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A Faithful Alliance Between the Civil Society and the State: Actors and Mechanisms of Accommodating Syrian Refugees in Istanbul

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ABSTRACT

Reception, hospitality and integration are certainly the main challenges of the contemporary world, particularly for countries like Turkey which hosts more than 3 million refugees from Syria. The aim of this article is to analyze the reception practices of civil society organizations and the nature of these bodies' relationship with state agencies by focusing on Sultanbeyli, a peripheral district of Istanbul. Based on a fieldwork conducted in this district, we present the functioning of various state and non-state actors in order to uncover not only the role of NGOs, but also the nature of the relations between them and the state in terms of governance of refugee reception in Turkey. We thus argue that the reception of Syrian refugees is undertaken by a "faithful" alliance between the state and certain NGOs, a partnership where civil society assumes a supporting role to the state in refugee reception.

INTRODUCTION

"One of the most vital challenges of our time is how to hospitably welcome migrants, the exiled and refugees" writes Heidrun Friese (2010, 324). Reception, hospitality and integration are certainly the main challenges of the contemporary world, particularly for countries like Turkey which hosts more than 3 million refugees from Syria. One of the questions is how hospitality and the reception of newcomers are put into practice. As Friese puts it, hospitality was conceived as a "religious and ethical duty" before the emergence of the nation-state. With the development of the state system, political decisions, legal frameworks and administrative procedures have replaced this religious background and states have become the primary actor to organize and implement reception policies. This is certainly valid for Turkey too, as the state and its agencies are the primary actors that arrange and regulate the reception of Syrian refugees.

Numerous studies have analysed in detail the role of the state in Turkish refugee and immigration policies (İçduygu and Aksel, 2013; Kirişçi, 2000; İçduygu, 2015). Yet what seems novel in the recent case of mass arrival of Syrian refugees – besides the provision of temporary protection status – is the very rapid proliferation of humanitarian organizations, unlike the earlier "refugee crises" Turkey underwent.[1] Various reports have already mapped the nationwide NGO field and shown the presence and the role of civil society organizations in refugee reception (Çorabatır and Hassa, 2013; Özden, 2013; Kutlu, 2015; Mackreath and Sağnıç, 2017; Woods and Kayalı, 2017).

The aim of this article is to analyse the reception practices of civil society organizations and the nature of these bodies' relationship with state agencies by focusing on Sultanbeyli, a peripheral district of Istanbul which became visible owing to the abundance of services and activities catered to Syrian refugees. Based on a fieldwork conducted in this district, we present the functioning of various state

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and non-state actors in order to uncover not only the role of NGOs, but also the nature of the relations between them and the state in terms of governance of refugee reception in Turkey. Below, we will argue that the reception of Syrian refugees is undertaken by a "faithful" alliance between the state and certain NGOs, a partnership where civil society assumes a supporting role to the state in refugee reception. This alliance is "faithful" in both sense of the term; it is a relation marked by "loyalty" to the state and one that has been established on a shared basis of "religious references."

Throughout this article, we use "reception" instead of "integration" mainly because the Turkish authorities have perceived and presented the presence of Syrian refugees in the country as a temporary phenomenon and abstained from using the term integration, which connotes a permanent settlement in the country. Nevertheless, what we observe is rather an ongoing integration process, although both the authorities and the society are unwilling to admit it. As stated in a UNHCR (2002) document, "The reception phase for resettled refugees is the period following their arrival in their country of resettlement. The length of the reception phase is not defined – it often refers to the first few weeks after arrival, but can be used to refer to periods of up to 6 months following arrival." The stay of most of the Syrians has already lasted 3–4 years at 2018. Yet the authorities seem to be reluctant to use the term integration, which goes beyond reception, that is "ensuring that refugees are provided with basic needs and access to services." Actually, integration means durable solutions in terms of "enjoying equality of rights and opportunities in the social, economic and cultural life of the country" (UNHCR, 2002). However, in the Turkish context, both the state and the society perceive refugees as "guests" whose stay should be temporary. In this regard, hospitality and welcoming reception are perceived as a temporary duty towards the refugees.

This study is based on a qualitative fieldwork in Sultanbeyli, a district densely inhabited by Syrian refugees while simultaneously populated by a conservative-religious base of local inhabitants. The fieldwork was conducted between October 2016 and January 2017, during which we completed 66 in-depth semi-structured interviews with local representatives of political parties, local administrative authorities (the Municipality, the Prefecture of Police, the Office of the Mufti, district leaders, etc.) as well as the managers and employees of six NGOs operating in the district. One of the objectives of this study is to present local citizens' attitudes and discourses of hospitality and their perspectives on the implementation of refugee reception policies. Due to the tense political atmosphere in the aftermath of the coup attempt of 15 July (2016) and the following state of emergency, many people refused to be interviewed in their homes. Hence, we decided to interview local inhabitants in public spaces. For instance, shop owners (e.g. real estate agents, goldsmiths, etc.) and their employees with whom the refugees have frequent contact were met in parks and shopping malls to be interviewed about their opinions on the newcomers.

Below, we will first delineate a general framework on civil society's relations with the state in Turkey in order to analyse the power dynamics among these so-called non-governmental actors in the context of their political proximity (or distance) to the local and central authorities. We will then present our findings based on the fieldwork conducted in Sultanbeyli and demonstrate how discourses of "hospitality" are affirmed by a religious discourse and a historical one referring to the Ottoman past. Finally, we will offer an overall evaluation of the weaknesses and strengths of the governance of refugee reception in Turkey and provide some suggestions for policymaking on Syrian refugees' integration in the country.

STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS IN TURKEY AND GOVERNANCE OF REFUGEE RECEPTION

Although states have long been considered to be the primary actor in the control and regulation of migrants and refugees, recently other actors have come under the limelight with the introduction of the notion of "governance." Governance is one of the critical and catchy terms used to refer to the new governing mechanisms in the neoliberal age where the state is thought to have weakened as a

consequence of globalization dynamics. The term signifies states' collaborations with other actors such as NGOs, international organizations or multinational companies (Ceyhan, 2006) and has been commonly used in migration studies in order to comprehend border management (Carrera, 2007), non-state service providers (Guiraudon, 2000) and transnational management of national borders (Lahav, 2004). New governance mechanisms also imply new distributions of power, in which state actors are increasingly replaced by civilian and professional players (Rose, 1999). While governance theory considers the involvement of private sector and civil society actors in the process, the "new public administration" approach focuses on the changing role of the state.

Parallel to the rise of neoliberalism and the governance approach across the world from the 1980s onwards, social sciences literature in Turkey saw a shift from the emphasis on the dichotomy between civil society and the state to one on the idea of cooperation. For instance, Can (2007) contests the dichotomy between civil society and the state. She asserts that the relationship between the two has carried a dual character since the 1990s, civil society claims for rights being weakened while voluntary initiatives supporting the state gained an ascending importance. Adopting a Foucauldian perspective, Can (2007, 94) argues that the collapse of the welfare state in the neoliberal era does not mean that political intervention is coming to an end, but rather that it has led to the production of new management strategies where civil society organizations and volunteers step in as actors to solve problems linked with the weakening of the welfare state. Despite the proliferation of civil society organizations in the 2000s, their activities have been reduced to humanitarian assistance and charitable activities while the political aspect concerning the symbolic struggle for rights and democracy has lagged far behind. STEP's research, conducted between 2008 and 2011, has revealed 65 per cent of all associations in Turkey to be active in the provision of social services and assistance while only 1.28 per cent of them performed activities in the field of democracy and human rights (TÜSEV, 2011, 63). Can (2007, 96) adds that civil society began to play a complimentary role to the state with the expansion of "volunteering" mechanisms (Can, 2007, 96).

Since the 1990s and more specifically after the election victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP hereafter) in 2002, "religiously motivated associations" have gained importance, thanks to the endorsement of a social policy based on the idea of Islamic charity and the rise of a conservative bourgeoisie (Göçmen, 2014). As Sunar argues, today Islamic civil society organizations function as a social welfare institution, adopting a position as a supporter of the state. They are avoiding traditional anti-state rhetoric and are building collaborative relations with state structures (Sunar, 2018). According to Keyman and Icduygu (2003, 228), "the institutional distinction between the state and society" is often considered "a sufficient condition for thinking of organizations taking place outside the boundaries of the state as civil society organizations." However, the authors continue, the "boundary problem" obliges us to ask "to what extent civil society organizations in Turkey are in fact operating as 'a civil society organization' in terms of the scope and the content of their activities, their relation to the state, and their normative and ideological concerns" (Ibid, 228).

As we observe in the refugee field, many of the recently created civil society organizations in Turkey enjoy strong ideological and organizational ties with the governmental institutions or actors. In this respect, it may be more correct to call them "pro-governmental organizations" rather than non-governmental organizations. A concrete example of the proliferation of this type of NGOs can be observed in Sultanbeyli where civil society organizations serving the refugees today are not independent of the state and its institutions; they are rather an auxiliary agent alongside the state, taking over its duties vis-à-vis the refugees. This is similar to what Özden (2013) observed in refugee camps, where Turkish authorities maintain strong control over the entry and activities of NGOs in the camps. Thus, as suggested by the governance approach, state authorities increasingly yet selectively cooperate with civil society organizations operating in the field of refugees, working only with those that are ideologically close to the governing party's position.

This apparently "privileged" co-operation between the government and some "pro-government organizations" echoes the rigid dichotomy between the state and society that was inherited from the Ottoman Empire as some authors asserted in the late 1990s in order to account for the weakness of civil society in the face of state domination in Turkey (İnalcık, 1998; Kalaycıoğlu, 1998). According to these two authors, the state in the Ottoman era interfered with civil society activities that might provoke oppositional movements among the people and endanger the continuity of the state.

In fact, the state's control over civil society is not peculiar to the case of Turkey. It is a common phenomenon in a wide range of so-called un(der)developed countries from the Middle East to East and South Asia, Africa and Latin America. Examining the state–civil society relations, Wiktorowicz (2000, 43–4) points out that political liberalization undertaken by many of the Middle Eastern countries did not put an end to state control but rather changed its form "from overt repression toward less visible forms of social control in the region" by means of regulations that enabled the state to monitor the activities of civil society actors. Dupuy et al. (2016) scrutinize the reasons behind the accentuated state control over NGOs and the restrictions on allocation of foreign aid to domestically operating NGOs in low- and middle-income countries. Their analysis reveals that governmental policy making in relation to civil society organizations is influenced by three imperatives: the perceived risk of weakened sovereignty and legitimacy, the need for aid flows as an economic resource and the potential harms to its reputation as an international norm complier (Ibid, 302–3).

The case of Morocco sets a concrete example for understanding to what extent the relationship between civil society and the state in migration governance is formed due to rising demands and mobilizations from below and the impact of foreign policy, particularly the enhancement of the EU-Morocco partnership (Üstübici, 2016; Cherti and Collyer, 2015). Similar to the Moroccan case, Turkey's migratory policy has changed in line with the shift in foreign policy negotiations with the European Union and in relations with neighbouring countries in the region, especially Syria. The new Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Soykan, 2012) ratified in 2013 and the creation of a Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) in 2014 are examples of the long-established EU influence on Turkish migration and asylum policies. Moreover, internal political dynamics have been no less influential on migration governance than the country's foreign affairs. The shutdown of many international NGOs during the state of emergency that was declared just after the 2016 coup attempt is just one example.

In a nutshell, the governance of refugee reception in Turkey cannot be described merely in terms of coordination between the state and civil society organizations that is marked by neo-liberal policies. It would also be wrong to reduce the repressive policies of the state against civil society solely to a top-down approach inherited from the past as described by Kalaycıoğlu (1998) and İnalcık (1998). Rather, we believe that it can be described as an amalgamation of a deeply rooted managerial tradition and policy making that was taken over from the previous governments, especially from right-wing political parties, on the one hand, and a neo-liberal understanding of governance based on volunteerism and religious solidarity on the other. Lastly, responses of the AKP government to the new dynamics of domestic and foreign politics cannot be excluded from this framework where refugee policies have taken their current shape.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: SYRIANS IN ISTANBUL

According to the most recent data, there are more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees in Turkey as of April 2018, most of them settled in the border provinces. 556 thousand Syrians under temporary protection status live in Istanbul, where the official population is nearly 15 million.[2]

Istanbul, historically a host city for various migrant groups, today provides shelter for Syrian refugees; it accommodates a larger Syrian population than any other Turkish city. Relatively, however, this constitutes less than 4 per cent of the overall city population. The refugee density is

highest in Kilis with 95.6 per cent, followed by 28.1 per cent in Hatay, and 24 per cent in Urfa, as seen in Table 1. The Syrian population in Istanbul is usually concentrated in the peripheral districts where the housing is cheaper and informal economy is widespread.

By the year 2016, Sultanbeyli's population was more than 320,000 and there were about 21,000 Syrian refugees, constituting 6 per cent of the local population. This makes Sultanbeyli the only district on the Asian side of the city where refugee density is above the average (see the map).

Sultanbeyli, initially an informal settlement area in the eastern periphery of Istanbul, became a district municipality in 1992, thanks to the steady increase in population as internal migrants of lower socio-economic background urbanized the public land (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2008). Despite its location on the geographic perimeter of the city, it has a symbolic position in the country's political scene. Since the creation of the first municipal structure in Sultanbeyli, the local government has always been in the hands of pious-conservative parties. For the last two decades, AKP has been the main political actor in the district, as can also be seen in the most recent election results.[3] Sultanbeyli's pious-conservative character is visible not only in the electoral victories of AKP, but also in street names, store signs and the characteristics of women's clothing stores.

According to the statements of people from public institutions and NGOs in Sultanbeyli, Syrians in this district are predominantly from rural parts of Aleppo, the rate of literacy among the refugees is lower and the fertility rate is higher than the average for Istanbul. Syrian men try to ensure their families' livelihood by working in the large informal sector, mainly in construction and textile workshops, where they are obliged to accept low wages and poor working conditions.

DISCOURSES AND LIMITS OF HOSPITALITY

The political discourse shapes existing local discourses about refugees, especially in localities where the governing political party is powerful enough to influence social perceptions. In this connection, the analysis of discourses is important to better understand the context in which refugee reception mechanisms operate. The two main discourses regarding Syrian refugees in Turkey are religious (with reference to the Ansar and Muhajirin narrative) and historical (with reference to the

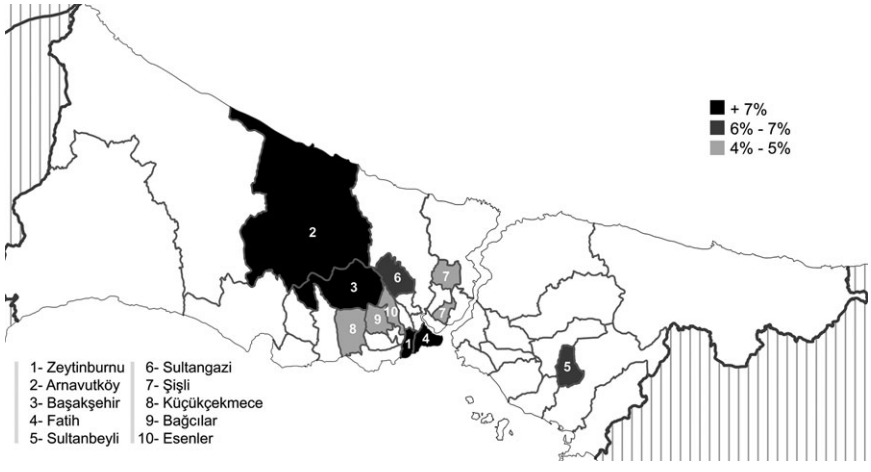
TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF SYRIANS UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS IN CERTAIN CITIES (APRIL 2018)

Cities	Number of registered Syrians	Population of the city	Share of Syrian refugees in the cities they live
Kilis	130.263	136.319	95,56%
Hatay	443.214	1.575.226	28,14%
Şanlıurfa	476.766	1.985.753	24,01%
Gaziantep	379.989	2.005.515	18,95%
Mersin	207.067	1.793.931	11,54%
Mardin	92.726	809.719	11,45%
Osmaniye	54.511	527.724	10,33%
Kahramanmaraş	100.252	1.127.623	8,89%
Adana	194.383	2.216.475	8,77%
Istanbul	556.663	15.029.231	3,70%
Total	3.578.246	80.810.525	4,43%

Source: DGMM (Accessed on March 18, 2018) http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik

MAP
DISTRIBUTION OF SYRIANS IN ISTANBUL DISTRICTS
THE MAP IS BASED ON THE DATA PRESENTED IN THE REPORT BY MURAT ERDOĞAN IN 2017.



glorious past of the Ottoman Empire). A third discourse, namely instrumentalization of refugees for foreign policy concerns, is less commonly heard at the local level in Sultanbeyli.

In the earlier mass arrivals from Bulgaria (1989) and from Iraq (1991), the "hierarchy of admissibility" was mainly based on ethnic brotherhood (*soydaşlık* in Turkish) (Danış and Parla, 2009). The people who were accepted were defined by "common ancestry and culture" with a strong reference to Turkishness (Kirişçi, 2000). What we observe since the arrival of Syrians is the use of religious reference to the narrative of Ansar and Muhajirin. Muhajirin refers to the Muslim people who migrated from Mecca to Madinah, while Ansar denotes the local people of Madinah who welcomed the newcomers and helped them. The narrative is also mentioned in the Quran: "But those who have believed and emigrated and fought in the cause of Allah and those who gave shelter and aided – it is they who are the believers, truly. For them is forgiveness and noble provision" (8/Anfal–74). Thus, for many pious Muslims in Sultanbeyli hospitality is a religious duty.

In addition to the discourse of solidarity on the ground of religion, recurring reference by some interviewees to "the Ottoman heritage" helps to construct a historical connection between the past and the present and supports the necessity to protect Syrians. As such, we frequently heard about "our duty as heirs of the Ottoman Empire" towards "the oppressed of the region" from the inhabitants of Sultanbeyli and the workers of local NGOs. These strong welcoming discourses with a compassionate connotation assume a relation of power in which the locals position themselves in a superior position vis-à-vis the refugees by generously offering assistance to the newcomers. A similarity can be drawn between these neo–Ottomanist discourses and the humanitarian rhetoric that has become widespread in migration governance regimes. Fassin (2005, 382) asserts: "expressing sympathy for the asylum seeker or the undesirable immigrant holds fewer benefits for that figure than it has for us, as we show how humane we finally are." The display of compassion towards refugees echoes the hierarchical relationship between the host who "offers" his hospitality and the guest who "receives" it. In spite of the prevalence of the reference to the Ansar and the Muhajirin among the interviewees, the relationship between them and the refugees remains one of domination and power.

These welcoming discourses that we heard at the beginning of the interviews were followed by complaints against the Syrians, an indicator of the limitations to the hospitality offered by the

locals. Indisputably, the arrival of thousands of Syrians into this low-income district has intensified the conflict over allocation of certain goods and services. This struggle can be observed mainly in the job and housing markets as well as in access to health and educational services. Almost all the local interviewees in Sultanbeyli complain about the "privileged access" granted to Syrian refugees in public services and the government's affirmative action towards the refugees. This common yet biased narrative throughout Turkey usually leads to an overstatement of certain basic rights that Syrians are granted and exacerbates the conflicts between the two sides, as expressed by local people in Sultanbeyli:

> Many people in our own country need [social] assistance, too. I know a widow who needs help. She has five children. There is a visible difference in terms of [social] assistance provided to the two parties [citizens and refugees]. (. . .) Our state helps [the Syrians] rather than our own people. It's good but . . . They [the Syrians] are spending much more than we do. (. . .) They [the Syrians] communicate with each other, one informs the other about the distribution of [social] aids (. . .) I do not know to what extent the state will exclude its own people.
>
> (Interview with a 24-year-old clothing shop employee, October 2016)

The competition over jobs and rental housing takes place mainly among the lower income residents of the district whereas the wealthier population, economically profiting from the refugees' presence, have a more tolerant discourse. Some interviewees pointed to the "exploitation of refugees" by "cruel landlords" who are "taking advantage of them." Similarly, they talked about Syrians as a "source of cheap labour" as they are forced to accept much lower wages and lack of social security. A second source of conflict is the inter-group marriages between local men and Syrian women. The conflict arises from rage and accusations of the local women against Syrian women who have married local men (sometimes as their second wife) to ensure their livelihood. In fact, the lack of economic independence of both local and refugee women leads them to consider marriages as a source of livelihood. Consequently, the established men in the district become a "resource" to compete over. This rivalry is reflected in the statements of the local women in the form of hate discourse and contempt as well as stigmatization through rumours and legends.

Such discourses aim at creating a hierarchy between the established and the outsiders, contributing to the perception of Syrian women as inferior than the local women in terms of lifestyle, morality, culinary culture, clothing style and family life, exactly as Elias and Scotson (1965) described in *The Established and The Outsiders*. The fieldwork data demonstrate that dissatisfaction concerning the settlement of refugees in Sultanbeyli can be felt by the anxiety with regard to the "possession" of opportunities or goods and services such as social assistance and inter-group marriages. This feeling of loss of the privileged and dominant position of the citizens in relation to "the guests" gives birth to more hostile discourses among the inhabitants.

Meso-level actors of refugee reception in Sultanbeyli

Sultanbeyli is rich in terms of organized actors in refugee reception. One of the most important of these is certainly the district municipality, which provides many services to support the refugees in the district. The accomplishments of this municipality recalls the example of Italian cities, where local authorities play an important role for migrant integration in a context of neglectful official policies limited to emergency measures (Campomori and Caponio, 2014). In the Turkish context, characterized by a highly centralized political tradition, municipalities have always been less powerful than the central government. Even between the 1980s and the 2000s, when there were aggressive neoliberal reforms, Turkey experienced a limited decentralization. The central government has always been jealous to protect its overwhelming power vis-à-vis local bodies. Despite a short

period of decentralization reforms, the unequal power sharing between central and local forces has continued and Turkey turned again towards further authoritarian centrist rule (Bayraktar, 2014). The overwhelming centralization is also visible in the domain of refugee reception. It is mainly the government and affiliated institutions, such as AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency attached to the Prime Ministry) and DGMM (Directorate General of Migration Management), which manage the reception of Syrians. Meanwhile, there have emerged several civil society organizations to play an important role in the refugee reception.

NGOs

In Sultanbeyli, there are a number of NGOs active in the area of social assistance for the Syrian refugees. Many of them are newly created organizations that have opened their doors after the arrival of the refugees; others had been present prior to the refugees yet worked in other fields. Almost all of them now work for the new poor in the neighbourhood and most can be labelled as "religiously motivated associations" following Göçmen's terminology (2014). Their activities are supported by a discourse of Islamic solidarity and religious fraternity, and are made possible by funding instruments such as *zakat* and charity.

The NGOs in Sultanbeyli can be grouped into two main categories: large organizations that operate nationally and internationally, and local ones that work exclusively in Sultanbeyli. In the first group, one can mention the IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation), which organizes large-scale humanitarian campaigns and sends collected goods to the communities in Syria, or the International Blue Crescent, which organizes social events and trainings for the refugees. The activities of small local NGOs are limited to providing refugees with food, clothes and housewares. Almost all NGO workers recognize Syrians as "guests" or "religious fellows in need." The sheer majority of the NGOs provide aid in kind whereas advocacy for refugee rights is almost non-existent.

The most important civil society organization in hosting the Syrians in Sultanbeyli is the Association for Refugees (MD). This organization, which works solely in Sultanbeyli, was started with individual efforts to relieve the dreadful conditions in which refugees lived. It acquired legal status in 2014 and officially became an association. The founders consist mainly of high-level employees of the district municipality as well as local notables; their success relies on their capacity to mobilize various networks, thanks to their links to AKP deputies, state officials and leading local figures:

> At the beginning there were no politicians. Some of them [the participants in the meetings] were local notables… Mr. X [a high level bureaucrat within the municipal organization] was willing to help [the Syrians]. Whenever he faced a problem, he resolved it with the support of the municipality, and we said that we should systematize this. We said we would put such people on the [executive] board so that we could be in touch with every [institution]. We were a team of about 20 people. We have gathered people from different institutions, including the district governor [*kaymakam*], the mayor, an AKP member and another person from the public hospital, to quickly solve the problems.
>
> (Interview with an MD Manager, January 2017)

Since its creation, the MD has been able to operate very efficiently, thanks to its pragmatic approach that helps to bypass bureaucratic obstacles through the mobilization of clientelistic networks.[4] For instance, through personal efforts and activating various links with economic and political elites, they managed to obtain a fingerprint machine to be used in the Sultanbeyli District Police Department in order to speed up the registration process of Syrians in Sultanbeyli. Thus, the Syrians are no longer obliged to commute a 40 km distance in order to register in the DGMM's headquarters in Fatih. Besides, the MD covered the salaries of the translators working in the District Police

Department. The association managed to attract not only national but also international funding to provide services in a variety of areas such as humanitarian assistance, health, education, employment and so on. At the very beginning, the MD operated in a tiny building with only three employees. By 2016, only 2 years after its creation, it had more than 40 employees whose salaries were paid by various international NGOs and was housed in a five-storey building whose rent and furnishing was funded by a German foundation.[5]

Competition over symbolic prestige and capacity to attract international funding are important sources of conflict among NGOs active in Sultanbeyli, as elsewhere.[6] The problem of cooperation is also acknowledged by Mackreath and Sağnıç (2017) in their report about civil society organizations in Turkey. As they argue, the competition is mainly due to political differences or rivalry for funds. The strongest asset of associations is their database containing the personal information of "all" Syrian refugees living in Sultanbeyli. Thanks to these detailed databases, the associations have comprehensive information on refugee households, such as the amount of aid received by families as well as basic demographic figures. The database, which helps them to prevent repeated assistance, is a main pillar of their efficiency as well as a source of symbolic power, which they refuse to share not only with researchers but also with other NGOs (even if they share similar political values).

Another characteristic of the activities of local NGOs is "informality." A very good example was the outpatient clinic of the MD that occupied two floors of their building, together with a laboratory and a pharmacy, until late 2017. A dozen Syrian doctors and nurses provided the clinic's services, treating Syrians only.[7] Despite its outstanding success in serving the refugees, the Syrian doctors were, surprisingly, employed without legal work permits while serving around 150–200 Syrian patients per day. Besides, the polyclinic was not registered with the Ministry of Health and thus not audited by state institutions. Official authorities adopted a "deliberate ignorance" vis-à-vis these informal, if not unlawful, practices. In short, the association provided a wide range of social services for the Syrians in an easy, practical and efficient way without fulfilling certain legal obligations, thanks to its good relationship with the municipality and the government. The following words from one of the managers of the association clearly demonstrate this informality:

> Everything we do [here] is illegal. Once, the supervisors of the Public Health and Hygiene Directorate came. They told us to close the polyclinic. So I told them, 'You, the officials, you do nothing; it is us who do the work! We did what you had to do.' When they were told so, they closed their eyes. Why did they not close [the polyclinic]? For if they did it, who would treat the Syrians?
>
> (Interview with a manager of the MD, January 2017)

Another characteristic of these associations is the efficient cooperation they build among various actors. The education service is a typical example of this. The Temporary Education Center (*Geçici Eğitim Merkezi*, MUTEM) in Sultanbeyli, which hosted around 400 Syrian children and 30 Syrian and some Turkish educators, was run by the MD in 2017. It occupied a well-equipped building allocated by the government. Furthermore, the municipality had agreed to provide school bus services free of charge for the Syrian students of this school. In 2015, the activities of this school began to be regulated by the Ministry of National Education. Previously, it was autonomous of state control and funded by a well-known and powerful Islamic NGO in Turkey. Since this change, the teachers' salaries have been paid by the Ministry, thanks to the international funds provided by UN agencies, such as UNICEF. This single example shows the efficient collaboration among the local associations, state institutions, district municipality and Islamic organizations. Yet this well-functioning cooperation operates in a non–transparent way and with the exclusion of unwanted organizations, which are often the secular or politically oppositional groups.

The services provided by local NGOs in Sultanbeyli are built on a segregationist model. For instance, Syrian children who attend the two public schools in the district do not meet local pupils,

as these institutions implement a double-shift teaching system. Not only education but also health services are provided to the refugees separately. A manager of an association calls this "a policy of balance" that aims to prevent the reaction of the local inhabitants.

Political parties

As we explained above, AKP is the hegemonic political actor in Sultanbeyli. It represents more than half of the voters in the district. In the referendum of April 2016, which was characterized by a rigid political polarization, it won by an overwhelming 70.5 per cent of the votes. The welcoming discourse of AKP supporters in the district is marked by a religious and Ottoman heritage narrative, as presented above. On the other hand, representatives of the three main opposition parties have criticized the "open door policy" of the government and the "use" of the Syrians for the government's own political interests. What they propose as an alternative policy is repatriation or obligatory settlement of the Syrians in the refugee camps. Opposition parties in Sultanbeyli emphasize the socio–economic impact and "the need to defend the rights of our own citizens" against "the privileges granted to non-citizens." The debate on naturalization, as initiated by president Erdoğan in July 2016, has fuelled criticism against the government. Representatives of the opposition parties believe that there already is considerable tension between the two groups, and they draw attention to a possible "social explosion" arising from local dissatisfaction with the "privileged" status of the Syrians:

> Everyone speaks about the Syrians, but our people are also poor. Our citizens, our own citizens should be the top priority. [The Syrians] are guests. [But] the guests have now literally made themselves at home!
>
> (Interview at the Saadet Partisi (the Felicity Party), December 2016).

Politicians from all sectors of the opposition complain in one way or another that AKP has excluded them from humanitarian affairs. They accuse the municipality, and some other NGOs working with the municipality, of monopolizing the field of humanitarian assistance and reaping all the benefits in favour of the government.

Other actors

Another local actor closely related to the reception of Syrian refugees is the *muhtar* (official neighbourhood headman), who enjoys good relations with the municipality and other local authorities. For instance, one of the *muhtars* in the district defines himself as the "host" of the entire neighbourhood. He offers several services to the Syrians: he finds accommodation for those in need; provides them with furniture; accompanies the patients and the elderly in the hospital; and finds job for some of them. This *muhtar* defines his profession as "the president of the district."

Two other important actors helping the Syrians in Sultanbeyli are the District Office of Religious Affairs (*Müftülük*) and Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SYDV). SYDV accepts individual (family-based) relief requests from the Syrians, whereas the *Müftülük* distributes donations collected in the mosques. The main mission of these two public institutions is to create a climate of hospitality by organizing activities aimed at increasing communication and solidarity between the refugees and the local people while emphasizing the religious discourse of *Ansar* and *Muhajirin*.[8]

Last but not the least, one should underline the strong cooperation among the district municipality, certain local associations, the District Police Department and the DGMM. For instance, DGMM Asian Side Field Office began operating in September 2016, on the top floor of the building where the MD is situated. Such a close relation between public bodies and civil society renders the

implementation of projects very efficiently. In this sense, Sultanbeyli can be considered as a unique yet representative case in terms of the efficiency of the close cooperation and complementarity among certain actors dealing with refugee reception and integration.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

All these examples show how certain civil society organizations have assumed the responsibilities of the state regarding refugee reception. This is what Mackreath and Sağnıç (2017) call the "subcontractor role" of NGOs, where the ones who stand by the government's policies are in turn rewarded. However, one should not think that this subcontracting means a complete withdrawal of the state. In fact, although governance is becoming more and more prevalent as a discourse, the public authorities do not want to forgo their capacity to control (and block if necessary) the activities of NGOs. The state has a strong will, based on old traditions and emerging political dynamics, to keep civil society from becoming fully autonomous. In fact, there have been several international organizations, such as the Medical Corps or the Mercy Corps, whose operations were shut down by the Turkish authorities without any public explanation.

Turkey has increasingly become an immigration country, situated as it is at a nexus of migratory movements. Sert and Yildiz (2016) argue the weakness of the legal and bureaucratic mechanisms, Turkey uses to manage and control these migrations. This argument might be true if one considers only the containment of migratory movements. However, when it comes to controlling migrants' stay in Turkey, it seems that the Turkish state has not lost its grip. On the contrary, it has developed new tactics and strategies for regulating and controlling the lives of migrants and refugees who have entered its soil. While we observed "governing through uncertainty" (Biehl, 2015) in the 1990s and 2000s, in the current case of Syrian refugees we are witnessing a new approach in refugee policy where the AKP government promotes certain non-governmental actors such as municipalities and civil society organizations –particularly the ones considered to be faithful to the state and its institutions– to fulfil the requirements of the state's responsibilities. This new approach is a selective governance model where the state delegates some of its functions of refugee reception to NGOs that it considers to be ideologically and politically akin.

A quick comparison with other countries of the region that host a significant number of Syrian refugees gives us clues about the Turkish state's methods for governing the refugee crisis. In the case of Lebanon, Estella Carpi (2014) talks about the presence of non-state actors (i.e. humanitarian organizations) replacing the void historically left by the central state. Thorleifsson (2016) similarly points at the weakness of the Lebanese state in controlling the camps and providing sufficiently for the urban refugees. In such a context, refugees are forced to rely on their own social networks, local support and humanitarian organizations, as was similarly the case with Iraqis, Afghans and others practising "integration in limbo" in Turkey in the early 2000s (Danış et al., 2009).

As we have analysed in detail through the Sultanbeyli example, a new method of refugee governance has risen in Turkey, characterized by a faithful cooperation among the governing party (AKP), state institutions, the municipality and pro-government NGOs. This alliance produces and reproduces reception politics that prioritize social assistance while ignoring –even hindering – the advocacy of refugee rights initiatives. Simultaneously, a religious discourse with reference to the Quran as well as to a common Ottoman heritage facilitates the management of refugee reception. Other attributes of this reception style are: prevalence of informal practices (tolerated or deliberately overlooked by the authorities); lack of transparency; overlapping of state and civil society actors; monopolization and centralization of humanitarian assistance by certain NGOs favoured by the leading political actors. Our fieldwork in Sultanbeyli offers a clear example of how politics

dominate civil society and how certain NGOs that have become extensions of the state apparatus within this faithful alliance play an important role in migration governance.

The integration or non–integration of Syrian refugees in the Turkish context is a matter of time. Its consequences can only be fully observed in the long run. The first action that the Turkish state should take in order to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to refugees is to clarify the ambiguity of their legal status. Secondly, the provision of services to refugees in segregated locations should be abandoned as it leads to their separation from the rest of the society, blocks potential communication channels with the local people and hinders the integration processes. In other words, these segregated practices have to be replaced by more integrative ways of service provision. We believe that the most appropriate and perhaps the only way for the implementation of more satisfactory integration policies is a coordination between the state, civil society and the citizens, together with the refugees themselves. Knowing that they are in the very process of becoming part of Turkish society, each actor must shoulder its responsibilities in a collective and transparent way.

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NOTES

1. Previously, in the 1989 refugee arrival from Bulgaria and the 1991 arrival from Iraq, non-state actors were negligible if not absent (Kirişçi and Karaca, 2015; Danış et al., 2009).
2. Syrians under temporary protection by years, Ministry of Internal Affairs Directorate General of Migration Management, http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici–koruma_363_378_4713_icerik (Accessed on March 2018)
3. In the April 2017 referendum on constitutional changes, 70.5 per cent of the people in Sultanbeyli voted "yes" for a presidential model – by far the highest vote in favour among the 39 districts of Istanbul where the overall result was "no" with 51.4 per cent. Previously, in the national elections of June 2015, AKP obtained 57 per cent of the total votes, while HDP – the political party of the Kurdish movement – obtained 21 per cent. The three other parties, CHP, MHP, and SP, together were able to obtain only 19 per cent of the votes in Sultanbeyli. These figures show the predominant presence of a pro–AKP pious–conservative population and a large Kurdish population in the district. (The election data was accessed on the webpage of High Council of the Elections: www.ysk.gov.tr).
4. The functioning of the MD recalls the clientelism of Argentinian civil society organizations. Sacouman (2012, 899), in her study on a semi–urban settlement of Buenos Aires, finds that the associational network of one local NGO generates "dependency, exclusivity and paternalism." She identifies the characteristics of the functioning of this NGO as vertical and authoritarian, seeking to establish good relations with "funding agencies above them." She argues that the local NGOs do not operate in a horizontal direction, nor in democratic and participatory ways while serving their communities (Ibid, 911).
5. "Proje Ortaklarımız" [Our project partners], Mülteciler Derneği. http://multeciler.org.tr/proje-ortaklarimiz/ (Accessed on 8/26/2017).
6. NGOs' increasing dependence on donor funding and their lower position within this pyramidal structure limit their manoeuvrability and contribution to local development, as underlined by Banks et al. (2015, 709): 'NGOs face significant constraints and contradictions in their ability to strengthen civil society given the pressures they face to be non-political, their weak roots in society, the pressures they face to be accountable "upward" to donors rather than "downward" to "beneficiaries, and their focus on short–term projects rather than long-term structural change".'

7. The salaries of the doctors and the staff were paid by the MD, which is itself generously funded by other national and international NGOs. The visit to the doctor cost 20 Turkish liras [5 euros] per person. Half of the weekly revenue was allocated to doctors. Unfortunately, we could not collect detailed information on the financial turnover of the hospital.
8. It should be noted that not all the institutional actors in the district share the same idea of hospitality towards the refugees. According to certain NGO representatives, the unwillingness of public authorities harms the motivation of the volunteers. The reluctance of certain state officials is explained by their concern about a new migratory wave towards the district, as the "advantages and assets" of Sultanbeyli can become a pull factor for other refugees.

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