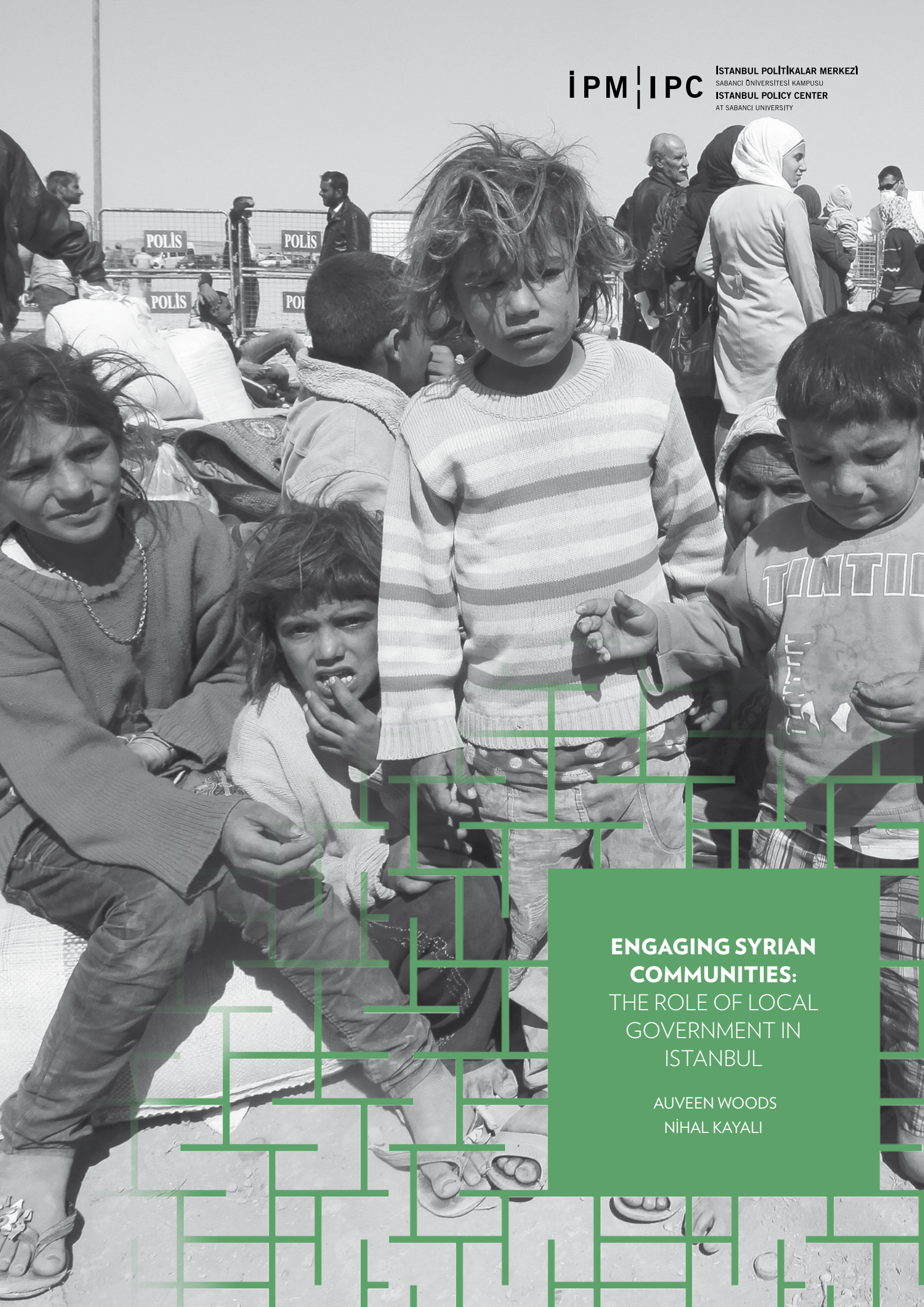
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AT SABANCI UNIVERSITY



ENGAGING SYRIAN COMMUNITIES: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ISTANBUL

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INTRODUCTION

The size of the Syrian population in Istanbul is continuing to grow. Over 400,000 Syrians are registered in the city, with at least an estimated 100,000 unregistered. Due to the size, complexity, and urbanization of Istanbul, engaging with this growing constituency is challenging. This paper cannot provide a full report on the myriad of activities and state agencies working in Istanbul. Rather, it aims to shed some light on how Istanbul's 39 local government districts are reacting to these new constituents and the issues they bring. The report highlights some of the bureaucratic mechanisms in Istanbul municipalities (both the *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* offices) trying to address refugee needs; what is their perception of issues facing Syrian communities in their areas; and what information is available to them, as well as their relationships with other critical actors such as government agencies and NGOs. This information is critical to understanding the role of local government in refugee affairs. To achieve all this in an efficient time, phone calls were chosen as the preferred method over individual face-to-face interviews.

URBANIZATION OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

Since 2011, the Syrian conflict has raged on through failed peace processes and intervention attempts, becoming more fractionalized and intractable. Between 400,000 and 470,000 people are estimated to have died.[1] Of the country's pre-war population of 22 million, at least 11.5 percent are believed to have been killed or injured. Approximately 7.6 million Syrians are internally displaced as they flee fighting and economic collapse, and 4.8 million are registered as refugees in neighboring countries.[2] Thousands have made their way to Europe. There are an estimated 2.7 million Syrians in Turkey. This number is cumulative, however, as it does not include registered Syrians that may have left the country or have yet to register. Nonetheless, Turkey is believed to be the largest refugee-hosting country in the world.

In contrast to past conflicts, the Syrian crisis is largely concentrated in urban areas, with most refugees living not in camps but in cities or towns among large host communities. As of January 2015, approximately 83 percent of the 621,404 Syrian refugees in Jordan were living outside camps in urban areas, mostly in the north of the country.[3] In Lebanon, which is hosting 1,048,275 Syrians, about half of the refugees live in rented housing, while the rest are staying in local communities or self-made camps.[4] In Turkey an estimated 90 percent of Syrians live outside camps in urban or rural areas.[5]

According to a 2014 UNHCR report, six out of ten refugees globally live in urban areas. Comparatively, in 2009, it was five out of ten.[6] In contrast to camps, urban and non-camp areas offer independence, freedom of movement, employment opportunities, and amenities for refugees. Refugees who settle in urban and other non-camp areas have been found to have better long-term outcomes and higher levels of self-sufficiency than their camp peers if they can secure a livelihood.[7] With the exception of wealthier individuals, however, by and large refugees join the ranks of the urban poor and IDPs (internally displaced people) when they move to non-camp areas like towns and cities.

Even with documentation or legal protection (which many do not have), urban refugees are often left on the margins of society, treading a fine line between legal and illegal.[8] Urban refugees struggle to find jobs outside infrequent, informal labor in the black market. They often find themselves living in poorer areas or overcrowded shantytowns (*gecekondu* in Turkish) where rents are cheaper alongside other migrants and marginalized people. A significant rise in urban refugees places additional pressure on the capacity of local services, such as health centers and schools, to facilitate access to these new constituents. The strain on local services and competition over jobs can also result in urban refugees becoming targets of discrimination, harassment, and xenophobic attacks as "outsiders." Due to all these stress factors, many urban refugees struggle with mental health issues in addition to the trauma of war and their ruptured identity and life plans. These are all issues of concern given that the majority of refugees in urban areas are likely to become permanent residents. This makes the aforementioned problems a development and potential security challenge for the future.

While it is easier to identify the numbers and needs of refugees in camps as their isolation and visibility attracts attention, this is not the case in urban areas. Local governments may not even be willing to acknowledge the number of refugees in their area for fear of

1 The United Nation estimates that 250,000 people have been killed in the Syrian war; however, the organization stopped collecting statistics in 2014. Staffan de Mistura, the UN special envoy for Syria, estimates that 400,000 people have been killed. ("Syria death toll: UN envoy estimates 400,000 killed," *Al Jazeera,* April 23, 2016, accessed June 21, 2016,http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/staffan-de-mistura-400000-killed-syria-civil-war-160423055735629.html.) The Syrian Center for Policy Research and the Arab League put the number between 400,000 to 470,000 people. (Ian Black, "Report on Syria conflict finds 11.5% of population killed or injured," *The Guardian*, February 11, 2016, accessed May 5, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/11/report-on-syria-conflict-finds-115-of-population-killed-or-injured.)

2 "Syrian Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal," United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, December 04, 2016, accessed August 1, 2016, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php.

3 Luigi Achilli, *Syrian Refugees in Jordan: a Reality Check* (Budapest: Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute, February 2016), accessed June 21, 2016, http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/34904, 5, 11.

4 "Syrian Refugees: A snapshot of the crisis – in the Middle East and Europe," Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute, accessed June 20, 2016, http://syrianrefugees.eu/?page_id=72.

5 "Turkey: Refugee crisis, ECHO Factsheet," European Commission, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, March 2016, accessed June 22, 2016, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/turkey_syrian_crisis_en_0.pdf.

6 *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas* (New York: UNHCR, September 2009), accessed November 25, 2015, http://www.unhcr.org/4ab356ab6.pdf.

7 Mary Beth Morand, Katherine Mahoney, Shaula Bellour, and Janice Rabkin, *The Implementation of UNHCR's Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas Global Survey – 2012* (New York: UNHCR, 2012), 53.

8 Auveen Woods, *Urban Refugees: The Experience of Syrians in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, February 2016).

encouraging greater immigration, inter-community tensions, and electoral backlash.[9] Identifying the needs of urban refugees is difficult not only because of their invisibility or political factors but also due to the bureaucratic hurdles of reaching such people. The issues that urban refugees face such as employment and access to services are development problems that require engagement through changes in laws, policies, and practices. Providing support for urban refugees is, therefore, a bureaucratic problem not just for municipalities but also for government agencies and NGOs (both national and international).

Refugee communities present unique challenges to society due to their war experiences and dislocation from support structures. The exclusion of refugees from certain services (whether by their choice or a lack of capacity by the provider), add to their separation from society. Criminality, even for survival, is likely to increase, especially where there is a large excluded youth population. In marginalized urban communities, crime, violence, health issues (such as drugs and diseases), and a lack of access to basic services all add up to a lack of security. In this vacuum of growing despair and anger, alternative local power systems emerge, from organized criminal gangs to extremist groups that ferment in impoverished and isolated urban areas.[10]

Local government engagement with refugee communities in urban areas is important in this regard. The responsibilities, power, and independence of local governments vary from country to country, but they often oversee a number of services in their vicinities. Knowledge of the number and needs of the populations in their districts is a necessity for municipal development in order to plan for emergencies, capacities, and services. While national and regional government policy is critical to structuring new policies, it is the local governments that have greater opportunities to work directly with refugees in order to ensure that their basic needs are met and can help facilitate their integration into communities. The potential proximity of municipal governments to local community leaders allows them greater opportunities to be more responsive to the needs of their constituents and mitigate tensions by responding preventively to problems and issues.[11]

9 Jeff Crisp, Tim Morris, and Hilde Refstie, "Displacement in Urban Areas: New Challenges, New Partnerships," *Disasters* 36, no. 1 (2012): 23-42.

10 Dan Lewis, "Why do cities matter on the global stage?," in *Human Security for an Urban Century: Local Challenges, Global Perspectives*, ed. N/A, Canadian Consortium on Human Security, (2006), http://www.alnap.org/resource/6570, 22.

11 Canadian Consortium on Human Security, *Human Security for an Urban Century: Local Challenges, Global Perspectives*, Canadian Consortium on Human Security, (2006), http://www.alnap.org/resource/6570, 23.

THE STATUS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

Syrians in Turkey fall under the temporary protection category of the 2014 Law on Foreigners and International Protections (No. 6458, *Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu*). The 2014 law created three categories of people that are applicable under Turkey's asylum regime. These are refugees, (Turkey did not lift the geographical limitation in the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, so only European asylum-seekers are legally identified as refugees), conditional refugees (those who stay in Turkey temporarily until they are resettled in a third country), and people granted subsidiary protection. In contrast to other countries, there is no time limit for those under subsidiary or temporary protection, who, in theory, enjoy access to education and healthcare, among other benefits.[12] It is this category that is generally applied to Syrians,[13] while in practice other refugee groups such as Iraqis seem to be excluded.

Although the Law on Foreigners attempts to clarify the definitions of those eligible for asylum in Turkey and their rights to services and protections, there is still ambiguity and exclusion. Syrians are legally guaranteed some basic humanitarian services but not any of the protections, rights, or mobility enjoyed by foreigners who have residence permits. While Syrians are legally entitled to basic services like education and healthcare, in practice, Turkish schools and hospitals have rejected Syrians due to ignorance of the law, a lack of capacity, or discrimination.[14] Though both the 2014 regulations and a new labor law enacted in January 2016 were said to ease the ability of Syrians to legally work in Turkey, this has not been the reality.[15] At most, only 0.1 percent of the estimated 2.7 million registered Syrians in Turkey could gain work permits.[16] Similarly, discussions on extending citizenship to (unspecified) skilled and wealthy Syrians, have limited the potential number to no more than 300,000.[17] Registration also remains a key issue as it supposedly guarantees access to public services, i.e. health and education. However, one can only legally gain access to these rights in the province where he or she has originally been registered. While Syrians have the right to apply to change their province of registration, there have been few instances of successful applications.[18] For this reason many Syrians residing in Istanbul remain officially registered in a different city and excluded from services.

The Turkish state alone has spent up to 12 billion USD on refugees.[19] The overwhelming majority of this appears to have gone to the Syrian refugee camps and the areas around them in the Southeast.[20] Only an estimated ten percent of the Syrian population in Turkey lives in camps. As of December 2016, Istanbul is host to the largest population of Syrians in Turkey, with nearly 418,000 registered in the city.[21] This number is considerably higher when unregistered Syrians are considered. Outside of basic legal rights to services, there is little state support for urban refugees in Turkey beyond those areas near the camps.

12 Law on Foreigners and International Protections, 2014, Part Three, Section One, Article 63, accessed December 3, 2015, http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/eng_minikanun_5_son.pdf.

13 There have been reports that Palestinian Syrians in Turkey have faced challenges in receiving treatment and rights equal to that of other Syrians. "No way out: the second Nakba of Palestinian refugees from Syria escaping to Turkey," BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 57 (Summer 2015), http://www.badil.org/en/publication/periodicals/al-majdal/item/2079-article-9.html.
Mai Abu Moghli, Nael Bitarie and Nell Gabiam, "Palestinian Refugees From Syria: Stranded on the Margins of Law," Al-Shabaka, October 19, 2015, https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-refugees-from-syria-stranded-on-the-margins-of-law/.
Senay Özden, "The Syrian Crisis and its Regional Repercussions," (Conference, Işık University, Maslak. December 10, 2015).

14 Human Rights Watch, "'When I Picture My Future, I See Nothing': Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Turkey," Human Rights Watch, November 8, 2015, https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/08/when-i-picture-my-future-i-see-nothing/barriers-education-syrian-refugee-children.

15 Auveen Woods, Bianca Benvenuti, and Nihal Kayalı, "Workshop Report: Syrian Refugees in Istanbul," *IPC-Mercator Policy Brief* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, May 2016), accessed June 23, 2016, http://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/en/publication/workshop-report-syrian-refugees-in-istanbul/, 11.

16 Patrick Kingsley, "Fewer than 0.1% of Syrians in Turkey in line for work permits," *The Guardian*, April 11, 2016, accessed April 12, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/11/fewer-than-01-of-syrians-in-turkey-in-line-for-work-permits.

17 "Up to 300,000 Syrians could get Turkish citizenship: Report," *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 10, 2016, accessed July 11, 2016, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/up-to-300000-syrians-could-get-turkish-citizenship-report-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=101412&NewsCatID=341.

18 Woods et.al, "Workshop Report."

19 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Alman ARD televizyonuna konuştu," *BirGün*, July 26, 2016, accessed August 1, 2016, http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-alman-ard-televizyonuna-konustu-121521.html.

20 "Turkey: Refugee crisis, ECHO Factsheet," European Commission, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, September 2016, accessed October 20, 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/turkey_syrian_crisis_en.pdf.

21 "Geçici Koruma Kapsamındaki Suriyelilerin İllere Göre Dağılımı," Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü, December 8, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713.

Both the Turkish government and international actors continue to focus their work on the Southeast of Turkey and have not yet shifted their priorities to reflect new refugee demographics. This is in part due to an inefficient system of counting refugee populations in urban areas, despite Syrian refugees settling in Istanbul since 2013. The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) has had offices in Istanbul for a number of years, yet information on Syrian populations in Southeastern Turkey is more widely available than Istanbul or other cities like Ankara. Since 2014, a more streamlined nationwide registration process was implemented with the establishment of the General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM) in 2014, but methodological inconsistencies of refugee counting on a local level continue to exist. The lack of reliable, comprehensive records of refugee numbers within district governments poses not only humanitarian challenges but also basic developmental challenges in terms of infrastructure and service allocation.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE IN ISTANBUL

Out of Turkey's 81 provinces (*il*) 30 are designated metropolitan municipalities (*Büyükşehir Belediyesi*). These are umbrella structures that oversee district municipalities (*ilçe*). Istanbul is both a province and a metropolitan municipality. It has one state-appointed provincial governor (*Vali*), one elected metropolitan mayor, and 39 municipal districts (*ilçe*).[22] Each of these districts has a locally-elected *belediye* and a state-appointed *kaymakamlık* office. The *kaymakamlik* is a local extension of the central government and is under the jurisdiction of the interior ministry. While the *belediye* is responsible for local development such as infrastructure maintenance, water, electricity, and waste management, the *kaymakamlık* carries out administrative tasks related to education, health, and security.[23] There are also offices representing state agencies such as the population directorates (*Nüfus Müdürlüğü*) or the security directorates (*emniyet*) at each government level, from the provincial to individual districts.

The finances and capacity of local governments in Turkey varies. The budgets of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and its 39 district municipalities are primarily determined by the central government. Allocation is based on population size, city development index, and revenues such as taxes and income. This means that the bigger and more developed cities in Turkey receive the largest allocation of public expenditure. In 2015, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's consolidated budget was 31.9 billion lira, over 30 percent of the total national expenditure on local administration.[24] This is bigger than most Turkish ministries and the GDPs of some countries such as Albania and Macedonia. Locally generated revenue through taxes and fees are often a secondary source of money for local governments.

At the national level, the General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM) is responsible for regular migration as well as refugee affairs. GDMM was primarily established to manage the refugee issue as an orderly, long-term administrative entity, instead of a reactive emergency response body. The GDMM has offices throughout Turkey's 81 provinces and receives refugee registration data from municipal security directorates (*emniyet)*. As a result, the GDMM compiles national, regional, and local data from *emniyet* offices throughout the country.

In our study, we aim to shed light on how Istanbul's 39 districts are engaging with Syrians in their area. We highlight some of the bureaucratic mechanisms in Istanbul municipalities (both the *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* offices) trying to address refugee needs; their perception of issues facing Syrian communities in their areas; and the information available to them, as well as their relationships with other critical actors such as government agencies and NGOs. This information is critical to understanding the role of local governments in refugee affairs. To achieve all this in a timely fashion, phone calls were chosen as the preferred method over individual face-to-face interviews.

"District" or "municipality" is used throughout the paper to refer to a local government office in general, unless *belediye* or *kaymakamlık* is specified. Similarly, "refugee" does not refer to legal status but is used as a sociological term to describe displaced groups.

22 Lauranne Callet-Ravat, "The Role of Municipalities of Turkey in the Syrian Migratory Influx Management," (*United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia,* January 2016).

23 Korel Göymen and Onur Sazak, "Introduction," *Centralization Decentralization Debate Revisited*, ed. Korel Göymen and Onur Sazak (Istanbul; Istanbul Policy Center and Fedrich Naumann Stiftung, 2014).

24 "Istanbul's budget larger than 80 countries' GDP," *Daily Sabah,* December 27, 2014, accessed October 27, 2016, http://www.dailysabah.com/economy/2014/12/27/istanbuls-budget-larger-than-80-countrys-gdp.

METHODOLOGY

There were three phases in the methodology. In the first phase, we called all 39 local government administrations in Istanbul in an effort to speak to someone with insight into how their district is dealing with the Syrian influx. Each district was initially contacted by calling the public number of the *belediye* office in the area like any other member of the public. Beginning with this public contact point, we hoped to gain a sense of the internal networks of the districts' offices and understand which were perceived to have the most insight on Syrian-related issues. We conducted semi-structured interviews using a prepared set of questions for each *belediye* contacted regardless of the density of Syrian populations. Additional information on Sultanbeyli was provided when representatives participated in an unrelated IPC workshop on April 2, 2016.

The first phase of questioning began on March 8, 2016. Depending on the *belediye* operator's suggestion, the call was connected to various *belediye* offices, or the numbers or names of other relevant actors including *kaymakamlık* agencies were recommended by the individual respondent. During this phase we pursued every call with the district officials until we reached one of four "dead ends": a statement that (1) there was no refugee-related information available; (2) the *emniyet* was the only body with substantive information; (3) either a state body such as GDMM or an NGO or international organization was the primary source of information; or (4) a formal letter of request was needed to access any available information.

In the second phase, after making contact with all of the belediyes, the *kaymakamlık* offices of each district were directly contacted if they had not already been called in the first round. We also continued making calls to some belediye departments that remained unresponsive or unavailable. These calls were conducted between March 23, 2016 and April 13, 2016. The aim of the second phase was twofold: first, to elicit information that may not have been found through the *belediye*'s initial referrals and, second, to compare the information from *belediyes* and *kaymakamlıks* to try to understand who assumed a more active role and was more engaged with operations on the ground. We had hoped to follow up beyond the *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* offices with all contacts recommended by officials, including active NGOs and international organizations, but such a broadened effort is beyond the scope of this study.

We are aware that different operators within the same district might recommend different points of contact for information on Syrians. But a lack of internal consistency as to who is perceived to have the most information on Syrian affairs is itself an indicator of a lack of a streamlined system. In the third phase, letters were sent to eight *belediyes* that had required written requests in order to disclose general "refugee"-related information. While these letters were sent to the specific offices or personnel that had requested them, only one *belediye* provided complete information upon our request.

A second round of calls to all 39 local government administrations (both *belediye* and *kaymakamlık*) was conducted between September 21 and October 3, 2016. The process followed the same three-step methodology of six months prior. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality was called on November 2 and 3, 2016. The Istanbul Governor's office (*Valilik*) was contacted on November 3, 2016.

ANALYSIS

There appears to be growing institutional acknowledgement among district governments of Syrian populations and issues in Istanbul. From the first round of calls in March and April 2016 to the follow-up research in September and October 2016, there was a clear change in trends. The most informative phone calls were those connected to social services offices in the *belediye* and the *kaymakamlık* social services foundations.

In the first round of calls in March and April, the belediye social services offices of Esenler, Esenyurt, Eyüp, Küçükçekmece, Fatih, Sancaktepe, Şişli, Üsküdar, and Zeytinburnu provided information. The *kaymakamlık* Social Service Charitable Foundation (SYDV) of Bağcılar, Kartal, and Sancaktepe also answered our questions. Finally, Sultanbeyli's Refugee Coordination Center—an entity of the belediye—provided us with additional information.[25] In the second round of calls from September 21 to October 3, the belediye offices of Beyoğlu, Küçükçekmece, Şişli, Esenler, Esenyurt, Sultanbeyli, Pendik, Çekmeköy, Kadıköy, Gaziosmapaşa, Zeytiburnu, Kağıthane, and Güngören responded to queries. These offices provided good insight into the efforts and limitations of the local governments dealing with Syrian populations and their relationships with other government agencies and NGOs.

The difference in the amount of information provided by districts was influenced not only by how active local governments in the area were or the size of Syrian communities but also by different perceptions of confidentiality. In the first round of calls, written applications for information were requested by eight *belediyes*, (Ataşehir, Bakırköy, Bayrampaşa, Gaziosmanpaşa, Tuzla, Ümraniye, Üsküdar, and Kadıköy).[26] Some of these *belediyes*, such as Bayrampaşa, Gaziosmanpaşa, and Ümraniye, have large Syrian populations. After submitting requests for information from these eight *belediyes,* Üsküdar responded with a written account of their services for refugees. Tuzla provided a cursory amount of information but stated that anything more detailed would require more approval. In the second round of calls in September and October 2016, written applications for information were requested only by Arnavutköy, Ataşehir, and Avcılar *belediyes.* The written requests for information indicate that the degree to which sharing Syrian-related information is considered "sensitive" varies widely and perhaps even from official to official. For example, Çekmeköy, Kadıköy, and Tuzla *belediyes* all stated that they have some information but that it would be inappropriate for them to share information on Syrians to third parties.

In the first round of calls, eight districts, six *kaymakamlıks* (Arnavutköy, Başakşehir, Beylikdüzü, Çatalca, Kağıthane, and Pendik) and two *belediyes* (Bahçelievler and Beyoğlu), could not provide any information. Instead, they recommended the *emniyet* as the source for Syrian-related information. *Emniyet* offices are where refugees in Istanbul first go to register with the government to obtain protected status. In the second round of calls in September and October, none of these districts recommended the *emniyet*. Instead, each district referred our calls to different offices, such as the social services inside the *belediye* or the *kaymakamlık*, where either information was provided or we were told there was no information. In the second round of calls, only two districts (Büyükçekmece and Üsküdar *kaymakamlıks*) referred our calls to the *emniyet.* In districts where calls were referred to the *emniyet,* there appeared to be no further information on the Syrians at the local level or few support mechanisms in place to work specifically with them. The *emniyet* appears to be the first and last point of contact with government agencies for many of the Syrians in such districts, unless they go to the *belediye* or *kaymakamlık* and receive help from the social welfare office on a case-by-case basis.

During the interval six-month period, more *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* offices acknowledged the presence of Syrians in their area. For example, in March, officials in the *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* offices in Beyoğlu, Kağıthane, and Pendik had claimed that they did not have information on any Syrians or other refugee groups in their area and had recommended that we contact the *emniyet.* When contacted six months later in September, these *belediyes* had more information about Syrians in their area and ways that they engaged with them. A new trend that emerged was the number of *belediyes* who recommended contacting the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality or the office of the Istanbul governor. Beykoz and Sarıyer *belediyes* recommended the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Çekmeköy and Kağıthane both said that they occasionally collaborate with the Istanbul Governor's office on Syrian-

25 Interview with representative from Sultanbeyli's Refugee Coordination Center in discussion with the authors, Istanbul, April 2, 2016.

26 Kadıköy municipality requested an email application.

related issues, while both Kartal and Fatih recommended it as a source of information. However, when contacted, the Istanbul Governor's Office said that they did not have any information and suggested that AFAD be contacted instead. This process was repeated twice, and each respondent from the governor's office recommended contacting AFAD. When called, AFAD recommended a "help" number to call. This number belonged to GDMM, and several attempts to connect to the number for the Istanbul office failed.

Contrary to the recommendations of some *belediye* the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality also does not seem to have much engagement on Syrian issues. The social services office of the metropolitan *belediye* did not have any information on Syrians and forwarded us to the White Desk (*Beyaz Masa*), a department that citizens are supposed to call to complain when they have any problems regarding *belediyes*. According to the White Desk, the metropolitan *belediye* is not doing anything specific regarding refugees. Like Turkish citizens, Syrians with an identity number are eligible for help when they contact the belediye. From time to time the metropolitan *belediye* offers financial support such as providing a shopping card that is filled monthly and allows them to buy certain items from supermarkets. The *belediye* also donates clothing and provides shelter for the homeless in winter. According to the official from the White Desk, the department may advise some Syrians to contact their district belediye, while unregistered Syrians are directed to the Istanbul Governor's Office.

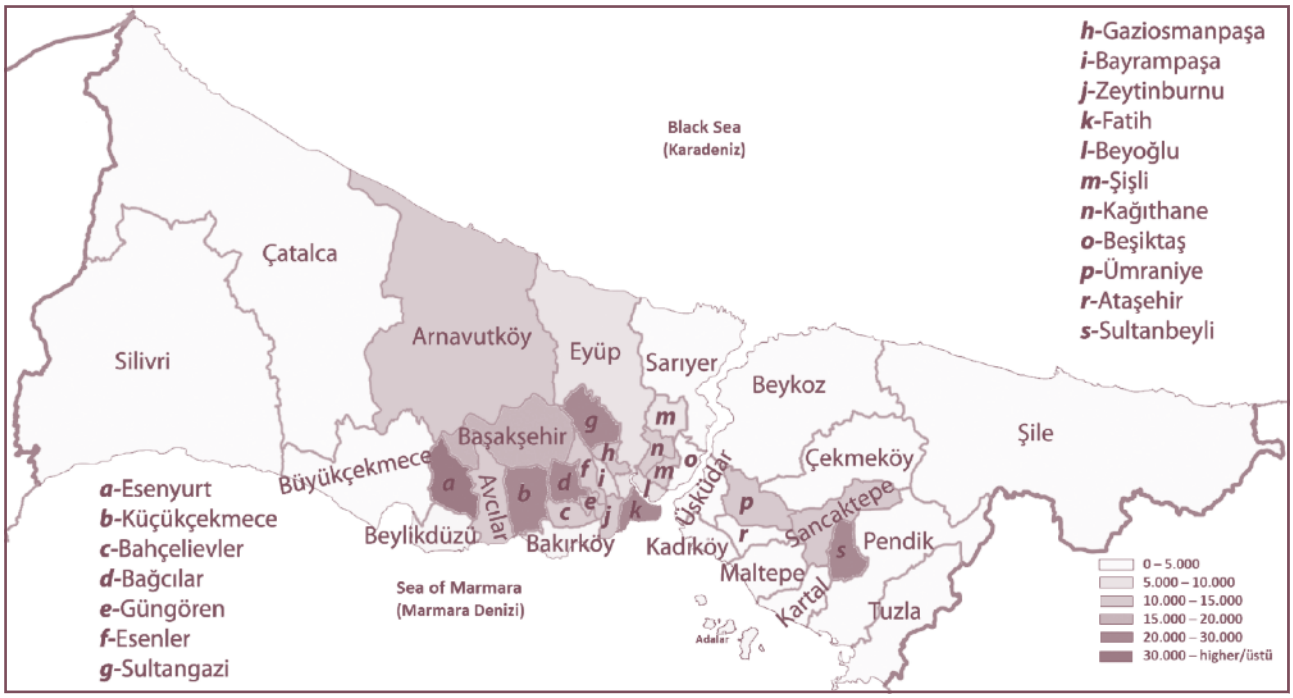
Confusion and miscommunication also seems to be a problem between departments in the *kaymakamlık* over who has information on Syrians. For example, in March and April, eight different districts ultimately referred our calls to the *nüfus mürdürlüğü*, an office of the *kaymakamlık* that deals with legal matters surrounding citizenship and registry of district residents (births, deaths, and other citizenship-related issues). The majority of these internal referrals were between *kaymakamlık* departments. Of these referrals, none had any substantive information on Syrians and either referred us to the *emniyet* (as discussed previously) or gave guidance as to other possible sources for information outside of the agency, though none with certainty. In the second round of research, only three districts referred our calls to the *nüfus mürdürlüğü*.

Referrals to external agencies such as the *emniyet*, GDMM, or AFAD calls decreased overall during the six-month interval. Instead, calls were more frequently transferred between the *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* offices. This would suggest an improvement of institutional knowledge or procedures. Local government systems, however, remain bureaucratic and very difficult to navigate, with calls frequently transferred between different offices and departments. Often officials in the *belediye* or *kaymakamlık* offices do not seem aware of what the other is doing or what information is available. To add to the confusion, the names of departments may change from district to district. While in one *belediye* there may be a directorate called the "social services," (*Sosyal Hizmet Müdürlüğü*) in another it may be called "social help directorate" (*Sosyal Yardım Müdürlüğü*).

Registration of Syrian Populations in Districts

The social services offices in a number of districts have some form of a record system for Syrians. Some of the numbers in these systems are based on a district's estimates, while others are compiled through communication with the *emniyet*. Record-keeping separate from the *emniyet* is useful to keep track of Syrians moving between municipalities, because Syrians need only register with the *emniyet* once to receive their ID cards and protected status and thus may not necessarily be registered to the district in which they currently reside within Istanbul. Some districts, like the Bağcılar *kaymakamlık* and Eyüp, Esenyurt, and Sancaktepe *belediyes,* have kept their own records of Syrians' numbers since they first started arriving to their areas in 2013. There is also no established system for how *belediyes* count their Syrian members. While two municipalities count individually (Bağcılar SYDV and Şişli *belediye*), four confirmed that they count based on household, or *hane* (the *belediyes* in Çekmeköy, Esenyurt, Esenler, and Eyüp). The Beyoğlu *belediye* collects statistics on Syrians in their area through an NGO they work with, the Social Market Foundation. The Şişli *belediye* takes note of Syrians through their *emniyet* registration number. Küçükçekmece noted that they count by both individual and household. The Sancaktepe *belediye* social services office counts by household, whereas their *kaymakamlık* uses numbers from the *emniyet*. The household system—which often relies on a single rental contract—makes it harder to estimate the number of Syrians as all sources confirmed that two, three, or even four families sometimes reside within one house.

Figure 1. Registered Syrians by Istanbul districts[27]



This map is based on GDMM statistics of Syrians registered in Istanbul districts by July 2015.[28] During the interviews, officials from the Esenyurt, Kartal, and Sultanbeyli *belediyes* and the *kaymakamlık* offices in Bağcılar and Sancaktepe provided estimates for Syrian numbers in their district for March and April 2016. In September and October, the *belediyes* in Beyoğlu, Çekmeköy, Esenler, Esenyurt, Gaziosmanpaşa, Güngören, Kağıthane, Küçükçekmece, Pendik, Şişli, Sultanbeyli, and Zeytinburnu shared their estimates of Syrians in their area. The Bağcılar *kaymakamlık* estimates that there were 28,000 Syrians in their district. There were 1,530 Syrians registered in Kartal. In Sancaktepe, there were 9,000 Syrians registered, though officials believe the number in March was closer to 12,000 when unregistered Syrians are included. In Sultanbeyli, 17,000 Syrians were registered out of an estimated 18,000 in April 2016. This had risen to 18,668 registered Syrians by September 2016.[29] The Beyoğlu *belediye* has just 1,000 Syrians registered with them, while Çekmeköy estimates there are 1,000 in their area. The *kaymakamlık* in Güngören says there are 3,000 registered Syrians in the district, though the *belediye* believes that the number of unregistered people would make it at least 4,000. Similarly, Küçükçekmece estimates that they could have more than 40,000 Syrians (registered and unregistered) in the area. Şişli believes that there are 10,000 Syrians in their district, while there are an estimated 8,000 in Kağıthane. There are 2,000 Syrians registered in Zeytinburnu, but because the area is often a transit place with people frequently moving, the *belediye* is unsure of the actual number. There are around 600 Syrian families registered in Pendik, 1,150 families in Gaziosmanpaşa, and 3,000 families in Esenler. In March there were 9,000 *hane* registered in Esenyurt. The *belediye* is aware that there are multiple people per *hane,* so they estimate that there are could be 40,000 Syrians in the area with an estimated 25,000 people who are registered and another 15,000 unregistered.

Counting also differs between municipalities in regard to who is actually counted as a refugee. Most municipalities only keep track of Syrian refugees. Those that track Syrians do not have more specific data about regional or ethnic roots within Syria, though both Esenyurt and Eyüp *belediye* noted that there is a mix of Kurds, Arab Syrians, and Turkmens in their districts. Sancaktepe and Pendik *belediyes* have a registry of all refugee families, including Afghans, Egyptians, Pakistanis, and Iraqis. Sancaktepe district employs two different systems to track Syrians and non-Syrians. According to the official interviewed, Syrians first register at

27 Ayhan Kaya and Aysu Kıraç, *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Hayat Destek, April 2016), 13.

28 Kaya and Kıraç, *Vulnerability*, 13.

29 Interview, Sultanbeyli Belediye official, April 2, 2016. Phone interview, Sultanbeyli belediye, September 26, 2016.

emniyet and then at the Sancaktepe *kaymakamlık* when they come for assistance. In contrast, the Sancaktepe *belediye* only counts non-Syrian refugees. This illustrates the legal safeguards set up to protect and prioritize Syrians but not other refugee groups.

Furthermore, some of the offices have specific units or centers dedicated to Syrian affairs within the belediye. In Esenyurt there is a Syrian communication center in the *belediye*. The center employs Arabic speakers, and Syrians can come to get information and support depending on their needs, such as directing them to *belediye*-provided language classes or healthcare centers. In the Şişli *belediye*'s social services department, *Göç Yardim Masası* ve *Merkezi* (Migrant Help Desk and Center) or *Mülteci Masası* (Refugee Desk), for short, opened in October 2015. It employs some sociologists, social workers, and psychologists who work not only with Syrians but also with other vulnerable refugee and migrant groups in the area. Küçükçekmece social services has a dedicated and busy refugee or "foreigner desk" associated with the social services department of the *belediye,* with one Turkish and one Arabic speaker working full-time. Finally, Sultanbeyli belediye has a Refugee Coordination Center with full-time employees, including some Syrians with work permits. After registering with the *emniyet*, Syrians go to the Center, where their GDMM registration number is recorded alongside a specific belediye-issued ID number. The center provides a range of services to Syrians, including informing them of their rights and doing basic needs assessments.

Adaptations by the *belediye* to create more permanent protocols such as processing centers or administrative desks to address Syrian issues are positive for encouraging communication between government agencies and fostering a responsive local government. In some examples, like Esenyurt, officials believe it has also led to even more Syrians moving to the area, stretching the local capacity to meet their needs effectively. One possible long-term consequence of such migration is the ghettoization of refugee and Syrian populations as they coalesce around localized urban enclaves where their immediate needs are more readily met.

Allocation of Basic Services

In order to be eligible for state aid, Syrians must demonstrate financial need. The Üsküdar *belediye* outlined how this process works in their municipality: once the individuals register with the *emniyet,* they get a "poverty" form from their local *muhtar* (the neighborhood's elected head executive) indicating need.[30] They then must apply, for example, to the *belediye's* social services offices, which send an official to conduct a home visit. Once this is established, aid can be administered within a week. This is the process that the belediye uses for any residents who may need social welfare in order to subsist.

If there are people who cannot pay their basic bills, such as water or electricity, they are referred to a variety of charitable foundations that may be able to offer help that the *belediye* cannot. The Fatih *belediye* generally redirects Syrians looking for help to other institutions such as the social services department of Istanbul's metropolitan municipality or AFAD's Istanbul offices. The social services office at the Eyüp *belediye* tries to help families through donations such as food, clothes, and household goods. Once a year, the Eyüp social services office helps families who are struggling with natural gas provisions. Eyüp, Esenyurt, and Küçükçekmece *belediye*s distribute locally-donated secondhand items such as clothes and furniture to Syrians. Both Küçükçekmece and Sancaktepe donate items to anyone who needs them, including both Syrians and other refugee groups in their district. All of the *belediye* social services offices interviewed highlighted donation distribution as one of the primary ways they help Syrians, and many of them pointed to the generosity of the people living in their district for the goods. The Bağcılar Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation of the *kaymakamlık* stated that in their district, they help with housing, whereas food aid is distributed by the *belediye*.

While housing is outside the purview of many *belediyes*,[31] there were, nonetheless, differences in perception between districts. The Üsküdar *belediye* listed housing access as the biggest challenge for Syrians. In Sultanbeyli, new arrivals who cannot find their own housing can stay in a *belediye* guesthouse until they find a place of their own. The *belediye* even contributes to rent for one month if needed. The Pendik *belediye* identified housing as the biggest problem in their area. In contrast, for the Esenyurt *belediye*, which has an estimated 40,000 Syrians, housing and basic services did not seem to be the most pressing concern. This could, however, also reflect geographical differences in housing availability and pricing between districts in Istanbul. For example,

30 Muhtars represent the lowest level of the local Turkish government system. In big cities, there can be hundreds or thousands of delineated neighborhoods, with a *muhtar* elected by local residents for each.

31 These include Bağcılar, Esenler, Esenyurt, Eyup, Kucukcekmece, Sancaktepe, and Şişli, as well as Üsküdar's written response, and our conversation with Sultanbeyli's representative from their refugee coordination center.

Bağcılar and Başaksehir districts on the European side of Istanbul have a lot of public housing and therefore more accommodation options.

Some *belediyes* take an active involvement in guiding Syrians in their area to appropriate health centers. The Zeytinburnu *belediye* provides some home care services. The *belediye* also provides psychological support services to those who can communicate sufficiently in Turkish. Küçükçekmece *belediye* appears to have a registration process that records details about Syrians' health, among other criteria.[32] In exceptional situations, such as when someone has lost their leg or when someone is fatally ill, the Küçükçekmece *kaymakamlık* pays for hospital expenses, though this is not an official policy. Sultanbeyli refers individuals who arrive with health issues directly to specific health professionals in the area. The *belediye* has a number of Syrian doctors working in its clinics. If they are unable to treat an issue within Sultanbeyli, they are referred to a broader network of health institutions. The social services desk at the Eyüp *belediye* noted that healthcare is easily accessible to Syrians and that the district has a special arrangement with a local hospital that they send Syrians to for childbirth. Esenyurt *belediye* mentioned that, from their perspective, the biggest challenge with healthcare is not access, but rather that Syrians do not have the language skills to understand what health professionals are telling them.

A primary issue, according to multiple conversations with *belediye* social service providers, is not simply the provision of these basic services but helping Syrians find employment in order for them to afford these basic services. Employment is important for financial independence and the ability to establish one's own home, as well as to restore a sense of autonomy and dignity for Syrians in their newly-adopted countries. The Sancaktepe social services representative mentioned that the *belediye* has a career center where people can seek guidance for finding work and that they refer Syrians there when they are having trouble. Employment and work permits for Syrians are complicated issues worth delving into but are outside the scope of this study.

Education

Education was perceived by local governments as the most complicated and problematic area in providing services for Syrians. The language barrier is an oft-cited impediment to Syrian resettlement, perhaps most acutely felt in education. All of the municipalities interviewed mentioned that getting children into schools is one of the biggest local challenges. While the districts vary significantly in terms of educational access for Syrians, they all expressed a desire to continue developing educational infrastructure.

The Bağcılar district has three Syrian schools with Arabic and Turkish instruction for students. But, like other districts, the officials were aware that most of the 12 and 13-year-olds in the area who should be enrolled in school end up working in sweatshops in the textile and garment sector. Küçükçekmece is trying to work with Syrian private schools and state schools in their area to try to monitor school enrollment. The Güngören *belediye* is working with the two Syrian schools in their district to monitor activities and ensure there are no problems. Both schools are privately run with 1,300 students and 84 Syrian teachers. Students come from other districts as well, such as Eyüp, Esenler, Bahçelievler, Bağcılar, and Fatih. The schools follow a Syrian curriculum but provide additional Turkish language classes to the children.

According to officials at the Fatih *belediye*, the district *kaymakamlık* provides classes in both Turkish and English to Syrians and other foreigners. While the education department of the *kaymakamlık* is responsible for hiring the teachers, the *belediye* provides the facilities. The Esenyurt *belediye* also runs its own education courses. It has opened a school for Syrians that follows a Syrian curriculum. The *belediye* also runs Turkish language classes for adults. The Zeytinburnu *belediye* offers Turkish language classes to both adults and children. Each course is for three months taught by teachers from the "Public Education Center" (*İlçe Halk Eğitim Merkezi*). The *belediye* also has a center where various informative workshops are run.

The Sancaktepe *belediye* had a positive assessment of Syrian education in their district. The *belediye* tries to advise parents on schools where there is both Turkish and Arabic instruction. It also tries to collaborate with the Sultanbeyli *belediye* on Syrian education with a temporary education center for Syrian children located near the border between the two districts. In April 2016, the Sancaktepe *belediye* stated that nearly 1,000 students were in attendance. By September 2016, Sultanbeyli confirmed that there were 1,200 children in this center. According to the officials from Sultanbeyli's Refugee Coordination Center, the district boasted a 50 percent enrollment rate among school-age children,[33]

32 Küçükçekmece records an individual's health, age, ID number, occupation, etc. They also assess what are the person's needs and ask whether their relatives are in Europe or Syria.

33 Interview with Sultanbeyli official, Istanbul Policy Center, April 2, 2016.

which is significantly higher than the national average of 25% among urban Syrians.[34] The *belediye* has placed one limiting criterion for aid that requires families with school-age children to register them in school in order to receive any support. In practice, it is unclear how this is enforced. Sultanbeyli officials have stated that there are not enough schools for Turkish students and that more must be built so more Syrians can also benefit.

A Şişli official had the most pessimistic assessment of the state of education in their district, noting that there are some Syrian school-age children who have been there for almost five years and have not yet had any formal education. The official warned that a lost generation is forming, which could lead to social problems in the near future, as these issues continue to be exacerbated. Like his colleague in Sancaktepe, the Şişli official mentioned that another problem is that parents often prefer private Syrian schools, which typically require tuition and are unaffordable to most families. Reports on Syrian education in general note that families sometimes forgo sending their children to local Turkish public schools due to bullying, a lack of capacity,[35] or the expectation that they will return home in the future. The Şişli official pointed out that the resistance to Turkish state schools is something that needs to be solved soon, though he did not mention whose responsibility it was to lead this change.

Funding and Cooperation with other Government Agencies and NGOs

Additional funding and the relocation of resources specifically for issues related to refugees or Syrians do not appear to have been provided to many Istanbul municipalities. For example, *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* officials said that they work within their established budgets to help the Syrians in their districts. Any additional support they get tends to be through donations. There are no apparent funds designated specifically for Syrians. *Kaymakamlık* offices are allotted a "solidarity fund" for general poverty alleviation, and though none of the offices we spoke with mentioned it specifically, some of these funds are presumably being set aside for Syrian needs.[36]

As local governmental agencies largely rely on established district budgets for general social services, collaboration with other non-governmental agencies helps expand their reach and effectiveness. While many *belediyes* do not collaborate with NGOs, for example Küçükçekmece or Kağıthane, others have been working together to implement projects or gain information about what is happening in the area. Şişli and Beyoğlu *belediyes* both work with a Social Market Foundation,[37] a volunteer-led NGO that provides donated food, clothing, and household goods to people in need of help. Syrians must show their registration card to get things from the foundation. The Beyoğlu *belediye* uses this information to ensure that they can provide the Social Market with supplies when necessary and to inform their own offices of the number of Syrians in the area. In addition to its own migrant center, the Şişli *belediye* collaborates with a number of other NGOs such as Refugee Rights center, Human Resource and Development Foundation (IKGV), and the Turkey Family Health and Planning Foundation to provide information services and workshops on legal rights and women's health to Syrians. Esenyurt *belediye* liaises with United Nations offices in providing winter supplies for Syrians. Üsküdar *belediye* mentioned the work of the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) and other NGOs but noted that their offices have not as yet engaged in regular communication with these organizations. Esenler *belediye* social services office highlighted collaboration between its *kaymakamlık*, the regional Directorate of Family and Social Policies, and NGOs in the area, a positive sign of pooling local and regional governmental agencies' functions.

The primary resource for Syrian-specific support continues to be private charitable donations. The nature and amount of these donations may vary widely. Küçükçekmece noted that there is a cyclical nature to the donations, with big spikes during Ramadan but a dearth during the rest of the year. While most offices reference donations on the community level, larger sums also sometimes come from wealthy private donors. Such funding was not discussed by any municipalities interviewed. But the disproportionate amount of resources in a few areas implies that some districts have substantially more donation money to work with. None of the municipality officials interviewed discussed the impact that political party affiliation had on access to resources.

Collaboration between local government and civil society is also used as a way to try to address a lack of capacity. For example, the *Marmara Belediyeler Birligi* (Marmara Municipalities Union, or MBB) was cited by a number of *belediyes*. It is an Istanbul-based organization that brings together belediye representa-

34 "'When I Picture My Future I See Nothing.'"

35 Ibid.

36 Telephone interview with academic, Istanbul, March 3, 2016.

37 "Sosyal Market Vakfı," retrieved, http://sosyalmarketvakfi.org/hakkimizda/detay/Hakkimizda/7/1/0.

tives across the greater Marmara region to discuss and collaboratively explore approaches to issues like migration. Eyüp and Fatih *belediyes* mentioned that when they cannot supply the specific aid needed, they will refer Syrians to charitable foundations. The Esenler *belediye* and the Human Resource and Development Foundation (IKGV) collaborate to recommend contacts and people to each other. Sultanbeyli *belediye,* for example, has a coordinated network of groups contributing to Syrian needs. The *belediye's* Refugee Coordination Center maintains detailed records of family needs, and charitable organizations that operate within the district are directly linked into its system. As such, the *belediye* can maintain a comprehensive understanding of non-state actors' aid efforts within the district and can adapt their resources appropriately. Due to the leading role that some *belediyes* have played in engaging with their Syrian populations, NGOs appear in general to come to these districts for guidance on where their services are needed.

GDMM and Local Governance

The establishment of the General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM) has both streamlined the record-keeping of Syrians in Turkey and has made the system and practices more robust. Both *belediyes* and *kaymakamlıks* in Istanbul, for example, appear to consistently direct Syrians to the *emniyet* for registration. In many districts that had no system in place for processing Syrians, the GDMM introduced a simple and standardized procedure. While there can be long waits to get the ID due to shortages of biometric equipment and high demand, the concept is straightforward: register at the *emniyet* and receive a temporary ID from the GDMM and have legal access to state services.

In practice, the centralization of the GDMM registration process has led some districts who had their own system of tracking Syrians to stop and defer responsibility to the provincial GDMM office. This has counter-intuitively led to inconsistency and improvisation on the local level. Information from the *emniyet* is communicated directly to a regional GDMM office and appears to bypass district level actors who provide services to constituents including Syrians. One *kaymakamlık* official stated that they used to keep track of Syrians in their municipality themselves, but since the establishment of the GDMM, they have stopped. Theoretically this is not problematic if they continue to get updated information from the *emniyet*. For example, the Sultanbeyli *belediye* sometimes collaborates closely with the district *emniyet*. In 2014, they sent three experts and five Syrian translators to the *emniyet* in order to process all the people waiting to be registered. The *belediye* now has a translator at the *emniyet* permanently. The problem is that there appears to be inconsistency in the relationship between the *belediye* and the *emniyet*. Both Şişli and Gaziosmanpaşa *belediyes* highlighted this problem, stating that *emniyet* officials had told them they cannot share information on Syrian statistics or other migrant groups. In the case of Gaziosmanpaşa this meant that they could not confirm the identity numbers of two Syrians in their area. With the exception of Sultanbeyli and Esenyurt, there does not seem to be a consistent or successful engagement between *belediye* and *emniyet* offices. On the one hand, this could be due to the unwillingness of some *belediyes* to keep track of Syrians in their area. On the other hand, this could also be a result of bureaucratic barriers to sharing information.

In contrast, there appears to be better communication between district *kaymakamlık*, *emniyet,* and GDMM offices. Both Pendik and Silivri *belediye* officials believe their *kaymakamlık* offices are in touch with the district GDMM and *emniyet*. This system illustrates an institutional separation of information at the local level between the central government institutions of the *kaymakamlıks*, *emniyet,* and GDMM and the local government *belediye*. Such a situation is incredibly problematic, especially as the *belediye* are the local government offices that are, in many instances, trying to extend their services to Syrian communities as a growing constituency. Üsküdar is one district where there appears to be periodic bilateral communication between the officials in the *belediye*, *kaymakamlık*, *emniyet,* and the provincial government. The GDMM may know how many Syrians are in a neighborhood, but there appear to be few if any standardized mechanisms that communicate this information to the local government. Some *belediyes* such as Beyoğlu, Sultanbeyli, and Çekmeköy confirmed that they work with the GDMM, while for others, such as Şişli, Esenler, and Gaziosmanpaşa, there is no engagement. This is problematic as these districts have thousands of registered Syrians. Some districts have developed their own systems to keep a registration of Syrians in their area.

CONCLUSION

This research has tried to explore the role of local Istanbul governments in engaging with Syrian communities. Istanbul has become the largest Syrian-hosting city in Turkey. Over 418,000 Syrians were officially living in the city by December 2016. The number is considerably higher when both unregistered Syrians and those registered in different cities are considered. This paper has relied almost exclusively on information from phone calls to officials in both the *kaymakamlık* and the *belediye* offices in each of the 39 districts in Istanbul. It has tried to analyze some of the bureaucratic mechanisms in Istanbul municipalities (both at the *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* offices) that may deal with Syrians and highlight what information is available to local officials, as well as their relationships with other critical actors such as NGOs, international organizations, and government agencies. The experiences of local governments in Istanbul vary widely and are very much dependent on the size of the Syrian communities in the area and the individual inclination of district mayors and officials. There are, however, some general trends and issues that have been identified.

There appears to be multiple institutional rifts among different branches of Istanbul municipalities and state agencies that are causing problems in accurately recording Syrian numbers and therefore recognizing and responding to their needs. The *emniyet*, for example, has records of the number of Syrians registered in districts; however, this information does not appear to be shared consistently with the *belediyes* or *kaymakamlıks*. These communication rifts result in local government offices, particularly the *belediye*, not knowing how many Syrians are in their district. Some municipalities undertake their own calculations, but as illustrated in the example of Sancaktepe, this can differ even between the *belediye* and the *kaymakamlık* in the same district. Knowledge of the number and needs of the populations in their districts is a necessity for local government development in order to plan for emergencies, capacities, and services. This is a sentiment expressed by the Kağıthane *belediye* officials. They are contemplating visiting every area of their district to get a more accurate refugee number, which they claim would make their jobs easier. There is also a lack of information sharing between *kaymakamlıks* and *belediyes* in the same districts. Numerous times during the research, phone calls to a municipality were transferred to and from the *belediye* and *kaymakamlık* as individual staff tried to decide who was most responsible.

There appears to be no coordination process or policies to guide local governments' engagement with Syrian communities in Istanbul. This has resulted in the development of ad hoc practices that differ between both *kaymakamlıks* and *belediyes*. *Kaymakamlıks* in Istanbul seem to be primarily involved in the process of recording the number of Syrians in their districts by referring them to the *emniyet* or the GDMM. In contrast, *belediyes* in Istanbul appear more active in working with Syrians and in some cases other refugee groups. For example, the Esenyurt, Şişli, Küçükçekmece, and Sultanbeyli *belediyes* have developed specific Syrian-orientated centers or departments. In general, *belediyes* in Istanbul have simply incorporated Syrians into existing services and outreach programs such as donations of food or household goods. Some *belediye* such as Esenyurt and Sultanbeyli have taken a leading role on Syrian issues in their area. As such, these *belediye* have become one of the main centers in their area for Syrians to go for information on their rights, while NGOs appear in general to come to these *belediyes* for guidance on where their services are needed. Cooperation between *belediyes* and NGOs, however, remains rare.

There is growing recognition among local governments of the scope of the Syrian population and issues in Istanbul. However, a number of municipality officials stated that they need more financial support and guidance to develop their capacity. There does not appear to be Syrian-specific state funds provided to local governments.[38] *Belediye* offices are working within their normal budgets to incorporate a large new constituency into existing services. This has already created some capacity challenges as mentioned by a number of officials. Consequently some *belediyes* are using NGOs as an alternative service provider by sending Syrians to them for help. However, as representatives from both Bağcılar and Şişli noted, NGOs are transient and a temporary fix for a long-term demographic transition. In a few instances some municipalities are collaborating with NGOs to deliver some outreach programs or have turned to umbrella agencies, such as the MBB, to find collaborative solutions and support. The MBB has organized meetings and workshops to try to support inter-municipality communication and develop common standards and approaches to Syrian populations. For example, in November 2015, it organ-

38 Telephone interview with academic in discussion with the authors, Istanbul, March 3, 2016.

ized a workshop with UNHCR Istanbul that brought together the Vice Governor of Istanbul, Istanbul GDMM officials, academics, and representatives of 21 municipalities to discuss Syrian-related issues.[39]

Catering to new constituents puts a strain on existing infrastructure. As highlighted by a number of officials, municipalities would benefit from both guidelines as to how they might streamline their operations and an allocation of greater resources to aid vulnerable communities. With a more coordinated effort, resources such as services and funding could be more effectively distributed, and government agencies could work together without relying as much on NGOs and external agencies. Statistics on the number and location of Syrians need to be more widely available to all local government agencies. The registration system of Syrians must also be made more flexible so that their place of residence can be updated. This would help to better monitor where Syrians are living. Syrians need to be incorporated into existing systems rather than create parallel ones that will lead to more bureaucracy, institutional segregation, and inter-community antagonism. To achieve this, however, there must be more investment in local services and municipalities.

The institutional and social issues faced by Istanbul municipalities will increase as Syrians continue to arrive in the city. Both the Beyoğlu *belediye* and the Sancaktepe *kaymakamlık* have sometimes registered three to four new Syrian families on the same day. It is necessary for Syrian-focused programs by both national and international actors to acknowledge and adjust resources to reflect the geographic shift of Syrian populations from the Southeast of Turkey to more urban areas in the West, particularly Istanbul. Many new Syrian arrivals have not registered and do not know their rights. For example, in Fatih, one NGO worker noted that two new families had arrived in their neighborhood in the second week of July and did not want to register as they were afraid of the repercussions.[40] Officials from both Esenyurt and Sancaktepe claim that chain migration is a significant aspect of their Syrian population growth. The communities are growing as more relatives come to join them in the same area. At the same time, some officials believe that the positive reputation of government services in some areas also attracts new immigrants. As a result, municipalities may be resistant to engage with Syrians or put in place support measures for fear of attracting more to the area.

There is also growing resentment toward Syrians, which can make local government adaptations to accommodate the influx politically unpopular. For example, in Güngören, *belediye* officials explained that locals in the area are complaining about Syrians and are blaming them for the perceived drop in wages or lack of jobs. Similarly, in Şişli, some people are unhappy about Syrians and other refugee groups coming to the area. Beyoğlu *belediye* officials noted that there is also growing frustration among the Syrian community in their district, with some making comparisons with each other over who the *belediye* is perceived to have helped more and why. Municipalities with more organized systems continue to attract Syrians from other districts where their needs are not met. This phenomenon disincentivizes municipalities from improving their systems. So long as policies are not applied uniformly throughout municipalities, migration to areas that provide support will continue and may lead to long-term ghettoization and security challenges.

In Turkey, 90 percent of registered Syrians live in urban areas such as in cities or towns as they offer better opportunities for jobs and settlement.[41] Syrians in urban areas of Turkey are more likely to become long-term or permanent residents as they try to establish new lives. Providing support for them in urban areas is, therefore, not a humanitarian issue like in camps but rather a long-term development and bureaucratic challenge. Syrians in urban areas are made vulnerable primarily by inconsistency in the implementation of laws, policies, and practices. Like other impoverished groups, criminality, even for survival, is likely to increase in the long-term, especially where there is a large excluded youth population. In marginalized urban communities there are higher rates of crime, violence, and mental health problems such as depression. A lack of access to services from healthcare to policing also heightens the sense of insecurity in these areas. From such situations, alternative local power systems and ideologies can emerge, from criminal gangs to extremist groups. Effectively engaging with vulnerable communities such as Syrians in urban areas requires responsive and effective leadership from municipalities and government agencies at the local level. While national and provincial administrations are critical to structuring policies, it is the local governments that have greater opportunities to work directly with Syrian communities in order to ensure that their basic needs are met and can help facilitate their integration into communities.

39 Lauranne Callet-Ravat, "The Role of Municipalities of Turkey in the Syrian Migratory Influx Management," United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia, January 2016, 19.

40 Interview with an NGO Worker, Balat, Fatih, July 21, 2016.

41 "Turkey: Refugee crisis, ECHO Factsheet."

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