an overview." *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey* (2).

- Hinnebusch, Raymond A. 1993. "State and civil society in Syria." *Middle East Journal* 47(2): 243–257.
- Hinnebusch, Raymond A et al. 1989. *Peasant and bureaucracy in Ba'hist Syria: the political economy of rural development*. Westview Press.
- Ibrahim, Ferhad. 1997. "Sivil Toplum Üzerine Arap Tartışması." *Ortadoğu'da Sivil Toplumun Sorunları* pp. 29–60.
- İçduygu, Ahmet, and Doğu Şimşek. 2016. "Syrian refugees in Turkey: Towards integration policies." *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 15(3): 59–69.
- Isik, Damla. 2019. "The Politics of Giving: Charity, State, Civil Society and Governance in Contemporary Turkey." *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society* 3(2).
- Isik, Damla. 2021. "Engineering self and civil society: the promise of charity in Turkey." *Religion* 51(1): 58–73.
- Kalaycıoğlu, Ersin. 2002. "State and Civil Society in Turkey: Democracy, Development and Protest." In *Civil Society in the Muslim World: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Sajoo A.B. Islamic Publications ltd.
- Kallio, Kirsi P, Jouni Häkli, and Elisa Pascucci. 2019. "Refugeeness as political subjectivity: Experiencing the humanitarian border." *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37(7): 1258–1276.
- Karadal, Kerim, Mortaza CHAYCHI Semsari, and Oğuz KESKİN. 2021. "The Migration Policy of Iran And Turkey from Past to Present and Migration Governance in the Context of Migrants: Iran and Turkey from Past to Present and Migration Governance in the Context of Migrants." *Prizren Social Science Journal* 5(2): 83–92.
- Karasapan, Omer. 2019. "Turkey's Syrian Refugees- the welcome fades."
- Kaviraj, Sudipta, Sunil Khilnani et al. 2001. *Civil society: history and possibilities*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kaya, Ayhan, and Aysu Kiraç. 2016. "Vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Istanbul." *Support to Life* .
- Keane, John. 2013. *Civil society: Old images, new visions*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Keyman, E Fuat, and Ahmet İçduygu. 2003. "Globalization, civil society and citizenship in Turkey: Actors, boundaries and discourses." *Citizenship Studies* 7(2): 219–234.
- Keyman, Fuat, and Şebnem Gümüşçü. 2014. *Democracy, identity and foreign policy in Turkey: Hegemony through transformation*. Springer.
- Kirişçi, Kemal. 2000. "Disaggregating Turkish citizenship and immigration practices." *Middle Eastern Studies* 36(3): 1–22.

- Kohn, Sally. 2011. "Civil Society and Equality." In *The Oxford handbook of civil society*, ed. M. Edwards. Oxford University Press.
- Kuzmanovic, Daniella. 2012. "Refractions of Civil Society." In *Refractions of Civil Society in Turkey*. Springer pp. 177–183.
- Lefèvre, Raphaël. 2013. *Ashes of Hama: The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Leghtas, I. 2019. "Insecure future: Deportations and lack of legal work for refugees in Turkey. Refugees International."
- Lobmeyer, H. G. 2007. "Suriye: Leviathan'ın Diyarı." In *Ortadoğu'da Sivil Toplumun Sorunları*, ed. F. Ibrahim, and H. Wedel. İletişim.
- Malkki, Liisa H. 1995. "Refugees and exile: From "refugee studies" to the national order of things." *Annual review of anthropology* 24(1): 495–523.
- Mamdani, M. 1996. "Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism (Kampala, Cape Town, London)."
- Mardin, Şerif. 1969. "Power, civil society and culture in the Ottoman Empire." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11(3): 258–281.
- May, Samantha. 2013. "Political piety: The politicization of zakat." *Middle East Critique* 22(2): 149–164.
- Menjívar, Cecilia. 2006. "Liminal legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants' lives in the United States." *American journal of sociology* 111(4): 999–1037.
- Mentzel, Peter C. 2012. "Nationalism, civil society, and the revolution of 1989." *Nations and Nationalism* 18(4): 624–642.
- Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 1998. "Uses and abuses of "state and civil society" in contemporary Turkey." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 18: 1–22.
- Nimer, Maissam. 2020. "Transforming state–civil society relations: centralization and externalization in refugee education." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 63: 32–54.
- Özçürümez, Saime, and Ahmet İçduygu. 2020. *Zorunlu göç deneyimi ve toplumsal bütünleşme: kavramlar, modeller ve uygulamalar ile Türkiye*. İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi.
- Polat, Rabia Karakaya. 2018. "Religious solidarity, historical mission and moral superiority: construction of external and internal 'others' in AKP's discourses on Syrian refugees in Turkey." *Critical Discourse Studies* 15(5): 500–516.
- Rabo, Annika. 2005. "Gender, state and civil society in Jordan and Syria." In *Civil society: Challenging Western Models*, ed. C. Hann, and Dunn E. Routledge.
- Reservations and declarations to the 1951 Refugee Convention. 1951.
- Sarı, Özgür. 2011. "Suriye'de Liberalleşme Hareketleri ve Sivil Toplum Örgütleri." *Konya, Çizgi Kitabevi* .

- Seçkinelgin, Hakan. 2004. "Contractions of a sociocultural reflex: civil society in Turkey." In *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts*, ed. M. Glasius, D. Lewis, and H. Seçkinelgin. New York: Routledge.
- Shils, Edward. 1991. "The virtue of civil society." *Government and opposition* 26(1): 3–20.
- Sievers, Bruce R. 2010. *Civil society, philanthropy, and the fate of the commons*. UPNE.
- Smith, Helena. 2020. "Erdoğan says border will stay open as Greece tries to repel influx."
- Sunar, Lütfi. 2018. "Türkiye’de İslami Stk’ların kurumsal yapı ve faaliyetlerinin değişimi." *İstanbul: İLKE İlim Kültür Eğitim Derneği* .
- Sunata, Ulaş, and Salh Tosun. 2019. "Assessing the civil society’s role in refugee integration in Turkey: NGO-R as a New Typology." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 32(4): 683–703.
- Swerts, Thomas. 2017. "Creating space for citizenship: The liminal politics of undocumented activism." *International journal of urban and regional research* 41(3): 379–395.
- Terzioğlu, Ayşecan. 2018. "The banality of evil and the normalization of the discriminatory discourses against Syrians in Turkey." *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia* 4(2): 34–47.
- Torbakov, Igor. 2017. "Neo-Ottomanism versus Neo-Eurasianism?: Nationalism and Symbolic Geography in Postimperial Turkey and Russia." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 28(2): 125–145.
- Toumarkine, Alexandre. 2000. "Balkan and Caucasian Immigrant Associations: Community and Politics." *Civil Society in the Grip of Nationalism, Studies on Political Culture in Contemporary Turkey, Istanbul, Orient-Institut* .
- Tremblay, Pınar. 2019. "Are Syrians in Turkey no longer Erdoğan’s ’brothers’?"
- TUSEV. 2021. "7262 Numaralı Kitle İmha Silahlarının Yayılmasının Finansmanın Önlenmesine İlişkin Kanun’da Yardım Toplama Kanunu ve Dernekler Kanunu’nda Yapılan Değişiklikler."
- UNHCR. 2021. "Registered Syrian Refugees. Operational Portal."
- Van Dijck, Maarten F, Bert De Munck, and Nicholas Terpstra. 2017. "Relocating civil society: Theories and practices of civil society between late medieval and modern society." *Social Science History* 41(1): 1–17.
- Viger, Jonathan. 2018. "Class, political power, and nationalism in Syria: A historical sociology of state-society relations." *Dialectical Anthropology* 42(4): 373–389.
- Walzer, Michael. 1992. "The civil society argument." *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* 94(1).

- Walzer, Michael. 2002. "Equality and Civil Society." In *Alternative conceptions of civil society*, ed. S. Chambers, and W. Kymlicka. Princeton University Press.
- Walzer, Michael. 2003. "A Better Vision: The Idea of Civil Society." In *The Civil Society Reader*, ed. V. A. Hodgkinson, and M. W. Foley. UPNE.
- Welton, Michael. 2001. "Civil society and the public sphere: Habermas's recent learning theory." *Studies in the Education of Adults* 33(1): 20–34.
- Wernesjö, Ulrika. 2014. Conditional belonging: Listening to unaccompanied young refugees' voices PhD thesis Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Wettergren, Åsa, and Hanna Wikström. 2014. "Who is a refugee? Political subjectivity and the categorisation of Somali asylum seekers in Sweden." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40(4): 566–583.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2000. "Civil society as social control: State power in Jordan." *Comparative politics* pp. 43–61.
- Yaman, Ahmet. 2016. "Suriyeli sosyal sermayenin inşası ve yeniden üretim sürecinin sivil toplum ve ekonomik hayat alanlarında incelenmesi." *Göç Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2(3): 94–127.
- Yerasimos, Stefanos. 2000. "Civil Society, Europe and Turkey." *Civil Society in the Grip of Nationalism* pp. 11–24.
- Young, Iris Marion. 2020. *Difference as a resource for democratic communication*. Routledge.
- Zubaida, S. 2001. "Civil society, community, and democracy in the middle east." In *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, ed. S. Kaviraj, and S. Khilnani. Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX A

The Profile of the Participants

Reda

- Serves in the field of healthcare
- His NGO was established in 2012
- Serves in a small-scale NGO

Mahmood

- Serves in the field of healthcare and education
- His NGO was established in 2012
- He serves in a small-scale NGO

Usama

- Serves in the field of education
- His NGO was established in 2017
- He serves in a large-scale NGO

Majid

- Serves in the field of education
- His NGO was established in 2017
- He serves in a large-scale NGO

Nebil

- Serves in the field of healthcare and student union
- His NGO was established in 2019
- He serves in a large-scale NGO

Sumayya

- Serves in the field of women's rights
- Her NGO was established in 2018
- She serves in a small-scale NGO

Salwa

- Serves in the field of psychological assistance
- Her NGO was established in
- She serves in a small-scale NGO

Khalid

- Serves in the field of intellectual and academic support
- His NGO was established in 2002 but after the Syrian war, the NGO transferred part of its services to the field of refugee support
- He serves in a small-scale NGO

Najib

- Serves in the field of healthcare and education
- His NGO was established in 2012
- He serves in a large-scale NGO

Samir

- Serves in the field of political and intellectual support
- His NGO was established in 2013
- He serves in a large-scale NGO

Omar

- Serves in the field of youth development
- His NGO was established in 2014
- He serves in a large-scale NGO

Hamid

- Serves in the field of women's rights
- His NGO was established in 2018

___ He serves in a small-scale NGO

