

PRACTICING COEXISTENCE IN CIVIL SOCIETY: SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

HANDE PAKER

IPC
ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

PRACTICING COEXISTENCE IN CIVIL SOCIETY: SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

HANDE PAKER

June 2019

Hande Paker is a political sociologist and 2015/16 Mercator-IPC Fellow who works on civil society, state, cosmopolitan citizenship, and political ecology. In this report, Paker analyzes encounters between refugees and hosts in the case of Turkey and offers policy suggestions for an alternative, inclusive response to the refugee issue.

About Istanbul Policy Center

Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) is a global policy research institution that specializes in key social and political issues ranging from democratization to climate change, transatlantic relations to conflict resolution and mediation. IPC organizes and conducts its research under three main clusters: the Istanbul Policy Center–Sabancı University–Stiftung Mercator Initiative, Democratization and Institutional Reform, and Conflict Resolution and Mediation. Since 2001, IPC has provided decision makers, opinion leaders, and other major stakeholders with objective analyses and innovative policy recommendations.
www.ipc.sabanciuniv.edu

About the Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program

The Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program is the cornerstone of the IPC-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative. The program aims to strengthen the academic, political, and social ties between Turkey and Germany, as well as Turkey and Europe, by facilitating excellent scientific research and hands-on policy work. It is based on the belief that in an increasingly globalized world, the acquisition of knowledge and an exchange of ideas and people are the preconditions for meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

* The interpretations and conclusions made in this report belong solely to the author and do not reflect IPC's offical position.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4

1. INTRODUCTION 5

2. METHODOLOGY 7

3. CIVIL SOCIETY AND COEXISTENCE 8

4. CIVIL SOCIETY IN TURKEY 10

5. ACTIVITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS WORKING WITH REFUGEES: MEDIUM- AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS 12

6. DIMENSIONS IN THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT 18

   6.1 Political Discourse 18

   6.2 Relations with the State 19

   6.3 Local Government 20

   6.4 The Social Context of Everyday Interactions 21

7. ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS 23

   7.1 Similar Issues, Different Approaches 23

   7.2 Funding 24

8. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS 26

APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS 27

BIBLIOGRAPHY 28

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the civil society representatives who have generously contributed their time and shared their insights and experiences with me. I have also benefitted greatly from the valuable assistance Günce Sabah Eryılmaz provided at every stage of the research process.

Many thanks are due to Çiğdem Tongal and Gülcihan Çiğdem Okan, who have provided excellent support at IPC, and to Megan Gisclon, who edited this report.

I would also like to acknowledge the generous support from Stiftung Mercator that made possible the larger research project carried out in 2017-18, a portion of which is presented in the following report.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contrary to the homogenizing discourses of many populist leaders that prioritize naturalized populations, current global trends present us with heterogeneous societies, the realities of which require more comprehensive solutions than the emergency aid and service provision that characterize many programs of refugee-receiving countries. Institutions that can govern diversity and practices that support diversified common public spheres are harder to build because they bring up questions relating to democratic participation and the construction of citizenship. The global movement of people brings into sharper focus the larger questions of our time, such as how to live with Others and who belongs.

The case of Turkey is highly relevant in discerning the boundaries of belonging, since it has become the largest refugee-hosting country worldwide.[1] The accommodation of 3.6 million Syrians now living in Turkey is a challenge not only because it is a multi-faceted issue that requires long-term perspectives but also because public resentment toward newcomers has been increasing. While it is clear that human-centered and sustainable responses to the refugee issue must be developed—at the core of which lies coexistence—a contradictory mix of social acceptance and resentment in society at large affects the interactions between locals and Syrians. On the one hand, 58% of Turkish citizens perceive Syrians as "people running away from war/persecution"; on the other, 43% of Turkish citizens perceive Syrians as a "liability," 39% as "dangerous people who will cause trouble in the future," and 24% as "beggars/living on aid."[2] Another study that looks at the dimensions of polarization in Turkey strikingly finds that 86% of Turkish citizens, deeply polarized around many issues, can agree that "Syrians should be sent back to their country once the war in Syria is over."[3] While many dimensions of and challenges to integration exist, coexistence is a core concern that crosscuts issues such as education, employment, and healthcare. For all these policies to be effective, the question of how to live together must be addressed.

This report assesses the role of civil society actors in Turkey in the integration of refugees, articulated as coexistence. Moving beyond approaches to integration that are based on assimilation and even the recognition of diversity, coexistence embodies a novel understanding of engagement between locals and newcomers that transcends existing categorizations—based on given borders—of citizen and non-citizen. Showing civil society to be a key actor in creating space for bringing together hosts and refugees, the report differentiates among the forms and approaches of civil society that can build open, participatory spaces where coexistence is made possible. The report argues that the social and political context within which civil society acts and hosts and newcomers interact shapes the potential of civil society actors to transform the public sphere, which is currently defined in exclusionary terms set by national membership.

1 UNHCR, https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/unhcr-in-turkey, accessed April 24, 2019.

2 Murat Erdoğan, *Syrian Barometer: A Framework for Living in Harmony with Syrians* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2018). In an earlier barometer report by Konda, 56% of participants defined Syrians as "people running away from persecution." See, Konda Barometer 2016, *Perceptions of Syrian Refugees* (Istanbul: Konda, February 2016), http://konda.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1602_Barometre62_SURIYELI_SIGINMACILAR.pdf, accessed April 24, 2019. Please see also, *Turkey's Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, Europe Report No. 248 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, January 29, 2018).

3 Emre Erdoğan and Pınar Uyan Semerci, *Fanus'ta Diyaloglar: Türkiye'de Kutuplaşmanın Boyutları* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2018).

The report first presents a brief discussion of why polities constituted by national membership fail to meet the challenge of supporting diversity. It then shows how civil society is relevant for coexistence, since mobilization on identity-based claims as well as negotiations on difference and belonging take place in civil society. Moreover, negotiations on "who belongs and how" are not just carried out across group boundaries but also beyond borders with the emergence of global problems that push for solutions based on cooperation with Others. The report then turns to the case of Turkey, with a quick overview of the expansion and diversification of civil society in the 2000s, only to face closing spaces for democratic participation recently as rule of law has eroded and peaceful opposition was subdued through the closure of more than 1,500 civil society organizations (CSOs), the purging of thousands of academics and civil society representatives, the suppression of free media, and arrests of dissidents.

The analysis of the data starts by laying out in detail the various activities civil society actors undertake, grouped under the categories of emergency relief and protection, services, and coexistence. The focus of the report is on the work civil society does to bring about openness to coexistence. An important finding is the significance of the dimensions of the social and political context, which shapes the capacity of civil society to make a wide and transformative impact. In that regard, the data reveals that political discourse, relations with the state, and the role of municipal governments are critical factors. Next, the report unpacks interactions between locals and refugees and finds that processes of Othering act as constraints in building peaceful coexistence and networks of trust. Finally, organizational factors delineate a comprehensive assessment of civil society's potential to be an inclusive sphere where transformative engagements between participants lead to the negotiation and remaking of diverse forms of belonging and common problems. The report makes the argument that the impact of civil society in strengthening the possibility of living together from the bottom up can only be enhanced by addressing the challenges of state-civil society relations, mitigating increasing public resentment, and supporting grassroots approaches sensitive to local dynamics.

Specifically, the report aims to answer the following questions:

- In what ways does civil society play a role in fostering coexistence?
- What are the sources of coexistence? What are the sources of tension?
- How can the transformative impacts of grassroots organizations and best practices of civil society organizations be diffused among citizens and government to promote coexistence?
- How do the social and political dimensions of the context in which civil society actors are embedded shape their capacities?
- What are some organizational issues that impact civil society's ability to provide services and spaces that can support integration?

2. METHODOLOGY

The report is based on data generated using qualitative methods. The bulk of the data comes from in-depth interviews I conducted with representatives of civil society organizations working with Syrian refugees in Turkey. The range of organizations include CSOs working at the national level, Syrian CSOs, international NGOs, and grassroots organizations to ensure the representation of different types, tasks, and approaches of civil society actors. A total of 22 interviews were conducted in 2017-18, with 12 of these taking place in Gaziantep, nine in Istanbul, and one in Hatay. A semi-structured interview schedule was designed to gather systematic data, which at the same time allowed for open-ended discussion in which participants could raise alternative points or concerns. Additionally, two focus group discussions were organized to complement the in-depth interviews. The first focus group was organized in Gaziantep with Syrian men, while the second focus group was organized in Istanbul with Syrian women. These focus groups were especially important in understanding the daily experiences of Syrians as well as their interactions with locals.

The report also makes use of desktop research, analyzing relevant reports, documents, and output of workshops attended. Out of a review of 28 reports published between 2013–2019, the following reports in particular were made use of to complement the findings of the research: *Living Together: Fostering Cultural Pluralism through the Arts* by Baban and Rygiel, IKSV (2018); *Turkey's Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions* by International Crisis Group, Europe Report no. 248, (2018); *Social Cohesion Assessment: Quantative and Qualitative Assessment of Host-Refugee Cohesion in Three Districts in Turkey* by IOM/Turkey (2017).

3. CIVIL SOCIETY AND COEXISTENCE

One of the most obvious trends that signals the ongoing transformation of states and societies toward closer integration is the unprecedented increase in the movement of people, resulting in pluralistic societies. The global reality of increased migration and refugee flows brings up two interrelated questions of how to live together and who belongs. For a long time, belonging has been subsumed under the nation state, formulated through citizenship, though various identity claims of belonging cut across membership in the national community. More than a formulation based on legal status, which comes with legal documents, rights, and duties, citizenship is also a set of practices, performed creatively by citizens and non-citizens alike[4] and realized through participation in civil society. Citizenship practiced in civil society revolves around claims of recognition and belonging as well as advocacy on how belonging should be defined. This is why one conceptualization of civil society, among others, is about the accommodation of diversity and conflict through public debate, non-violent struggle, and advocacy.[5] As the urgency of the question of how to live together has heightened, civil society has emerged as the pivotal space where civic conversation on difference and belonging and the negotiation of the commons takes place. This is especially so given that it has become clearer than ever that the two major methods of assimilation—homogenizing to the extent of stifling difference and multiculturalism and essentializing difference to the extent of losing common ground—have failed as strategies of integration.[6] Hence, the search for an alternative framework for coexistence is intense in academic discussions, as well as among civil society activists and policy makers.

An alternative framework-in-the-making can be found in the revival of the cosmopolitanism debate. This agenda for living together with diversity is constructed not as the rootless and abstract meeting of strangers who are expected to keep company with one another through their common humanity oblivious to their thick attachments (of religion, race, political position, class, culture) but as a transformative framework shaped by peers who have a stake in negotiating a common ground to solve shared problems. These shared problems rise from structural changes, for instance, the ascent of heterogeneous societies as a result of global flows of migrants and refugees, presenting what Ulrich Beck has called a cosmopolitan imperative.[7] In the case of refugees, the cosmopolitan imperative is manifested in the necessity of integration into a diverse public sphere. This report analyzes integration as coexistence, informed by approaches that adopt a radical cosmopolitanism, which takes traditional notions of cosmopolitanism beyond simple recognition of difference toward an inclusive and open-ended process mutually negotiated through the thick attachments of participants. Such a process can be traced in empirically identified everyday practices and mobilization in civil society.[8] Thus, the cosmo-

4 Engin Isin, "Performative citizenship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship*, ed. Ayelet Shacher, Rainer Baubock, Irene Bloemraad, and Maarten Vink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

5 Mary Kaldor, Helmut K. Anheier, and Marlies Glasius, "Introduction," in *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2004/5*, ed. Mary Kaldor, Helmut K. Anheier, and Marlies Glasius, 1–25 (London: SAGE, 2005).

6 Feyzi Baban and Kim Rygiel, "Snapshots from the margins: Transgressive cosmopolitanisms in Europe," *European Journal of Social Theory* 17, no. 4 (2014): 461–478.

7 Ulrich Beck, "Cosmopolitanism as Imagined Communities of Global Risk," *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 10 (2011): 1346–1361.

8 Baban and Rygiel, "Snapshots"; Feyzi Baban and Kim Rygiel, "Living with others: fostering radical cosmopolitanism through citizenship politics in Berlin," *Ethics & Global Politics* 10, no. 1 (2017): 98–116.

politan premise of engaging with "the Other" can be grounded and practiced in civil society. Civil society is relevant to coexistence because it provides spaces where locals and newcomers can interact. Specifically, the report focuses on the contextual and organizational factors that shape the impact civil society actors can make in creating and fostering spaces of coexistence.

Civil society is a historically and contextually loaded concept, with diverse forms, purposes, and values attributed to it. It is at once an organizational spectrum and normative sphere, seen to support neoliberal aspirations of replacing the tasks of the state and democratic force for practicing active citizenship, and a social fabric and public sphere in which to participate and deliberate.[9] With such various and at times contradictory manifestations, it does not come as a surprise that ambiguity surrounds the concept of civil society, which makes it crucial that it is assessed with the recognition of all the political and organizational factors that shape its capacities. Civil society here is defined as a sphere in which citizens organize locally, nationally, and globally to pursue their interests, show solidarity, provide services, make collective societal demands, or engage in critical public debate about their commons, distinct from but in relation with the state and the market. Not only is civil society diverse, but also its geographical boundaries are changing, which introduces further pluralism of form and purpose into the mix. Hence, civil society includes international NGOs, local and national civil society organizations, grassroots initiatives, transnational coalitions and networks, and social movements.[10] Crucially, the work and capacity for the transformation of diverse forms of civil society are shaped by the political and social context in which they are situated.[11] In this respect, the mode of interaction with the state, as well as the mode of participation in civil society, which has implications for its funding relations and effectiveness in creating change, need to be taken into account to comprehensively map civil society.[12]

9 Please see, among others, John A. Hall, "The nature of civil society," *Society* 35, no. 4 (1998): 32–41; Mary Kaldor, Helmut K. Anheier, and Marleis Glasius, "Global Civil Society in an Era of Regressive Globalization," in *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2003*, ed. Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier, and Marleis Glasius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); Carmen Malena and Volkhart Finn Heinrich, "Can We Measure Civil Society? A Proposed Methodology for International Comparative Research," *Development in Practice* 17, no. 3 (2007): 338–52.

10 Mary Kaldor, Helmut K. Anheier, and Marleis Glasius, ed., *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Helmut Anheier, Marleis Glasius, and Mary Kaldor, ed., *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

11 Hall, "The nature of civil society"; Joel S. Migdal, *State in society: Studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

12 Hande Paker, Fikret Adaman, Zeynep Kadirbeyoğlu, and Begüm Özkaynak, "Environmental Organisations in Turkey: Engaging the State and Capital," *Environmental Politics* 22, no. 5 (2013): 760–78.

4. CIVIL SOCIETY IN TURKEY

Civil society in Turkey has been active for well over 40 years, with earlier initiatives stretching further back in the history of the Republic and more recent periods marked by surges of civic activism and civil society expansion. Civil society is diversified and works on a wide range of issues including ecological sustainability, climate change, gender inequality, human rights, education, democratic participation, identity articulation, coexistence, and refugees. Some of these issues are addressed through awareness raising, service provision, and lobbying, while rights-based demands are made through legal activism, advocacy, community action, and mobilization. Accordingly, the sphere of civil society consists of both institutionalized organizations working for service provision or advocacy at the national level, often with transnational ties, and grassroots mobilizations at the local level.

Building on the activism (especially of women's and environmental movements, as well as human rights), institution building (with the establishment of several major rights-based CSOs), and transnational networks forming in the previous two decades, civil society flourished in Turkey in the 2000s. The number of CSOs increased nearly 40%, and approximately 13% of the population was a member of a civil society organization.[13] The legal and political context provided additional impetus when a new Law on Associations was passed in 2004, which lifted restrictions in previous legislation, and the EU accession process, at its peak at the time, provided networks, visibility, and funding. The expansion of the civic sphere also included grassroots initiatives and mobilization, with particular emphasis on human rights, democratization, women's rights, and the use of urban space and environmental issues, the epitome of which was the Gezi Park protests in 2013. The post-Gezi period has seen the proliferation of civic grassroots initiatives, citizens' forums, horizontal networks, and community organizations, despite an escalating crackdown on dissent.[14]

Even though civil society actors have come to occupy a crucial role in key political processes in Turkey such as democratization, integration into the EU, and the protection of the commons,[15] their effectiveness and mobilization have been constrained by factors specific to the wider context in Turkey—the more so considering the fact that such processes have come almost to a standstill. One of the most important factors to consider here is the relationship of civil society to the state, which is historically defined as a hierarchical one that emphasizes citizens' duties and the primacy

13 There are 121,774 CSOs in Turkey as of 2019 (Directorate for Relations with Civil Society, https://www.dernekler.gov.tr/tr/Anasayfa-Linkler/yillara-gore-faal-dernek.aspx, accessed April 5, 2019). This number includes associations, foundations, and CSOs with a legal status. When trade unions, employers' unions, public officials' unions, cooperatives, and chambers are added, the total number is 135,364. However, the number does not include informal organizations, civic initiatives, and grassroots networks.

14 Baran Alp Uncu, "From a Conflictual Coalition to a Social Movement? The Transformative Capacity of the Gezi Protests," *Southeastern Europe* 40, no. 2 (2016): 188–216; Özge Zihnioğlu, "The Prospects of Civic Alliance: New Civic Activists Acting Together with Civil Society Organizations," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* (2018): 1–11.

15 E. Fuat Keyman and Ahmet İçduygu, "Globalization, civil society and citizenship in Turkey: Actors, boundaries and discourses," *Citizenship Studies* 7, no. 2 (2003): 219–234; E. Fuat Keyman, "Modernity, democracy, and civil society," in *Environmentalism in Turkey*, ed. Fikret Adaman and Murat Arsel, 49–64 (Oxford/New York: Routledge, 2005); Paker et al. "Environmental organisations"; *Trends in Turkish Civil Society: Turkey 2023 Task Force* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, Istanbul Policy Center, and Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2017).

of national interest.[16] The autonomous political demands of civil society actors formulated outside of the duty-service axis starting with the 1980s have been met by the state with reluctance and exclusion and coopted whenever possible. The unresponsiveness of the state, possessively guarding what it deems to be its jurisdiction and closed to the idea of a pluralistic public sphere, has made cooperation between the state and civil society in Turkey very difficult to achieve. The state tradition in Turkey often presents civil society with "red lines," which civil society has to accommodate or contest, making cooptation or conflict more common forms of interaction between civil society and the state.[17] The other factor that constrains the effectiveness and more particularly the transformative power of civil society is the limited societal support for civic activity. The limited membership base of civil society is aggravated by low levels of generalized trust, a high level of polarization, and increased political risks of mobilization. Limited support for civil society has implications for access to funding that can enable the sustainability of their activities.[18]

More recently, the escalating crackdown on dissent, marked by the purging of thousands of academics and civil society representatives, as well as 150,000 civil servants, the disappearance of rule of law, trials based on the elimination of freedom of expression exemplified by the "Academics for Peace" petition, closure of more than 1,500 CSOs, suppression of free media, and arrests of parliamentarians and politicians from opposition parties as well as civil society representatives have led to the decline of the civic space and the capture of the political process by the state.[19] This has made rights-based activism increasingly difficult; however, it perseveres in relation to issues such as environment, gender equality, rule of law, and human rights. Under these circumstances, there has been a shift to service-based activities, around which only limited interaction with the state can take place. The shift to service-based activities in civil society is better understood in light of closing political opportunities for democratic participation. It is particularly visible in relation to the refugee issue, especially with the prominent role Islamic charity organizations have gained in line with the discourse of the government emphasizing religious solidarity.[20] Still, it is not only the Islamic charity organizations but also a broader section of civil society working with refugees that has predominantly undertaken service provision.

In addition to the decline of civic space, civil society actors working with refugees have to cope with the challenge of the scale of the refugee influx. The fact that 3.6 million Syrians have come to Turkey in the course of eight years[21] renders to scale a crucial issue that affects both locals and Syrians. On the part of Syrians, the huge numbers to which both civil society and the state have to cater result in insufficient access to services such as healthcare or education. Civil society organizations also point out that the scale of the refugee influx puts a lot of additional pressure on the services locals use.[22] Within this broader socio-political context there is thus a need to analyze the activities of civil society actors, their varying approaches to addressing refugee-related endeavors, and their capacity to facilitate coexistence.

16 Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "State and civil society in Turkey: Democracy, development and protest," in *Civil society in the Muslim world: Contemporary perspectives*, ed. Amyn B. Sajoo, 247–272 (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers in Association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2004); Keyman, "Modernity, democracy, and civil society."

17 Paker et al., "Environmental organizations."

18 Kalaycıoğlu, "State and civil society in Turkey"; Paker et al. ,"Environmental organizations."

19 *Trends in Turkish Civil Society*.

20 Didem Danış, *Türkiye'de Kent Mültecileri ve Misafirperverlik* (TESEV, 2018).

21 www.unhcr.org, accessed April 24, 2019.

22 Interview 4; Auveen Woods and Nihal Kayalı, *Engaging Syrian Communities: The Role of Local Government in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2017).

5. ACTIVITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS WORKING WITH REFUGEES: MEDIUM- AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

A diverse array of civil society actors works for and with refugees in Turkey. Among these are international NGOs (INGOs), national-level CSOs, grassroots organizations, and Syrian CSOs. Their activities fall under three general categories: emergency relief and protection, services, and coexistence. In the first phase of civil society activity in relation to refugees, emergency relief such as the distribution of relief items was the predominate form of aid, as to be expected.[23] As the stay of refugees lengthened, the need for and provision of services from CSOs increased. CSOs provide a range of services, from protection to educational and basic healthcare services. Protection involves case-based responses, mental health and psychosocial support, counseling on practical matters such as registering children at birth, renewing a temporary protection card, registering kids in school, establishing links with relevant institutions, and awareness-raising on violence against women or child marriages.[24] CSOs that carry out protection activities make household visits to develop a needs-based approach.[25] They may also organize focus groups with women or families to gain an understanding of the difficulties they face.[26] More recently, CSOs have begun to underline the importance of "community-based protection," which enables Syrians themselves to support each other. CSOs facilitate this process by providing opportunities to start up networks among Syrians and encouraging their Syrian representatives to play a role as "community leaders" or encouraging communities to mix.[27] Another example is when CSOs encourage community members to raise awareness of child marriage, as protection also involves child safeguarding. CSOs working on protection have to contend with issues such as child labor or child marriage.[28] Educational services mostly consist of language courses; however, the educational activities that CSOs can undertake have been severely curtailed. Currently, few select CSOs are allowed to offer courses. The state increased the regulation and centralization of education for Syrians first with the 2014 Ministry of Education Circular, emphasizing the responsibilities of the public authorities in this area, and later with the "National Harmonization Strategy" in 2016, which developed a refugee education policy with the aim of integrating the school-age Syrian population into the national education system.[29] A similar trend toward centralizing government services played out in relation to health services as well. Starting in 2013, Syrians are granted access to nationwide healthcare services, provided they are registered, and able to receive care in migrant health centers coordinated by the Ministry of Health.[30]

23 Similar period classifications are made elsewhere, for instance, see Ulaş Sunata and Salih Tosun, "Assessing the Civil Society's Role in Refugee Integration in Turkey: NGO-R as a New Typology," *Journal of Refugee Studies* (2018).

24 Interview 4, 12, 14, 15, 19. Throughout the document, interviews are referenced with numbers. Please see the appendix for the dates and locations of the interviews as well as the type of organization in which the interviewee works.

25 Interviews 7, 10, 18.

26 Interviews 12, 10, 19.

27 Interview 11, 12.

28 Interview 16, 20.

29 Kristen Biehl, Gabriele Cloeters, Wiebke Hohberger, Souad Osserian, Hande Paker, Emre Üçkardeşler, *Syrians in Turkey* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2018).

30 Ibid.

In the final phase of the response to the refugee inflow, peaceful coexistence—which involves creating spaces where locals and newcomers may meet, spend time together, and get to know one another—has emerged as one of the most important challenges that needs to be addressed. While CSO activities in Turkey that are heavily dominated by service provision and services to help navigate the bureaucratic and legal system, which is not familiar to newcomers, remain crucial,[31] CSO-led activities have diversified to include efforts to address challenges associated with coexistence (variably expressed as integration, social cohesion). With passing time, the need for emergency relief has waned, while the question of coexistence has become inevitable.[32] Therefore, many CSOs have started addressing the question of how hosts and newcomers can live together in the same society sharing common spaces.

Civil society organizations are aware that one of the most challenging questions regarding Syrians in Turkey is how 3.6 million Syrians can integrate into a new society in terms of gaining both access to social services and social acceptance. Thus, civil society actors have directed their energy to promoting living together. They create spaces of engagement through exchange of artistic expressions and cultural activities, language courses, employment/work projects, cooking experiences, craftwork production, get-together events, and child-oriented activities. Some civil society activities serve multiple purposes toward this end. Language courses organized with both hosts and refugees or focus groups organized to understand needs simultaneously bring together locals and newcomers. Educational activities geared toward children, such as organizing sports and cultural events, art workshops, and kid-friendly zones, are part of a larger effort to integrate Syrian children into school.[33] CSOs sometimes accompany families to register children in school to address the language barrier.[34] In one instance, a CSO organized the painting of school walls by children from both Turkey and Syria, which helped create a sense of ownership and a feeling of belonging in Syrian children.[35] These examples show how CSOs combine services with integration activities. They also provide legal and psychological counseling to families in the process.[36]

Some CSOs, whose focus is on activities geared toward women and girls' empowerment, raising awareness on gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health, have adapted their programs to include Syrian women and children.[37] One local CSO has identified young Syrian girls aged 10–14 in Turkey as a high-risk group in terms of lack of access to education, facing obstacles such as the need to work to contribute to household income, transfer of care duties to young girls, and child marriage. Accordingly, the CSO has designed programs to provide scholarships to support families of children from this age group.[38] Similarly, a number of national CSOs regularly include in their program various women and child-oriented activities such as the creation of "woman and girl safe spaces," family planning, sexual health education, and seminars on child marriage and gender-based violence.[39]

31 Interview 10, 11, 12, 18.

32 This is not to say that emergency relief is no longer on the agenda. Communities continue to struggle with poverty, and as such, CSOs provide relief items, especially at certain transitional times when needs becomes dire, e.g., the start of the school year or during seasonal transitions.

33 Interviews 10, 11, 12, 15.

34 Interviews 10, 11, 12, 19.

35 Interview 11.

36 Interviews 10, 12.

37 Interviews 10, 12, 14, 20.

38 Interview 10.

39 Interviews 12, 14.

When civil society actors organize activities through which locals and Syrians exchange art, work together, cook together, and socialize, specifically for the purposes of decreasing isolation, prejudices, and misconceived perceptions based on false information, they cultivate coexistence, since they create a public sphere in which both locals and refugees participate and get to know each other. There are diverse mediums of building common ground, and some civil society actors, especially grassroots organizations, have from the beginning focused on community building and participatory exchanges. One particularly remarkable example of a grassroots initiative emphasizes that culinary and artistic exchanges constitute a common ground on which to come together. To that end, they have designed an open space that supports interactions shaped around culinary cultures of host communities and refugee groups as well as the exhibition of the work of Syrian artists.[40] The endeavor to create a common ground around arts and culture proliferates further links as they collaborate with Syrian CSOs in bringing together Syrian artists and locals.[41] For instance, when they translated into Turkish and distributed a critical pamphlet on Syrian society and civil war prepared by Syrian youth in Gaziantep, the pamphlet became a contact point over which the youth from Syria and Turkey came together.[42] These points of convergence strengthen the prospects of living together because they create awareness that "we think the same things" and "we enjoy the same things."[43]

Work/employment projects in which CSOs mediate employment of both hosts and refugees in public outlets are crucial in creating spaces where both communities can participate and engage with one another. For example, a national CSO has signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education and the municipalities to carry out a "cash for work" project where the CSO pays for the labor costs of locals and Syrians who are then employed in municipalities or schools.[44] Work/employment projects increase encounters between the hosts and newcomers and reduce tensions in a number of ways. First, they reduce tensions between employers and employees that might result from differences in work cultures. Second, they bring together locals and Syrians who get the opportunity to work side by side. As one civil society representative pointed out:

> Both sides have a story. Sharing those stories without even properly speaking the language, establishing a tight bond, becoming friends... these are really really good stories... I mean the relationships of people who work and produce together are excellent.[45]

Finally, these projects change the perception on the part of local communities that only Syrians are receiving benefits and services when local communities who also struggle with poverty are left out.[46] This perception is a major source of tension and has underscored the essentiality of a community approach involving both hosts and newcomers. Such programs are also relevant for community-based integration in that they aim to increase the autonomy of refugees. Occupational courses, such as cooking and handicrafts, that aim to strengthen labor market opportunities can also bring the two communities together in this capacity.[47]

40 Interviews 5, 6; see also the report by Feyzi Baban and Kim Rygiel, *Living Together: Fostering Cultural Pluralism Through the Arts* (Istanbul: IKSV, 2018) for a thorough analysis of how arts can play a role in facilitating encounters that allow the co-creation of common spaces.

41 Interviews 5, 6.

42 Interview 5.

43 Interview 5.

44 Interviews 3, 16.

45 Interview 3.

46 Interviews 3, 7.

47 Interviews 14, 19.

Both national and Syrian CSOs as well as grassroots organizations regularly organize many get-together events such as cooking, crafts production, and child-oriented activities that cultivate mutual encounters. Examples include Syrian and mixed women's groups who come together in social gatherings and "tea time," where women invite their neighbors for tea and socialize.[48] Child-oriented activities also make up a large share of the civil society response, which includes taking mixed groups of children to parks and the theater, organizing festivals, art workshops, and sporting events.[49] Such activities provide the opportunity for Syrian and local children to participate in common activities and increase Syrian-host encounters, which also has a positive impact on the parents who observe their children in a co-sharing setting and change their prejudices.[50] A staff member of a community center of a national CSO observed this firsthand:

> ... When parents from Turkey first participated, they did not want to send their children here. "Will they catch a disease? Is there a contagious disease?" They had these kinds of concerns. But after a couple of activities, it became routine for them as well to do things with Syrian children.[51]

Recognizing that language constitutes both a barrier and a bridge in living together, many CSOs organize language courses, which aim to turn barriers into bridges. There are several forms of language education ranging from language courses run as (informal) conversation clubs[52] to Turkish courses organized by national CSOs (having become "accredited" by signing a protocol with the government).[53] There are also Turkish classes for Syrian children[54] or Arabic courses for Turkish students organized by Syrian CSOs and workshops with both Syrian and Turkish teachers to train them in engaging mixed classes with Turkish and Syrian students from different age groups.[55]

Community centers in which a mixture of these activities that promote coexistence take place have also become prevalent, in addition to the services reviewed above. A number of CSOs now run community centers[56] that "... increase the cohesion between the hosting community and the displaced community."[57] Community centers organize intensive child-oriented activities,[58] which often help mothers participate in activities geared toward women, such as women's health seminars.[59] They also give group support to women's or LGBTI groups.[60] In certain instances, women gained a new sense of empowerment at some of these community centers, for example, starting to work using the networks they established at these community centers.[61] Open spaces such as the "Kitchen Women Workshop" have also become a basis for economic and social empowerment for women, because they can sell what they produce in the kitchen in a migrant-owned restaurant.[62] Syrian women's groups also collaborate with CSOs in Turkey. They participate in community centers and events aimed

48 Interviews 7, 8, 9, 12, 18, 19.

49 Interviews 7, 12, 18.

50 Interview 7.

51 Interview 12.

52 Interviews 15, 17.

53 Interview 14.

54 Interview 19.

55 Interview 3.

56 Interviews 7, 11, 19.

57 Interview 7.

58 Interviews 11, 15, 17, 19.

59 Interview 11.

60 Interview 11.

61 Interview 12.

62 Interview 5.

at raising awareness of child marriage and women's rights and further disseminate information on these issues through the pamphlets they prepare.[63]

Also important for peaceful coexistence is the work of civil society in raising awareness about migration, forced displacement, and resultant change in living conditions, directed at both populations to dispel myths about one another.[64] This can be especially important to counteract prejudices and misinformation about Syrians. In one case, a grassroots organization prepared a booklet in Turkish, English, and Arabic on vital information such as how to register children in schools and distributed it in the neighborhoods in which they work.[65] Another grassroots organization has organized workshops with civil society representatives and activists that raise discussions that address the question of coexistence.[66]

Civil society engagement in advocacy is relatively limited. There are some efforts in this direction, such as organizing a meeting to bring together CSOs and state officials working on refugee issues or creating platforms where CSOs share experiences.[67] Some CSOs also aim to involve state institutions more in the work being carried out in the field and to support them by giving seminars to relevant officials, involving them by directing individual cases to them, and inviting them as speakers in workshops to increase state capacity.[68] A Syrian organization has conducted workshops and prepared reports on proposals to improve the education services offered to Syrians and shared them with the Ministry of Education.[69] The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and Directorate General of Migration Management, the main state institutions working in the field of refugee relief in Turkey, used to organize meetings with the participation of all CSOs, but they have not organized such meetings since 2016.[70]

Some civil society organizations explicitly state that they are not involved in advocacy.[71] This is partly explained by CSOs' perceptions that the state is doing all that it can given the scale of the issue. Europe is more severely criticized in this regard, because it is perceived to have closed its doors to refugees while it has a much greater capacity to take them in. Some CSOs also underline that state regulation is to be expected since the state needs to govern and regulate in areas such as healthcare or education according to "its terms of reference"; moreover, regulation is necessary to avoid abuse.[72]

Finally, there is no rights-based refugee movement. The lack of a rights-based refugee movement can be explained by the political context in Turkey and the approach of political actors toward the refugee issue. In this political context, two dimensions, political discourse and relations with the state, play a role in understanding why a rights-based approach and advocacy is limited within civil society. The temporary protection status of refugees also inhibits the emergence of refugees' political demands. This temporary status, which places refugees in a more precarious situation and as such makes it more difficult for them to make demands, is closely associated with the perception and discourse of politicians regarding Syrians in Turkey.

63 Interviews 8, 9, 13.

64 Interview 14.

65 Interview 18.

66 Interviews 5, 6.

67 An education forum has been established to this end (Interview 10).

68 Interview 14.

69 Interview 19.

70 Interview 15.

71 Interview 3.

72 Interview 4.

All of these civil society initiatives discussed above create the conditions for the coproduction of a common ground under which coexistence envisioned by a transformative form of cosmopolitanism is possible. However, the political and social context greatly shapes the capacity of civil society actors to generate an inclusive public sphere. The next section analyzes the political and social context in which civil society actors work on facilitating coexistence. Two crucial dimensions that pertain to the political context stand out: political discourse and relations with the state. First, I analyze how the political discourse in relation to refugees and the relations of civil society with the state, which maintains a top-down approach, have an adverse effect on the ability of civil society to bring together both communities to engage with one another. Then, I identify processes of othering that constitute challenges in everyday interactions.

6. DIMENSIONS IN THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

An important aspect that has a direct impact on whether and how Syrians are welcomed in Turkey is political discourse. Political discourse reflects the politics of polarization and serves to increase resentment toward Syrians, albeit through different channels. While the opposition adopts exclusionary attitudes toward refugees and helps reproduce misconceptions because the prevalent open-door policy is carried out by the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government, the "guest" discourse that the government uses also fails to create a welcoming effect, though it did so briefly in the first phase of refugee inflow.

6.1. Political Discourse

Political discourse has an impact on both local and Syrian communities. First, politicians' discourses reflect the deeply polarized political context in Turkey. Preexisting cleavages based on party affiliation (AKP vs. Republican People's Party, (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP)) or religious sect (Sunni vs. Alevi) shape locals' responses to Syrians. Polarization has led to the conduct of politics based on preexisting cleavages and identities rather than issue-based politics. The government's policies are criticized by the opposition, especially the main opposition party, regardless of their content and simply because they are policies offered by the government. Refugee policies are not immune. This means that even the best efforts may be dismissed if they come from the government. In the example below, a CSO representative criticizes this polarization as he recognizes the success of the AKP municipality in Sultanbeyli in reaching the most vulnerable groups:

> ... Sultanbeyli municipality in Istanbul... Yes, it is an AKP municipality but (works) in cooperation with all CSOs. And we [even] found one Dom child who goes to school [there]—and none of the Dom go to school. Sultanbeyli municipality sends the kid to preschool. Now, how can you denigrate this municipality![73]

Inevitably, Syrians become instrumentalized in the politics of polarization in Turkey. This discourse shapes the perceptions of citizens of Turkey according to party affiliation, conflating opposition to the government with resentment toward Syrians.[74] The degree of polarization can change from one city to another. For instance, the general sentiment in Hatay was that the government settled the biggest number of refugees in their city for Sunnification purposes because they are Alevi; meanwhile, in Gaziantep attitudes toward refugees differed.[75] Moreover, this polarized discourse reproduces false information and myths about Syrian communities, for example, that they receive salaries from the government or that they will be handed citizenship. It also leaves Syrians in a precarious position, living in fear of being sent back should the government change.[76] CSOs underline that the lack of transparency in state policies or lack of statements aimed at correcting false information regarding Syrians help perpetuate these myths.[77]

It is not only the opposition's political discourse used that creates resentment toward Syrians. For years the government used the "guest" discourse in relation to Syrians to emphasize that their stay in Turkey is temporary.[78] While it fostered a welcoming attitude on the part of the local population in the beginning,

73 Interview 6.

74 Interviews 3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 18, 20.

75 Interview 12.

76 Interviews 6, 11, 20.

77 Interview 18.

78 Interviews 3, 11, 14, 15, 18, 20.

this discourse became damaging to coexistence as the stay of Syrians lengthened into a more permanent situation.[79] There is a strong culture of hosting guests in Turkey. Citizens of Turkey take pride in being good hosts, and guests are valued and cared for. By the same token, however, the guest culture carries expectations attached to how guests should behave:

> You know this concept of the guest, the notion that the guest takes what s/he finds and not what s/he hopes for and all its (implications). And the Syrians are convinced, too: "We are guests anyway; we are overstaying our welcome (*ayıp ediyoruz*)." With this, they make no demands for their rights. Citizens of Turkey also do not have a rights-based approach in their interaction with Syrians. So (the public thinks) the guest can stay for a limited amount of time. We do our best for them. But a longer stay is unpleasant. It is time for them to leave. We did what we could; we showed our hospitality as best as we could.[80]

Furthermore, as expressed in the above quote, the political discourse built around "Syrians as guests in Turkey" inhibits a rights-based framework toward refugees. Citizenship prospects are left ambiguous and resented by the public at large,[81] while long-term policies are lacking.[82] The reproduction of the guest discourse remains a charity-based approach and prevents the discussion of exercising legal rights conferred by citizenship or the practice of citizenship by Syrians. In addition, there is no channel through which Syrians can participate in the decision-making processes that concern them.[83]

6.2 Relations With the State

In recent years, civic space and political participation in Turkey have been shrinking. CSOs working with refugees have seen their centers closed or their licenses revoked, especially in the case of international NGOs.[84] As the state has reestablished its monopoly with respect to the fields of healthcare and education, the multi-actor scene has turned into one where the state tightly controls who can provide services and how. Starting in 2016, the state took over a lot of the services carried out by CSOs in healthcare and education, cancelling many permits of INGOs in particular, which left the country in due course. Some national CSOs were able to sign protocols with the state detailing the conditions under which these CSOs could continue to offer language courses by applying and going through a security check.[85] While these protocols give some CSOs recognition from the state, which facilitates cooperation, CSOs highlight the fact that the content of the protocols is prepared by the Ministry and not the CSO, which make the state the sole party that defines the type of cooperation that can be undertaken.[86]

CSOs underline that their interaction with the state is characterized by the state's reflex to control.[87] If and when the state can organize its own capacity, then civil society is pushed out, as was the case in education and healthcare. CSOs also point out that the state does not want to share information and requires approval for continuing civil society activities.[88] CSOs are fully aware of the unwillingness of the state to include civil society. They have to develop active strategies

79 Interviews 3, 14, 18, 20.

80 Interview 14.

81 Interviews 4, 12.

82 Interviews 4, 6, 15, 18.

83 Interview 19.

84 Interviews 6, 7.

85 Interviews 14, 19, 21.

86 Interview 14.

87 Interviews 7, 15, 16; please also see *Turkey's Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*.

88 Interview 16.

to cooperate[89] and "eliminate the prejudices of the state."[90] In an effort to cultivate good relations with the state, one CSO includes state officials in seminars and workshops they organize, visits state officials within a prefixed monthly program to understand the "sensitivities" of state institutions, follows the activities that state institutions organize, and offers to hold joint activities on common themes and collaborate on projects.[91] As a result of these efforts, they have seen a significant change in the approach of state officials toward their organization. While in the beginning state officials refused to meet with them and were suspicious of them based on rumors that they were a "Christian organization distributing Bibles," they built relations of trust and respect through their efforts toward cooperation, so much so that they were one of the few organizations that could get permits for their activities when the permits of many CSOs were cancelled.[92] Nevertheless, state-civil society interaction transpires selectively and is tightly controlled from above, as exemplified by the following words of a CSO representative:

> Now the state is clearly against international NGOs. But they allow the national CSOs just to exist. They want their basic activities to continue but not to interfere with any work that falls under the jurisdiction of the state. Meaning what? When we talk about a seminar on age, they say that they already have similar activities at the Ministry for Family, Labor, and Social Services. When we talk about handicrafts for kids, they say that there are arts classes at schools, etc...We are trying to establish a relationship in which CSOs do not constantly demand something from the state and the state can also benefit from us.[93]

That said, there is also a general sense of approbation toward the state among civil society actors that work with refugees. CSOs feel that the state has done a lot (more than its fair share) in opening its doors and providing for refugees.[94] Even though there might be shortcomings, they do not seem significant in the face of other actors' failure to act, notably the EU.[95] Still, representatives of CSOs point out where there is a need for active state policy. For instance, the Ministry of Education does not have any policies or projects to address discrimination toward Syrian children at school[96] or a program to train teachers on working with kids who experienced trauma.[97] Despite these shortcomings or proposed improvements, CSOs grant that the Ministry of Education has done well in terms of increasing the number of children in formal education, from about 17% in 2014 to 64% in 2018.[98]

6.3 Local Government

Most of the collaboration between the state and CSOs takes place at the local level. Several CSOs stressed the importance of working together with municipalities and attempting to cooperate with state officials at the local level.[99] One reason for this is the scale of the services required, which is a lot larger than CSOs can meet. In one example, a CSO secured hygiene packages from UNFPA to meet an urgent need in Gaziantep, but they did not have sufficient resources to store and distribute the packages, which the municipality then undertook in collaboration with the CSO.[100] Several municipalities have units or centers working with refugees to provide health services.

89 Interviews 13, 14, 15.

90 Interview 14.

91 Interview 14.

92 Interview 14.

93 Interview 14.

94 Interviews 3, 4, 18, 20.

95 Interviews 3, 4.

96 Interview 21.

97 Interview 11.

98 Biehl et al., *Syrians in Turkey*.

99 Interviews 6, 11.

100 Interview 6.

Another reason is that municipalities are much better placed to respond to the needs and problems of refugees. State institutions at the national level such as the Directorate General of Migration Management are removed from and unaware of local needs and dynamics. This is why a lot of CSOs perceive local governments as important actors to collaborate with in carrying out activities and programs.[101] CSOs also cooperate with *muhtars* (administrators at the neighborhood level) to reach Syrian communities.[102]

Some grassroots organizations have specifically engaged local governments to increase diversity, framing them as the main actor that has a mandate to facilitate coexistence. One grassroots organization stresses that they are working on cultivating a "local government approach that is more inclusive, pluralist, just towards all existing diversity and that offers a multilingual, multicultural public sphere."[103] In that regard, they make use of the Law on Municipalities, which states that municipalities are responsible for their "fellow denizens" and that these denizens have the right to demand from municipalities an inclusionary program for living in diversity:

> Article 13 states that everyone who resides within the borders of the municipality is a fellow denizen. And it does not limit this definition to ethnic identity, country of citizenship, or a specified group as such. It says *everyone* (emphasis added). Everyone in the municipality includes the Syrians, Afghanis, or people with official residency in another city. The article goes on to say that they (all denizens) can participate in decision-making processes. This is why we emphasize fellow denizen: To say to the municipalities that Syrians are also your fellow denizens because they live in your jurisdiction.[104]

6.4 The Social Context of Everyday Interactions

One of the fundamental questions that this report analyzes is the potential of civil society as a sphere that can bring together newcomers and hosts. As discussed above, civil society actors do important work to increase interactions among local communities and Syrians. The ability of civil society actors to proliferate engagements conducive to living together is affected by not only the political context but also the social context.

Even though both communities are capable of showing solidarity and expressing commonalities in terms of similarities in culture, religion, and shared problems,[105] the social context in which everyday interactions between locals and Syrians are embedded is increasingly marked by processes of Othering. Processes of Othering include discrimination, resentment emanating from daily encounters, and circulating myths about Syrians. For instance, Syrians are discriminated against when they are asked to pay higher rents or are paid lower wages, and resentment builds as a result of changes in life conditions of the local community such as rising rents and falling wages.[106] Daily encounters lead to offhand observations that perpetuate stereotypes about Syrians ("They have ran away from the war and hang out here. We would have fought; they are lazy"; "Syrian women are overdressed and too made-up"; "They don't take care of their children;

101 Interviews 3, 7, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21.

102 Interviews 11, 15.

103 Interview 18.

104 Interview 18.

105 *Social Cohesion Assessment: Quantative and Qualitative Assessment of Host-Refugee Cohesion in Three Districts in Turkey* (Ankara: IOM/Turkey, June 2017).

106 For a more detailed discussion, see *Social Cohesion Assessment*. On discrimination towards Syrians in the labor market, please see Gökçe Uysal, Baran Alp Uncu, and Merve Akgül, *Suriyeli Çalışanlar ve İşgcü Piyasasında Ayrımcılık* (Istanbul: BETAM, 2018).

they take care of themselves.").[107] Finally, circulating myths about Syrians around university entrance or distribution of citizenship increase the resentment of locals who assume unfair treatment.[108] These processes inevitably shape the impact that civil society can make in terms of strengthening coexistence. They are significant challenges that undermine the possibility of constructing an inclusive common public sphere. The fact that processes of Othering are becoming more prevalent is not only an observation made by CSOs but is also based on common experiences Syrians share from their daily lives.[109]

Another constraint in building peaceful coexistence and networks of trust is isolation of refugees from local communities. Refugee communities remain isolated to a large extent, and interactions as traders and neighbors are largely informed by tolerance.[110] The engagements based on tolerance form around the private sphere (e.g., being neighbors) rather than politicized solidarities, as indicated by a CSO representative:

> So, networks are forged within the private sphere in the context of neighborly relations, but this cannot be called solidarity. This is being neighborly (*komşuluk*). The language is shaped in terms of the private sphere. Or, I don't know, it is aid. Nothing that goes beyond charity.[111]

These neighborly relations, conducted in the private sphere, do not go beyond aid or charity and, as such, do not give rise to participatory commons forged mutually by the locals and newcomers. These relations do not emerge from interactions in the public sphere that are shaped explicitly through political negotiations on coexistence. Rather, these are encounters that do not truly engage the two populations and are just as likely to reproduce prejudices.

107 Interviews 4, 20.

108 Interview 12.

109 Interviews 1, 2, 4, 12, 16, 20; focus group Istanbul; *Social Cohesion Assessment*.

110 Interviews 3, 4, 5, 6.

111 Interview 4.

7. ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

7.1 Similar Issues, Different Approaches

In addition to the political and social context, there are organizational factors that have an impact on how effective civil society can be in their work in supporting coexistence. This section explains the differing approaches civil society actors adopt, while the next considers the implications of funding requirements. Civil society actors work on similar issues in relation to refugees. Since newcomers mainly face challenges in accessing services as well as adapting to a new life and country, CSOs focus their efforts on supporting refugees in accessing relief items and services, as well as integration. However, civil society actors differ in their approach in handling these issues. Some CSOs, mostly local/grassroots organizations, have had an understanding of coexistence from the beginning. Thus, they criticize the service-based approach predominant in CSOs working with refugees for not being conducive to mutual interaction and participation from both communities as well as not taking into account the perspective of service receivers.[112] For instance, a local grassroots organization, which came together in 2010 before Syrian refugees started to arrive in Turkey, has defined their interaction with newcomers as solidarity rather than a passive relationship of service givers and service takers. This interaction is based on the recognition that coexistence can be realized through co-creating common ground. As one activist and NGO worker has comparatively discussed:

> ... we had, in effect, set up a community center without any funds. One (volunteer) gave dance lessons, another Turkish; another was taking Arabic lessons. Or vice versa. I mean everyone—it is exactly our commons. Everyone gives in the capacity of their talents and takes according to their need. And this without any funds, by collecting among us. Yes, (there is) free food, but it is not charity; it is not like come, we will give you food, but a way of setting a common table, common space. Yes, (NGOs) distribute food but don't establish that (connection). Because (on) the common table there is food, yes, but it is food that creates the common space.[113]

Grassroots organizations that define their work in terms of finding commonalities communicated through arts, cultural events, and culinary experiences prioritize reciprocity and solidarity and explicitly distinguish themselves from organizations that are charity-oriented and carry out protection activities for the refugees who are perceived as "victims."[114] They criticize the approach of larger, mostly international NGOs that are focused on service provision, working almost like a municipality, and that lack knowledge about the local context and therefore devise solutions that are ineffective and unsustainable. These kind of encounters between Syrians and locals create the awareness that "these people are no different from us"[115] and build trust that emerges from bottom-up, reciprocal exchanges.

Being locally grown is also an important factor that distinguishes the approach of grassroots CSOs from that of national and international NGOs, with important implications for trust building. Members of a locally situated grassroots organization that originally emerged in response to urban regeneration/gentrification were already meeting residents

112 Interviews 4, 5, 18.

113 Interview 4.

114 Interview 5.

115 Interview 5.

of neighborhoods to talk about what can be done in relation to their problems when Syrians arrived and settled. As an extension of their work in these neighborhoods, which was motivated by the question of what they could do for their neighbors and how they could show solidarity, they felt that they had to ask the same questions to the newly arrived refugees who also became neighbors:

> Large NGOs asked this (to us): "we experience difficulties in entering neighborhoods. Nobody opens their door to us...how do you do it?"...We entered neighborhoods that we were already in touch with, where we organized solidarity networks. I mean, we were already there. They already knew us. One of the important tools here is trust...[116]

These grassroots organizations aim for the active inclusion of the members of the neighborhood.[117] Their participatory approach has important implications for both sustainability and coexistence. The common denominator of "getting to know one another" facilitates sustainability by establishing networks at the grassroots level, which can also build trust toward fostering coexistence by expanding these networks to newcomers.

The participatory emphasis on living together is shaped by the concerns of grassroots organizations to develop a humanitarian response to the problems of refugees that underlines the rights of refugees or refugee children. In that respect, one organization has developed certain ground rules such as avoiding exhibition of bad living conditions or "cuteness" of children to appeal to aid, exercising discretion when distributing aid, and not using cameras without the explicit permission of those being photographed or filmed.[118] These ethical concerns help shape a humane and solidaristic approach that establishes trust.

The importance of local relations is being more widely recognized as some institutionalized CSOs have started promoting "community-based protection" where refugees can start up networks through participation in the activities of community centers or encouraging community members themselves to raise awareness on crucial issues such as child marriage.[119] Some representatives of CSOs are concerned that when they carry out protection activities on behalf of refugees, refugees will not be able to develop capabilities to adapt to a new society. In that regard, dealing with government institutions, petitioning, and making rights-based demands are all part of being out in the public sphere and increase empowerment.[120]

7.2 Funding

Even though external funding increases the capacity of CSOs to maintain their activities, CSOs have to contend with challenges that arise with donor conditions. First, when funders stipulate that the funds are to be used only for the Syrian community, this contributes to tension between newcomers and the host community, undermining coexistence. Since a substantial portion of civil society work is project-based, it is important to emphasize that the projects do not necessarily foster coexistence if and when they target Syrians only.[121] When projects include Syrians only, it leads to a substantial decrease in the sense of living together with new neighbors and social acceptance of newcomers. Recognizing this, CSOs take care to include both communities in need when distributing aid items or organizing activities to countervail social tension and polarization[122]:

116 Interview 18.

117 Interview 18.

118 Interview 18.

119 Interviews 12, 14.

120 Interview 14.

121 Interviews 3, 5.

122 Interviews 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19.

> ... We said, "for our neighbors from Syria and Turkey who are in need." (Otherwise), this is something that feeds the tension that I talked about earlier. Most people from Turkey say, "We face similar conditions. We do not receive aid... It goes to them (Syrians)." They are right! ... If both have to face the same conditions and the aid goes to the other, of course there will be conflict. And there will be polarization. We are trying to minimize this.[123]

Funding agencies are also criticized for being unaware of local dynamics and applying standardized models to varying localities that are not sustainable. In spite of the large amounts of money spent, these top-down approaches fail to address local needs and present long-term solutions.

Another adverse impact on sustainability has to do with the short-term horizon of projects. CSOs point out that most projects are to be completed within a year or two, which is not sufficient time for preparation, analysis, evaluation, implementation, feedback, and improvement.[124] In order to ensure sustainability, some CSOs focus on transferring their knowledge and experiences to local communities, empowering them to continue running community centers and programs such as increasing awareness on child marriages.[125]

CSOs find that they have to apply certain methods as a requirement for receiving funds and disregard the methods that they themselves have developed based on accumulated local knowledge and experience. Not only do they lose autonomy, but also funds are wasted in fulfilling criteria that may not necessarily be appropriate or sufficient to address the problem at hand. Moreover, criteria such as beneficiary participation may remain only on paper when the methods of the application are too rigidly set, as the following words of a CSO representative exemplify:

> I have a way of doing it. I develop it with the community... But what is expected of me? "So and so many people live in this place. This is what they need, and this is how I will address it." That's not it! They (donors) also say that a participatory approach is important. But it remains theoretical; it is there because it looks good on paper, in the proposal...It does not work like that. I have to first get together with them (beneficiaries) step by step. I will organize a tea hour. I will listen to the problems of their kids. I will mingle with them. We are neighbors in any case. This is how I do my work.... But the UNHCR says, "I am opening a call on this issue, and you need to do this and that and this is how you will do it"... For instance, I don't hear the beneficiary here. What happened to the so-called participatory approach? It remains on paper.[126]

Finally, the pressure to produce concrete outcomes as defined by donors and comply with imposed conditions regarding issues and methods means that CSOs cannot work on issues that require long-term effort.[127] For instance, there is no time to do in-depth research supported by input from academics even if CSOs preferred to proceed this way. They find that they are supposed to "reach 10,000 people in six months," emphasizing the quantity of research over quality.[128] Some grassroots organizations choose to work with funding they raise from volunteers/community. This type of crowdfunding enables civil society actors to avoid the funding-related issues discussed above.

123 Interview 18.

124 Interview 18.

125 Interviews 16, 18.

126 Interview 20.

127 Interviews 13, 16, 20.

128 Interview 16.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Localized approaches are crucial in creating effective and participatory responses to the refugee issue. There are two dimensions to consider. First, civil society plays a significant role in creating positive experiences of coming together. These should be supported and multiplied. Solidarity networks organized at the neighborhood level are especially crucial to fostering coexistence. Second, local governments are strategically placed to reach out to newcomers in the community, provide services, and support the activities of grassroots civil society initiatives.
- Adopting a rights-based approach rather than service-/charity-based approach can prevent the instrumentalization of refugees by political actors.
- In supporting civil society initiatives, donors must pay utmost attention to how funding is designed in order to preserve grassroots perspectives. Moreover, funding needs to support action that includes both hosts and newcomers. Otherwise services provided for Syrians turn into a source of resentment and increase the tension between the two communities.
- Projects that aim to increase the capacity of Syrians to find employment or provide direct opportunities for employment such as Cash for Work are more beneficial than projects that distribute direct assistance or cash. Community-based protection that empowers Syrians to participate in society and shape their demands promotes sustainability.
- Awareness campaigns need to be increased to dispel misinformation and unfounded prejudices that reinforce public resentment.

APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

1. CSO representative, (Syrian), Gaziantep, May 23, 2017
2. CSO representative, (Syrian), Gaziantep, May 23, 2017
3. CSO representative, (national), Istanbul, May 9, 2017
4. CSO representative, (international), Gaziantep, May 22, 2017
5. CSO representative, (grassroots), Gaziantep, May 23, 2017
6. CSO representative, (grassroots), Gaziantep, May 23, 2017
7. CSO representative, (national), Gaziantep, May 22, 2017
8. CSO representative, (Syrian grassroots), Gaziantep, May 25, 2017
9. CSO representative, (Syrian grassroots), Gaziantep, May 25, 2017
10. CSO representative, (grassroots), Istanbul, September 29, 2017
11. CSO representative, (national), Istanbul, October 25, 2017
12. CSO representative, (national), Istanbul, October 4, 2017
13. CSO representative, (national), Gaziantep, May 25, 2017
14. CSO representative, (national), Hatay, January 18, 2018
15. CSO representative, (international), Gaziantep, May 24, 2017
16. CSO representative, (national), Istanbul, June 8, 2017
17. CSO representative, (national), Gaziantep, May 25, 2017
18. CSO representative, (grassroots), Istanbul, March 29, 2018
19. CSO representative, (Syrian), Istanbul, November 14, 2017
20. CSO representative, (grassroots), Istanbul, September 29, 2017
21. CSO representative, (national), Istanbul, October 25, 2017
22. CSO representative, (national), Gaziantep, May 23, 2017

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anheier, Helmut, Marleis Glasius, and Mary Kaldor, ed. *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Baban, Feyzi, and Kim Rygiel. *Living Together: Fostering Cultural Pluralism Through the Arts*. Istanbul: IKSV, 2018.

Baban, Feyzi, and Kim Rygiel. "Living with others: fostering radical cosmopolitanism through citizenship politics in Berlin." *Ethics & Global Politics* 10, no. 1 (2017): 98–116.

Baban, Feyzi, and Kim Rygiel. "Snapshots from the margins: Transgressive cosmopolitanisms in Europe." *European Journal of Social Theory* 17, no. 4 (2014): 461–478.

Beck, Ulrich. "Cosmopolitanism as Imagined Communities of Global Risk." *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 10 (2011): 1346–1361.

Biehl, Kristen, Gabriele Cloeters, Wiebke Hohberger, Souad Osserian, Hande Paker, and Emre Üçkardeşler. *Syrians in Turkey*. Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2018.

Danış, Didem. *Türkiye'de Kent Mültecileri ve Misafirperverlik*. Istanbul: TESEV, 2018.

Edwards, Michael. *Civil Society*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

Erdoğan, Emre, and Pınar Uyan Semerci. *Fanus'ta Diyaloglar: Türkiye'de Kutuplaşmanın Boyutları*. Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2018.

Erdoğan, Murat. *Syrian Barometer: A Framework for Living in Harmony with Syrians*. Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2018.

Hall, John A. "The nature of civil society." *Society* 35, no. 4 (1998): 32–41.

Isin, Engin. "Performative citizenship." In *The Oxford handbook of citizenship*, edited by Ayelet Shachar, Rainer Baubock, Irene Bloemraad, and Maarten Vink. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Kalaycıoglu, Ersin. "State and civil society in Turkey: Democracy, development and protest." In *Civil society in the Muslim world: Contemporary perspectives*, edited by Amyn B. Sajoo, 247–272. London: I.B. Tauris Publishers in Association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2004.

Kaldor, Mary. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.

Kaldor, Mary, Helmut K. Anheier, and Marleis Glasius. "Introduction." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2004/5*, edited by Helmut K. Anheier, Mary Kaldor, and Marleis Glasius, 1–25. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Kaldor, Mary, Helmut K. Anheier, and Marleis Glasius. "Global Civil Society in an Era of Regressive Globalization." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2003*, edited by Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier, Marleis Glasius. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Kaldor, Mary, Helmut K. Anheier, and Marleis Glasius, ed. *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2003*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Keyman, E. Fuat. "Modernity, democracy, and civil society." In *Environmentalism in Turkey*, edited by Fikret Adaman and Murat Arsel, 49–64. Oxford/New York: Routledge, 2005.

Keyman, E. Fuat, and Ahmet Icduygu. "Globalization, Civil Society and Citizenship in Turkey: Actors, Boundaries and Discourses." *Citizenship Studies* 7, no. 2 (2003): 219–234. doi:10.1080/1362102032000065982.

Konda Barometer 2016. *Perceptions of Syrian Refugees*. Istanbul: Konda, February 2016.

Malena, Carmen, and Volkhart Finn Heinrich. "Can We Measure Civil Society? A Proposed Methodology for International Comparative Research." *Development in Practice* 17, no. 3 (2007): 338–352. doi:10.1080/09614520701336766.

Migdal, Joel S. *State in society: Studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Paker, Hande, Fikret Adaman, Zeynep Kadirbeyoğlu, and Begüm Özkaynak. "Environmental Organisations in Turkey: Engaging the State and Capital." *Environmental Politics* 22, no. 5 (2013): 760–778. doi:10.1080/09644016.2013.825138.

Social Cohesion Assessment: Quantative and Qualitative Assessment of Host-Refugee Cohesion in Three Districts in Turkey. Ankara: IOM/Turkey, June 2017.

Sunata, Ulaş, and Salih Tosun. "Assessing the Civil Society's Role in Refugee Integration in Turkey: NGO-R as a New Typology." *Journal of Refugee Studies* (2018). doi:10.1093/jrs/fey047.

Trends in Turkish Civil Society: Turkey 2023 Task Force. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, Istanbul Policy Center, and Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2017.

Turkey's Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions. Europe Report No. 248. Brussels: International Crisis Group, January 29, 2018.

Uncu, Baran Alp. "From a Conflictual Coalition to a Social Movement? The Transformative Capacity of the Gezi Protests." *Southeastern Europe* 40, no. 2 (2016): 188–216. doi:10.1163/18763332-04002003.

Uysal, Gökçe, Baran Alp Uncu, and Merve Akgül. *Suriyeli Çalışanlar ve İşgcü Piyasasında Ayrımcılık*. Istanbul: BETAM, 2018.

Woods, Auveen, and Nihal Kayalı. *Engaging Syrian Communities: The Role of Local Government in Istanbul*. Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, 2017.

Zihnioğlu, Özge. "The Prospects of Civic Alliance: New Civic Activists Acting Together with Civil Society Organizations." *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* (2018): 1–11. doi:10.1007/s11266-018-0032-9.

IPC

ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

ISBN: 978-605-2095-59-1

Istanbul Policy Center
Bankalar Caddesi No: 2 Minerva Han 34420
Karaköy, İstanbul TURKEY

+90 212 292 49 39
+90 212 292 49 57
@ ipc@sabanciuniv.edu
w ipc.sabanciuniv.edu