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Integration Processes of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: 'Class-based Integration'

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This article explores the intersections between economic resources of refugees and integration. It measures processes of adaptation of Syrians by focusing on the legal-political and socio-economic dimensions of integration. The focus of my analysis of the situations of Syrian refugees in Turkey is on class and related to financial resources that help Syrians to reach a kind of stability and security to those who lack rights. The key theoretical undertaking of this article is an attempt to develop the concept of 'class-based integration'. The data consists of 120 semi-structured interviews conducted with Syrian refugees in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep. I argue that Syrian refugees in Turkey go through 'class-based integration', which is in favour of refugees who do investments and who are skilled and leaves out refugees who are unskilled and do not have economic resources to invest in the receiving country from the integration processes. The article also shows that having economic resources could also support the construction of social bridges with members of the receiving society and overcoming the legal barriers to integration.

Keywords: Refugee integration, class-based integration, social bridge, Syrian refugees, Turkey

Introduction

Since 2011, Turkey has been receiving refugees displaced by the ongoing war in Syria. Despite the number of Syrian refugees[1] settled in Turkey standing at 3.5 million, Turkey is yet to introduce an effective integration policy covering all integration domains. Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Additional Protocol on the status of refugees in Turkey, although Turkey applies a geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention. In line with this limitation, asylum rights are limited only to Europeans, whereas Syrians who have fled to Turkey are recognized as 'people with temporary protection status' and not as 'refugees'. Due to the absence of a refugee status—the lack of state assistance in accessing fundamental rights in practice—an unequal situation is constructed between those

refugees who had economic resources when they migrated to Turkey and those who did not have such resources. In order to explain the possibility of integration in the case of Syrians in Turkey who are faced with insecure legal status and limited access to rights, this article aims to investigate the intersection between economic resources of refugees and integration.

Taking into account the concept of 'market citizenship', which explains the role of neo-liberalism on granting citizenship (Brodie 1997; Schild 2000; Fudge 2005; Grace *et al.* 2017), and 'refugee economies', which highlights the fact that refugees are a part of distinct sub-economy of the receiving countries (Betts *et al.* 2017), this article aims to explore whether the economic resources of Syrians influence their integration processes and support the construction of social bridges with members of receiving societies and overcoming the legal barriers to integration. The key theoretical undertaking of this article is an attempt to develop the concept of 'class-based integration'. I aim to go beyond the existing, predominant policy-driven literature and develop a sociological way of thinking about the integration processes of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The focus of my analysis of the situations of Syrian refugees in Turkey is on class and related to financial resources that help them to reach a kind of stability and security to those who lack rights. By focusing on class in exploring the integration processes of Syrian refugees, the article fills the gap in the literature, as class is not the focus of studies about refugees. I argue that Syrians in Turkey go through 'class-based integration' that is in favour of refugees who do investments and who are skilled, and leaves out refugees who are unskilled and do not have economic resources to invest in the receiving country from the integration processes. The article also shows that having economic resources could also support the construction of social bridges with members of the receiving society and overcoming the legal barriers to integration.

This article is divided into the following sections. First, it sets out a theoretical framework focusing upon refugee integration, before outlining the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Second, it explains the research methods implemented for this study. Third, using in-depth interview data, it explores legal-political and socio-economic dimensions of integration in the case of Syrian refugees in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep by considering the linkage between the economic resources of refugees and integration.

Theoretical Framework on Refugee Integration

Integration is a term that is used differently by policy makers, migrants, members of receiving societies and researchers. As argued by Castles *et al.* (2002: 112), 'there is no single generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated'. Like Castles *et al.*, Robinson (1998: 118) also noted that 'integration is a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most'. The definition of integration does not only differ

in relation to who defines it; its definition also varies with regard to the types of migrants. For instance, integration of refugees differs from labour migrants due to the differing motivations of migration and conditions in the receiving society (Phillimore 2012). Legal status associated with different migrant groups might have an important role on integration processes. For example, Syrians in Turkey are not referred to as 'refugees'; they are under temporary protection. In this sense, their integration processes might differ from those of refugees.

On the one hand, some studies highlight the crucial role of social networks and social capital in the integration of refugees and argue that it assists them to access resources (Williams 2006; Danzer and Ulku 2011; Phillimore 2012; Cheung and Phillimore 2014; Bloch and McKay 2015). The common argument of those studies states the important role of social networks in accessing rights and resources. For example, Cheung and Phillimore (2014) argue that there is a positive relationship between social networks and access to work in the case of refugees in the United Kingdom. Similarly, Bloch and McKay's (2015) study found that social capital and social networks are crucial to the development and running of businesses operating within the ethnic enclave economy, which has a positive role on undocumented migrants' access to the labour market. However, Lewis (2010) argues that social networks might create a sense of belonging for refugees that might not be principal for integration.

On the other hand, some studies on refugee integration focus on the functional dimensions of integration and highlight the importance of legal status, safety and stability: access to education, health, the labour market and housing for integration processes to start (McKeary and Newbold 2010; Valenta and Bunar 2010; Vrecer 2010). For example, focusing on Swedish and Norwegian refugee-integration policies, Valenta and Bunar (2010) argue that, although these countries provide housing assistance and training to refugees, refugees do not feel safe. A similar argument is also stated by Da Lomba (2010), who reasons that legal status has significant implications for refugee integration. Integration comprises overlapping processes of the migration cycle, namely the shifting of identities between past and present, the receiving and sending societies, and constructing relationships with spheres of the receiving societies. There is a need to examine the various processes of receiving societies, the level of economic and social participation and their interrelation, rather than focusing only on the examination of the measurable variables of access to housing, the labour market, education and health (Korac 2003). Ager and Strang (2008) developed a framework to operationalize integration processes. Their framework, which has been widely adopted, is structured around 10 domains that are grouped under four headings as 'means and markers' (employment, housing, education, health), 'social connections' (social bridges, social bonds, social links), 'facilitators' (language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability) and 'foundation' (rights and citizenship) and viewed access to the labour market as an important indicator

for refugee integration. Although they try to come up with a generic framework for understanding integration processes, their approach does not consider of the conditions of refugees in the receiving country in terms of their migratory status and the role of social class. This approach foregrounds the nation state as the primary unit of analysis, which favours 'methodological nationalism' that supports the dominance of a national framework in defining integration rather than considering of aspirations and experiences of refugees—more specifically, how refugees live their lives (Glick-Schiller and Wimmer 2002). The concept of integration should be redefined to dwell upon 'methodological individualism' that focuses on the refugee-actor level in order to highlight the experiences of refugees and how they are influenced by integration policies (Lacroix 2013). It is important to explain the experiences of refugees and how structural determinants influence their lives to have a better understanding on their integration processes. For instance, Bloch (2004) argued that labour-market discrimination was heightened against refugees in the United Kingdom, which hinders their integration. Research focusing on the integration processes of refugees settling in developing countries has also highlighted the positive role of having economic resources. For instance, Campbell (2006: 409) argues that, in the case of urban refugees in Nairobi, 'only those refugees with the economic means necessary remain permanently in the city; thus, other refugees living in protracted exile must indeed have alternative durable solutions available to them'. Just like Al-Sharmani (2004), she highlights that refugee livelihoods and integration are interlinked.

Focusing on the economic lives of refugees, Jacobsen (2005: 49) examines that government authorities create obstacles to refugees' livelihood by preventing refugees from pulling their economic weight, which is crucial for their integration. In exploring the economic lives of refugees in Uganda, Betts *et al.* (2017: 8) develop the concept of 'refugee economies', which refers to the resource allocation systems relating to the lives of refugees. They highlight the necessity of a self-reliance model and argue that refugees experience a fundamentally different institutional context—'refugeehood'—than that of host populations, which supports their argument that refugees are not dependent victims and have complex economic lives. Their approach of analysing refugees' economic lives from a wider structure that includes market structures which characterize the economic lives of refugees offers a self-reliant model for refugee livelihood; however, it does not pay much attention to inequalities among refugees that occur due to different class positions and how policies reflect on such inequalities.

Some studies focus on the role of neo-liberalism in granting citizenship, which is explored by the concepts of market citizenship (Brodie 1997; Schild 2000; Fudge 2005; Grace *et al.*, 2017) in which access to rights depends on economic resources and access to the labour market. Grace *et al.* (2017: 18–19) argue that, in the case of Burmese refugees in Michigan, market citizenship renders refugees economically, socially and linguistically isolated and

shows that individual employment to capture integration is not enough to sustain an entire family.

In this article, in contrast to those studies stated above, my analysis considers class positions of Syrian refugees to explain how inequalities among Syrians are reflected in their integration processes and whether having economic resources could also support the construction of social bridges with members of receiving societies and overcome the legal barriers to integration. Integration is understood as a process that is configured by diversity in the receiving societies and the various experiences of refugees, and which is measured by legal status, access to rights, intentions and aspirations of refugees and social bridges between refugees and members of the receiving society in this article. To explore the role of economic resources of refugees on their integration processes, I focus on the interrelation of legal-political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions of integration. The article attempts to develop the concept of 'class-based integration'. I define 'class-based integration' as the allocation of rights based on refugees' economic resources, which means that access to rights, especially the labour market and citizenship rights, is easier for refugees who can do investment in the receiving country compared to those without.

Research Methods

The findings presented here are based on fieldwork carried out in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep in Turkey from January to December 2016. These three cities were selected for methodological reasons, as each reflects a different case. For example, Istanbul has been home to migrants for many years, including Afghans, Somalis, Iraqis, Iranians and Mahkrebi. Ankara, the capital of Turkey, had previously received mostly internal migrants; the arrival of Syrian refugees introduced new diversity into the city. Gaziantep, bordering with Syria, has to some extent developed an infrastructure around Syrian refugees, including businesses mainly in textile, logistics, footwear and plastic sectors established by Syrian refugees. Thus, Ankara has only recently hosted international migrants, Gaziantep has adopted an economic integration model through businesses established by Syrians and is also a city where national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actively work around refugee integration, while Istanbul was already diverse. By selecting these three cities, I sought to understand whether contextual differences had an influence on processes of integration and showed how they differentially accelerate processes of integration.

I conducted in-depth interviews with a total of 120 Syrian refugees—50 of them were established businesses and 70 of them, including 20 skilled refugees, were working in the informal economy—in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep, recruited in cafes and other meeting points. Once I had made some connections, I used a snowballing approach to identify further interviewees. Seventy per cent of them were men and the remainder women, aged

from 19 to 54; while some were in receipt of very low incomes, others were living in more affluent districts of Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep.[2] Those who own businesses in Turkey stated that they brought investment capital with them when they were migrating and that they had owned restaurants, cafes and off-licences in Syria as well. Although many research participants were Sunni-Arabs, I also interviewed a few Syrian refugees whose backgrounds were Kurdish and Turkmen. Their length of stay in Turkey varied; while some migrated six months ago, others have been living in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep for four years. Ninety per cent of the participants had not stayed in refugee camps and 65 per cent of them were not registered with the Turkish authorities.

I worked closely with an interpreter who translated from Arabic and Kurdish to English during the interview process. Questions were relatively open to enable respondents to tell their stories in their own words and focused on their migration journeys, experiences before migrating to Turkey, experiences in Turkey (arrival, settlement and relationship with the natives), links with Syria and near-future plans. I used qualitative content analysis to identify a set of common themes from the narratives, and then employed a thematic coding system with NVivo, which helped to create analytical categories. A thematic coding reflects the dimensions of integration such as legal-political and socio-economic ones, which include experiences of accessing housing, employment, health and education, citizenship and social relations. Ethical approval for the project was gained via the university's ethics committee and consent forms, which were circulated to participants before starting the interview process. The next session follows the discussion of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Syrian Refugees in Turkey

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of August 2018, there are 3,533,822[3] Syrian refugees registered in Turkey, 93 per cent[4] of whom prefer to reside in towns and cities rather than in camps, including the border cities and metropolitan areas, where they experience limited access to accommodation, social services and job opportunities. The rising number of Syrian nationals living in cities opens up discussions around issues of permanency, economic stabilization, political representation and accessibility of public services, for both the refugees and wider society. Syrians in Turkey are heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion, gender, generation, social class, etc. There are Kurdish, Turkmen, Arab, Shi, Dom, Abdal, Armenian, Yazidis, Assyrian Syrian nationals; Palestinian and Iranian refugees coming from Syria; working-, middle- and upper-class Syrians; and Syrians from diverse religious backgrounds, including Christians and Muslim Alawites and Sunnis, settled in various cities of Turkey.

Since the beginning of 2013, many Syrian refugees have settled in large cities, such as Istanbul and Ankara. As of August 2018, Istanbul hosts the

highest number of Syrians, with 563,874[5] in residence in conjunction with migrants from Somalia, Russia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan and Moldova, amongst others. Ankara, the capital of Turkey, hosts 80,037[6] Syrians in districts undergoing urban regeneration, with wealthier Syrians tending to live separately from those with fewer resources. Gaziantep, bordering Syria, hosts 390,860[7] Syrians and contains many Syrian-run businesses plus national and international NGOs working with refugees.

In April 2014, Turkey adopted a new Law on Foreigners and International Protection that clarified the status of Syrians in Turkey, which is temporary-protection status, focusing on subsidiary protection and access to fundamental rights. The rights of Syrian nationals in Turkey include a lawful stay in Turkey until the conflict ends in Syria and access to health, education, social assistance and the labour market.

Access to the labour market has been stated as a granted right for Syrians in the Law on Foreigners and International Protection in 2014 and the implementation has been left to the Ministry of Social Security and Work. In January 2016, Turkey issued a new regulation allowing registered Syrian refugees to apply for work permits. However, accessing work permits is difficult and depends upon employers' willingness to offer contracts of employment and for refugees to have held Turkish identification documents for at least six months. In fact, according to a report published by the Crisis Group, as of January 2018, an estimated 750,000–950,000 Syrians currently work in the informal sector; only 15,000 have obtained the permits needed for formal employment.[8] This clearly shows that the majority of Syrians are working in an informal economy without social security, faced with exploitation around the lack of safe working conditions, overworked and underpaid, which causes the exclusion of many refugees from wider society. According to the International Crisis Group's recent report, as of December 2017, there were about 8,000 registered Syrian businesses in Turkey and about 10,000 unregistered enterprises.[9] According to a study conducted by Building Markets, Syrian enterprises employ on average 9.4 Syrians, the majority of whom previously worked in the informal sector.[10] A recent report published by The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Syrian refugees established 778 businesses in the first half of 2018 and 473 of these businesses are based in Istanbul; 7,243 businesses have been established by Syrians in the last seven years.[11] The report also indicates that 13 per cent of newly established companies in Turkey have a Syrian partner.[12] There is a working permit for Syrians in Turkey, but they cannot easily become a citizen of Turkey. There are other fundamental rights for Syrians; however, especially regarding work permits, there are visible barriers to full participation within the formal economy. However, the way to be an entrepreneur is not prevented in Turkey, which is different from many European countries. In Europe, there are barriers for refugees trying to establish businesses. For instance, refugees suffer more from barriers in establishing business than

other immigrants in Belgium (Wauters and Lambrecht 2008). Turkey therefore implements a self-sufficient model for refugees.

On 2 July 2016, the Turkish president announced that millions of Syrians living in Turkey would be granted citizenship. Granting full citizenship is an important development but it is not clear whether it would include all Syrians under temporary protection. According to a new report on Syrian refugees in Turkey, published by the Turkish parliament's Refugee Rights Commission, as of 2017, there were 30,000 Syrian nationals granted citizenship in Turkey.[13] The deputy prime minister said that 'Citizenship will be granted initially based on criteria such as employment, education level, wealth, and urgency of one's situation'.[14] Although Turkey has taken important steps towards the integration of Syrian refugees into Turkey, more needs to be done, especially on the current status of Syrians. The authorities should provide a clear legal provision on the status of Syrians and should have an inclusive definition of citizenship. In the next section, I explain the legal-political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions of integration in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Integration of Syrian Refugees in Turkey

Legal-political Dimension: Residence Status and Citizenship

The legal and political dimensions of becoming part of a receiving society include secure residence status and citizenship rights for refugees. Some studies show that refugees who have a secure legal status, rights and established social connections and whose intentions and aspirations are to stay in the new country feel that they 'belong' to the receiving society (Korac 2003; Ager and Strang 2008; Da Lomba 2010; Lewis 2010). In the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey, insecure legal status and limited access to rights in practice may influence refugees' aspiration to integrate. There is no structured regulation regarding the integration framework; for instance, granting citizenship has lots of ambiguity in terms of who can apply and what are the actual conditions for ascribing citizenship. Refugee entrepreneurs who invest in Turkey through establishing business and skilled refugees who can get a work permit more easily compared to unskilled refugees have advantages in the integration processes, so the policy are in favour of refugees who are selected by the state. Those who are not preferred and seen as inappropriate to be a citizen of Turkey prefer to move to Europe to get a refugee status, as they are under temporary protection. Istanbul's Aksaray district has become either a 'gateway to Europe' for Syrians, as in the case of refugees in Italy (Losi and Strang 2008), or it represents a refuge until they can return home. Many Syrian refugees interviewed did not see Turkey as their final destination. Living in Europe appears attractive for them because they can have a secure status and access to the rights they need to integrate, such as

employment, housing, education and unemployment benefits (Baban *et al.* 2017). This can be illustrated by the quotation below:

> Europe is better than Turkey because Europe gives us a status. I do not see any future here. I need to work to look after my family, to pay rent. Europe provides free accommodation and job opportunities (20 years old, male, Gaziantep).

Temporary-protection status—having limited access to fundamental rights and socio-economic deprivation—hinders integration processes for those who are struggling to establish their lives in Turkey. However, the settlement process would be easier for those who have resources and a profession:

> I am happy to live in Turkey. I do not want to go to Europe. I am working in my profession as a teacher here. I've heard that Syrians who have a profession can apply for citizenship. If this is true, I can apply for citizenship and plan for my future in Turkey (36 years old, female, Istanbul).

On the one hand, granting citizenship can be understood as the settlement of Syrians possibly turning into a long-term situation. On the other hand, it also shows the citizenship offered to Syrians to be a 'selective citizenship', which targets investors and highly skilled individuals and is not extended to less skilled individuals, labourers and small-wage earners (Akcapar-Koser and Simsek 2018). Not extending the citizenship to all Syrians also highlights the selectivity on their integration, which means that the integration processes of Syrians who are appropriate to become a citizen would be smoother than for those who experience difficulties in accessing resources and feel insecure about the future. Selective citizenship discriminates between Syrians in terms of their class, as stated by a Syrian male in Ankara:

> We want to have a secure residence status. Syrians living in Germany, Sweden and Canada receive refugee status and all of them have access to similar rights as there is no differentiation among refugees. After some time, all of them might be able to apply for citizenship. But in Turkey, Syrians who are rich can access all available rights including citizenship, which is not fair (29 years old, male, Ankara).

This quotation highlights that 'citizenship is broadly constrained by neo-liberalism' and it is an example of 'market citizenship', which offers rights to those who have economic resources (Brodie 2002; Fudge 2005; Lee 2015; Grace *et al.* 2017). Empirical data shows that the policy not only eliminates Syrians who do not have economic resources from accessing rights and resources, but also decreases their aspirations to integrate with the receiving society.

Socio-economic and Cultural Dimensions: Access to Rights and Socio-cultural Engagement

The lack of access to fundamental rights such as the labour market, housing, education and health might also cause the social exclusion of refugees.

Employment has been highlighted as one of the most important supporters of integration for refugees in terms of feeling secure, future plans, economic independence, self-esteem, wellbeing and a means of survival (Bloch 1999, 2004; McColl *et al*. 2008; Stewart and Mulvey 2014). Some researchers argue that refugees who are employed adapt more easily to the receiving society than those who are unemployed, and unemployment increases the levels of social exclusion (Bloch 2000, 2004; Phillimore and Goodson 2005). In relating employment to social exclusion, Phillimore and Goodson (2005: 1730) state that 'unemployed refugees will also be excluded from other aspects of society such as consumption and social interaction'. Syrians who do not have regular income struggle to establish their lives in Turkey, which is a fundamental element for integration processes to start. This can be illustrated by the quotations below:

> When I came to Turkey, I worked in construction, but I did not get my wages. I just want a secure job to pay my rent and buy food (25 years old, male, Gaziantep).
>
> I am looking for a job for a long time, but it is very difficult to find a decent job. I worked in a car repair place for two months under very hard conditions and the employer did not pay my wages. I cannot complain to any institution because I am working informally. Employers need to apply for work permit on behalf of us and they do not do this. It is very difficult to survive here under these conditions (32 years old, male, Istanbul).

As a result of being forced to work in the informal economy, Syrians experience exploitation; they are overworked, underpaid and have no social security or pension rights. Struggling to enter into the labour market and not having economic resources have a bad influence on refugees' access to affordable housing and education (Simsek 2018). To feel included in the society, refugees need to access decent, safe, secure and affordable accommodation (Philips 2006; Murdie 2008). However, in the case of many Syrians, finding affordable housing is an important problem. A few Syrians mentioned difficulty in finding decent accommodation:

> Renting a flat is very expensive in Turkey. We pay $600 for two-bedroom flat and pay extra money for the bills. We struggle to pay the rent and the bills because only my son works and does not earn much. To be able to pay the rent and expenses we live with another family in this small flat. In total, we are 10 people living together which is very hard. This area is not safe at all (33 years old, female, Istanbul).

Those who struggle to find affordable, safe and decent housing also struggle to access education. A lack of available information on school registration, child labour and financial hardships are highlighted as main barriers to education by the participants as well. A Syrian woman living in Istanbul with her five children who lost her husband during the war in Syria said the following about her son's education:

> I arrived in Istanbul a year ago with my five children. Four of them are small and I need to look after them. Someone must work to pay rent and feed the children. I lost my husband. I have a 14 years old boy working in construction. He was studying in Syria but here he must work. I wish one day he carries on his education (35 years old, female, Istanbul).

Labour has been a part of daily life for many Syrian children. According to Kaya and Kirac (2016), at least one child works in almost every third Syrian household in Istanbul. Besides child labour, financial hardships are highlighted as the other important barrier to education by most participants. For example, a Syrian female in Ankara mentioned the high prices of the school bus as a barrier to education. She said the following:

> Even tough education is free in Turkey, there are additional costs such as uniforms, books, activities and school bus. It is very difficult for us to send our children to school because we [my husband and I] do not have a regular income (33 years old, female, Ankara).

Most of these barriers to education are related to a lack of integration of refugees, which is related to the lack of having economic resources. While many Syrians experience difficulties in accessing certain rights that are crucial for integration, those who are wealthier do not experience such difficulties. There are Syrian restaurants and cafes in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep and numerous Syrian businessmen contribute to the Turkish economy by investing their capital in Turkey. Running a business made some of them feel that they were settled in Turkey, as one Syrian restaurant owner said:

> I owned this restaurant 11 months ago. I also had a restaurant in Syria. I came here with my family; got my own house in Istanbul. I established this business under a Turkish company name. Most of my customers are Syrian. We serve Syrian food here. I do not know Turkish. We have a translator here, but I want to learn Turkish. I am happy to live in Istanbul. I established my life here (40 years old, male, Istanbul).

Opening establishments offers the possibility of adaptation for Syrians and sees refugees as key social actors in the process of integration. A shop owner who lives in Gaziantep highlighted the role of business in the adaptation process. He stated that:

> When I came to Turkey, I had enough money to establish a business in Gaziantep. I opened this convenience store which brings a good income every month. With this income, I survive here, send my children to private school and established my life in Gaziantep. I am happy here do not want to go to elsewhere (37 years old, male, Gaziantep).

The quotation highlights that he is in a more favourable position to become economically integrated, his children receive education at a private school and he perhaps is more socially integrated than those who do not have a

regular income. This can also be observed in access to housing, as stated by a Syrian entrepreneur who resided in Istanbul:

> I came to Istanbul two years ago. I had restaurants in Syria. I sold my restaurants in Syria and brought some money with me which was enough to establish a business and bought a flat in Fatih district of Istanbul. Syrians who have investments prefer to buy a flat in Turkey which is better than paying rent each month and dealing with the landlord (40 years old, male, Istanbul).

Health is highlighted as a less problematic area compared to accessing other fundamental rights. Most participants, regardless of their access to economic resources, stated that they have not experienced difficulties when they give birth or go to hospital for other treatments.

Apart from accessing rights, the social participation of refugees in the receiving society is crucial for their integration processes. The definition of integration as a 'two-way process' highlights the role of the receiving society in the processes of integration. Much research has shown that, in an environment where harmony and friendliness are established between refugees and natives, refugees feel safe and secure, making their integration processes easier (Threadgold and Court 2005; Ager and Strang 2008). However, in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey, the natives' discriminatory, unwelcoming behaviours and the lack of language competence create barriers in establishing good relationships with members of the receiving society and a sense of feeling included in the receiving society. The majority of the participants stated that they are isolated from society. This can be illustrated by the following quotation:

> I do not have an environment where I can construct a relationship with Turkish people. One reason of this is a language barrier, and another reason is related to not connecting to the local people at work, on the street (22 years old, male, Ankara).

In the case of Syrians who have fewer connections with members of the receiving society, social integration becomes difficult. However, those who are economically integrated through working and establishing businesses are better connected. For example, a Syrian who runs a restaurant in Istanbul highlighted that his business helps him to construct links with members of the receiving society. He said that 'the majority of my customers are Turkish. I sometimes have conversations with Turkish people on food and my country at my restaurant. Food connects us' (45 years old, male, Istanbul). A space is constructed through businesses where communication is established between Syrians and the local people and the quotation shows that Syrians have something in common with locals to talk about. A social bridge is established between Syrians who run businesses and the local people in the forms of friendship, reciprocity and mutual support. For example, a Syrian man who runs a bakery shop in Ankara highlighted that a friendship is established through running a business:

> When I opened this shop on this neighbourhood, there were not many businesses running by Syrians that time. Next shop- the off-licence- is running by a Turkish man for a long time. Throughout time we became friends. We communicated in Turkish. I went to Turkish language course when I arrive in Turkey. He started to sell Syrian products after getting information from me regarding what Syrians consume most. When I struggle to understand the regulations, he helped me. The solidarity is established between us through friendship due to running businesses on the same street (50 years old, male, Ankara).

The quotation shows that a social bridge is constituted between the Syrian bakery shop owner and Turkish off-licence owner through businesses in the forms of friendship, reciprocity, mutual support and solidarity. Another participant also stated the mutual support and solidarity established with the local people in Istanbul:

> When I opened my first restaurant in Taksim, I encounter bureaucratic problems. I ask for advice to a Turkish shop owner in the next door who eats in my restaurant from time to time and he helped me a lot to sort out my problem. We then became a friend which is based on a trust, solidarity and reciprocity (55 years old, male, Istanbul).

The social relationships constructed between Syrians and the local people are based on economic status. In the case of Syrians who work in the informal market, constructing social bridges with the local people is difficult due to hierarchies and competition in accessing the labour market as a result of the neo-liberal labour market and the lack of implementation of the policy. However, in the case of Syrians who have economic resources, the constitution of social bridges is easier because of equal economic status between them and the local entrepreneurs; the business space allows them to connect and their class status separates them from the lower-class Syrians in the eyes of many local people.

Language is also crucial to constructing social bridges and it is one of the main challenges of the refugee-integration process. According to a recent report published by the Crisis Group, Syrians who remain in Turkey instead of moving on to Europe tend to have little education and few skills; most do not speak Turkish.[15] Syrian refugees who have access to economic resources can take private Turkish-language courses, which helps them to establish links with the native population, as stated by a Syrian male:

> After finding my accommodation and sorting out my business in Turkey, my next aim was to learn Turkish. I had to pay to a course to learn Turkish because the government do not offer free Turkish language courses to Syrians. I have been attending to the course since last spring and I started to speak with Turkish customers in my restaurant. I think that it is very important for my adaptation (38 years old, male, Istanbul).

Syrians who have economic capital construct social bridges with members of the receiving society easily. Social bridges were established because business

owners could speak Turkish. However, opportunities to interact with the receiving society through work relationships is limited for many Syrians because of exclusion and language barriers, as stated in the following quotation:

> I am working in a car repair place. I do not have much communication with the Turkish workers there because they do not want me to work there. One day they said that 'we do not want foreigners to work in this establishment'. I understand Turkish and hear what they say about Syrians and myself. It is not easy to have conversation and construct friendship with people I work together (25 years old, male, Gaziantep).

When there are limited opportunities to construct bridges with members of the receiving society because of discrimination, language barriers and not having an environment to communicate, cultural events organized by Syrian and national NGOs might play a crucial role in constructing bridges between refugees and members of the receiving society. However, not all Syrians are aware of the existence of these community organizations. Some of them do not participate in socio-cultural events because they do not always have the inspiration to do so and their priorities are surviving in Turkey rather than being culturally engaged. For instance, a 23-year-old Syrian male living in Istanbul stated:

> I work six days a week and ten hours each day in the shop. When I am not working I just want to sleep. I do not have time to socio-cultural activities and communicate with people. I must work to be able to pay the rent and other expenses (23 years old, male, Istanbul).

The level of attending socio-cultural activities is also related to whether Syrian refugees can access the economic resources that enable them to work less and have time to participate in activities that bring members of the receiving society and refugees together.

Conclusion

This article shows that the integration processes of Syrian refugees have been widely influenced by their class positions due to the lack of an implementation of policy that provides opportunities to the refugees who have economic resources. To explore how and why access to economic resources makes the integration process easier in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey, the empirical data highlights that Syrians go through 'class-based integration', which refers to the allocation of rights based on refugees' economic resources. For instance, Syrians who do not have economic resources struggled to access the labour market, education and housing, all of which are essentials that need to be guaranteed. Although access to citizenship rights for Syrians in Turkey is officially announced, Syrians who lack economic resources and are less skilled might not be granted citizenship and be under temporary protection for a long time.

The empirical data also shows that wealthier Syrians establish businesses, construct social bridges with members of the receiving society through their businesses and engage in socio-cultural activities, thus making their integration processes smoother than those who do not have ready economic resources. The social aspect of integration also reflects the role of class, as the Syrians who work longer hours and do not have access to employment construct fewer social connections with members of the receiving society due to being isolated. The difficulty in establishing livelihoods in urban settings under these hard conditions causes Syrians to construct weak ties with the receiving society and to even hold the idea of leaving Turkey and not wanting to learn Turkish, which hamper the processes of integration. Consequently, Turkey's integration policy does not support the integration of all Syrians residing in Turkey, as only 'selected' Syrians are to be propped up.

Considering the concepts of 'refugee economies' and 'market citizenship' as the analytical framework of this article, it is shown that Syrian refugees participate in formal and informal economy in Turkey; however, policies characterize the economic lives of refugees, not the market, as highlighted by Betts *et al.* (2017) in the case of refugees in Uganda. The experiences of Syrians who work in the informal economy are economically, socially and linguistically isolated compared to those who are wealthier, which supports Grace *et al.*'s (2017) findings that market citizenship renders Burmese refugees in Michigan. The integration processes of Syrian refugees in Turkey are influenced by their class difference due to the lack of implementation of an integration policy, which causes unequal access to rights and participation of refugees in the receiving society and constructs visible boundaries between refugees that are reflected on their everyday life experiences in the settlement process.

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1. I prefer to use the term 'refugee' when referring to Syrians in Turkey, even though they are not recognized as refugees to highlight the international protection and rights.
2. The majority of Syrian refugees in Istanbul settled in the European side districts, including Fatih, Esenler, Esenyurt, Okmeydani, Beyoglu and Basaksehir, so most of my participants live or work in these districts of Istanbul. In Ankara, they live in the districts of Ismetpasa, Altindag, Siteler and Haskoy. In Gaziantep, they live in the districts of Sehit Kamil, Emek mahallesi and Karatas.

3. UNHCR–Syria Regional Refugee Response, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224 (accessed August 2018).
4. For DCMM's recent statistics on demographics of Syrians under temporary protection in cities and at camps, see http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/temporary-protection_915_1024_4748_icerik (accessed August 2018).
5. *Ibid*.
6. *Ibid*.
7. *Ibid*.
8. 'Turkey's Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions', *International Crisis Group*, Report No: 248, 29 January 2018, https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/248-turkeys-syrian-refugees-defusing-metropolitan-tensions (accessed February 2018).
9. *Ibid*.
10. 'Another Side to the Story: A Market Assessment of Syrian SMEs in Turkey', *Building Markets*, June 2017. https://buildingmarkets.org/sites/default/files/pdm_-reports/another_side_to_the_story_a_market_assessment_of_syrian_smes_in_turkey.pdf (accessed February 2018).
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12. *Ibid*.
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