LIFE, CONNECTIVITY AND INTEGRATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY: SURVIVING THROUGH A SMARTPHONE

Nilüfer Narli

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Vie, connectivité et intégration des réfugiés syriens en Turquie : survivre grâce à un smartphone

Nilüfer Narli

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NILÜFER NARLI
Bahçesehir University
TR-34353
nilufer.narli@eas.bau.edu.tr

LIFE, CONNECTIVITY AND INTEGRATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY: SURVIVING THROUGH A SMARTPHONE

Abstract. — This paper addresses the life and connectivity of Syrian refugees in Turkey. It is founded on an interdisciplinary research project that combines explorative qualitative methods and a Grounded Theory approach with a survey of 380 Syrian participants living in Zeytinburnu, Istanbul. It examines these refugees' trajectories from the war situation in Syria to Zeytinburnu, and investigates how they have been using smartphones during the conflict, displacement and resettlement; how the use of smartphones affects their daily lives, social connections and integration; and the type of new uses they have discovered as survival and integration strategies. The author builds conceptual categories to describe how the smartphone has become a *dispositif* and a tool for survival and integration for the Syrian refugees in Turkey. This study also examines the response of Turkish mobile phone companies to the Syrian refugee crisis and the refugees' need for connectivity, and how Syrian refugees use these telecom services according to their emerging needs in the Turkish and regional context.

Keywords. — dispositif, smartphone, refugee, integration

Nilüfer Narli, Vie, connectivité et intégration des réfugiés syriens en Turquie : survivre grâce à un smartphone

Résumé. — Cet article traite de la vie et de la connectivité des réfugiés syriens en Turquie. Fondé sur un projet de recherche interdisciplinaire combinant des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives avec une enquête auprès de 380 participants syriens vivant à Zeytinburnu, Istanbul, il examine les trajectoires de ces réfugiés de guerre. Il étudie comment les réfugiés syriens ont utilisé des smartphones pendant le conflit, le déplacement et la réinstallation ; comment l'utilisation des smartphones affecte leur vie quotidienne, leurs connexions sociales et leur intégration ; et quels types de nouveaux usages du smartphone ils ont découverts en tant que stratégies de survie et d'intégration. L'auteure construit des catégories conceptuelles pour décrire comment le smartphone est devenu un *dispositif* et un outil de survie et d'intégration pour les réfugiés syriens en Turquie. Cette étude examine également la réponse des entreprises turques de téléphonie mobile à la crise des réfugiés syriens et au besoin de connectivité des réfugiés, et comment les réfugiés syriens utilisent ces services de télécommunication en fonction de leurs besoins émergents dans le contexte turc et régional.

Mots clés. — dispositif, téléphone intelligent, réfugié, intégration

The civil war that began in Syria in 2011 generated a huge wave of migration, mostly toward and across the country's Turkish, Lebanese and Jordanian borders. More than five million refugees fled their homes, with many taking refuge in these neighboring countries, and others making their way to Europe or the United States (UNHCR, 2017). The first refugees, a group of 300 Syrians, broke through the wire fence at the Turkish-Syrian border gate of Hatay and entered Turkey to request asylum on April 29, 2011 (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2013). At first scattered in border towns and then all over Turkey, the registered Syrian refuge population has reached more than three million (3,222,000) as of early October 2017 (UNHCR, 2017), although the large number of unregistered Syrians means that the true figure is even larger. At the beginning of the crisis, the Turkish authorities described the Syrian refugees as "Syrian brothers and sisters" and "guests" until the introduction of the Temporary Protection Regulation in October 2014, which defines the registered Syrian refugees as people under the "temporary protection regime.[1] It grants them access to health, education and social welfare services (Coşkun, Emin, 2016), and the "right" to work, establish businesses, buy property and travel (Tunç, 2015).

The question of what is happening to the displaced Syrians who took refuge in Turkey and how they have survived this displacement crisis and adapted themselves to the living and social conditions of the host country are concerns for both academia and policy makers. My recent survey research, which has focused on such questions and investigated the living conditions of Syrian refugees in Zeytinburnu (a district of Istanbul), led me to formulate a new research question after observing that most of them have the latest brands of smartphone despite having no furniture except a worn-out carpet. I expanded my research scope to investigate these agents' desire for smartphones in the context of displacement and immigration to Zeytinburnu, a district of Istanbul that has become highly populated with Syrians (Genç, Özdemirkıran, 2015; Erdoğan, 2017).[2] Addressing the lives and connectivity of these refugees, this paper investigates how they have been using communication technologies, particularly smartphones, during the conflict, displacement and resettlement; how the use of smartphones affects their daily lives, social connections and integration; and what type of new uses for smartphone they have discovered as survival and integration strategies. This study also examines the response of Turkish mobile phone companies to the Syrian refugee crisis and the refugees' need for connectivity, and how Syrian refugees use the telecom services according to their emerging needs in the Turkish and regional context.

In order to understand the diverse use of smartphones by refugees in the global, regional and local (Syrian refugees and telecommunication companies in Turkey and Zeytinburnu specifically) contexts, it is necessary to explore the patterns of Syrian

[1] "Registered Syrian refugees" refers to those who are given the status of people under the "temporary protection regime".

[2] Most of the 540,000 Syrians in Istanbul are concentrated in Esenyurt, Başakşehir, Sultangazi, Küçükçekmece, Bağcılar, Zeytinburnu and Fatih districts (Erdoğan, 2017).

refugee survival strategies during their displacement and resettling, and the coping mechanisms used to deal with the difficulties they experience in everyday life in Istanbul and Zeytinburnu. Hence, this paper is an interdisciplinary research project that combines explorative qualitative and quantitative research methods through a survey study merged with intensive field work. The qualitative research adopted a Grounded Theory approach (Strauss, Corbin, 1994) because this methodology is very relevant to our study; its inductive strategies allow to generate conceptual categories to define uses of smartphones in various domains of integration. The qualitative data was collected from intensive and extensive field work in Zeytinburnu (May 2016-September 2017), which included immersion in the daily lives and routines of the Syrians residents and visiting Syrian NGO representatives and schools. The quantitative data was obtained from a questionnaire (August 2016-July 2017), which sampled 380 Syrians living in Zeytinburnu to investigate the trajectories of their journeys from the war situation in Syria to Zeytinburnu, their living and working conditions, access to public services (e.g. housing, education), stress and trauma coping strategies, social network-building mechanisms and perceived security issues.

For a better understanding of the Zeytinburnu social context, the qualitative research targeted the local *mukhtars* (directly-elected heads of neighborhood wards). A focus group discussion with 11 *mukhtars* was held in Zeytinburnu (May 9, 2016), and individual in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 *mukhtars* (May-June, 2016). They were asked how they see Syrian refugees in general, and what they know about the daily lives, housing and working conditions of Syrians living in the neighborhood. To understand the wider social context, Turkish cities bordering Syria, including Urfa, Gaziantep, Hatay and Kilis, and a refugee camp were also visited (December 2015-February 2016) for ethnographic observations and informal interviews with Syrians living there. Data on Turkish telecommunication companies' responses to Syrian refugees and their needs were obtained from a semi-structured interview with a Turkcell company official. This company was selected due to its prompt response to the refugee crisis by providing services and several apps for Syrian refugees.

Conceptual Framework and Definitions

The paper aims at combining Foucauldian studies of power and *dispositif* with a sociology of refugee and forced migration, and the use of communication technologies, particularly smartphones. Forced migration involves both refugees and asylum seekers (Castles, 2003), and broadly refers to the movements of refugees, and internally and externally displaced people due to political, economic and social causes or civil wars. Integration, a contested concept, means the need for refugees and the diaspora to "become part" of their "host culture" (Ager, Strang, 2008).

A smartphone is a mobile device, "a device armed with computing power, mobility and downloadable apps" (Franko, Tirrell, 2012: 1), a virtual toolbox with a solution

for almost every need. As its purpose has shifted from a verbal communication tool to a multimedia tool, it is a dynamic node rather than just a phone, which is designed to be constantly developing (Julier, 2000) if people use it innovatively (Park, Chen, 2007). Smartphones have penetrated many aspects of everyday life (Wang, Xiang, Fesenmaier, 2014) while their use has shifted from merely making phone calls to surfing the web, checking emails, taking photos and updating social media statuses. Smartphone apps enable users to expand their repertoire of uses across many settings, including education and healthcare (Payne, Wharrad, Watts, 2012).

Given the diverse and evolving uses of smartphones, this study conceptualizes them as apparatus (*dispositif* in French) in the Foucauldian and Agamben terms. Michel Foucault defines the *dispositif* as an apparatus that carries strong implications of an ability to control (Legg, 2011). According to Michel Foucault, it is a configuration of heterogeneous elements and the system of relations between them. The latter are relations of power that constitute humans as subjects of knowledge, which is power itself (Foucault, 1980: 94). Because of the multiplicity of force relations (Foucault, 1998: 93), the *dispositif* is performative power, produced from one moment to the next, from below. Capillary power pervades the social field, stretching deep into the construction of the micro practices of its subjects and the "hermeneutics of the psyche" embedded in the "politics of the everyday life" (Fraser, 1989: 23). The exercise of power is strategic (O'Farrell, 2005). Reviewing Michel Foucault's concept of *dispositif* and going beyond the prison and the panopticon, whose connection with power is evident, Giorgio Agamben (2006: 14) defines power as "literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings". Of relevance to this study, Giorgio Agamben also refers to computers and cellular phones in discussing the concept of *dispositif*.

Moving from defining smartphones as a *dispositif*, and focusing on the Syrian refugees' use of smartphones, this study examines the following propositions: smartphone use is context dependent (Do, Blom, Gatica-Perez, 2011); smartphone users constantly modify their diverse use options depending on their motivations, contingency needs, and survival strategies, which are conditioned by social context and power relations; and the interaction between human (refugee) and non-human (smartphone) produces new ways of acting and new practices of using smartphones.

Syrian Refugees in the Turkish Context: Demographic Profile and Refugee Policies

The dramatic growth in Turkey's registered Syrian refugee population began in early 2012. It rose from around 9,500 to 300,000 in April 2013, to more than a million by December 2014, and over two million in December 2016 (UNHCR, 2017). The Turkish authorities responded to the emergency by settling the fleeing Syrians

in camps established by AFAD (Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency), partnering with the Turkish Red Crescent Society, UN agencies and line ministries, including the Ministry of Health. Institutional capacity was expanded, and new directories were established (e.g. Directorate General of Migration Management in 2013) to provide basic social services to the refugees. Besides the state agencies humanitarian efforts, civil society and professional associations (e.g. doctors' associations, humanitarian NGOs) entered the field to meet the refugees' food, shelter, education and health needs.

10% of the registered Syrians are living in 28 government-run camps where the majority has full access to health and education services. The rest live outside the camps, largely in border cities, including şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Kilis, Mardin, Malatya, Hatay, Adana and Mersin, but with huge numbers also settling in the three main metropolises of Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir (Özden, 2013; İçduygu, 2015). The growing urban Syrian refugee population, particularly since 2015 (Erdoğan, 2017), has put stress on Turkey's education and health systems, and complicated the challenges in living conditions that Syrians face outside the camps. An AFAD (2014) report on housing of Syrian women outside the camps shows that 27% face hardship, with 16% living in uncompleted or rundown buildings, 10% living in temporary or plastic shelters, and 1% living in tents. The rest live in small, uncomfortable and unsuitable flats (*ibid*.: 44).

The Syrian refugee population is young, with children constituting more than 50% in 2013 (AFAD, 2013). Moreover, 20% of the more than 1.3 million children under 18 years old are between 0-4 years old (Erdoğan, Ünver, 2015). Their need for care and formal education (UNICEF, 2017) has forced Turkey to introduce new refugee policies. The Ministry of Education, for example, has implemented various regulations on refugee education since 2012, including the Education Memorandum (MoNE Circular No. 2014/21), titled "Education Services for Foreign Nationals" (September 23, 2014). It grants refugee children under "temporary protection" access to Turkish primary and secondary schools and education in temporary education institutions inside the camps or in residential areas. The temporary education centers,[3] which followed a revised Syrian curriculum in Arabic, were closed, in order to standardize the education program and integrate Syrian children into Turkey's education system. As part of this education policy, the Ministry of Education introduced the Strategic Plan 2015-2019 for educating refugees (Coşkun, Emin, 2016). Consequently, more than 90% of the Syrian refugee children in the camps are enrolled in primary or secondary schools. Outside the camps, however, around 40% of school-aged children remain out of school, particularly in urban areas (UNICEF, 2017), despite the enrollment of 660,000 Syrian children in state schools as of September 2017.[4]

[3] The Turkish government decided to close these schools in 2016 (Erkuş, 2016).

[4] Reported in *Theirworld* (Watt, 2017).

The language barrier, with most children only speaking Arabic, is the major educational challenge (Kanat, Üstün, 2015). This has motivated the Turkish government to focus on Turkish language learning for Syrian students and adults. Another educational challenge is female illiteracy rates of around 20% (AFAD, 2014). This is linked to gender issues faced by Syrian women, particularly child marriage, which involves forcing a female child to marry an adult male, even an elderly man, to avoid sexual violence and escape poverty (Freedman, Kivilcim, 2017). Early marriage is an education and gender issue for Syrian refugees. It is prevalent in the region, as shown by a study in Jordan (Doedens *et al*., 2013). Given the high pre-war (2011) school enrollment ratio (more than 90%, with a balanced gender ratio of school attendance),[5] it is likely that the dire conditions of displacement and poverty has forced displaced Syrian girls into early marriages.

Another education challenge is the result of Syrians experiencing war, displacement and terrorism trauma (Quosh, Eloul, Ajlani, 2013). A large number (79%) of children have experienced death within the family (Sirin, Rogers-Sirin, 2015), while many Syrian women and children have been separated from their male family members, who were either killed in the war (AFAD, 2014), imprisoned in Syria or stayed there to fight (*ibid*.). Studies of Syrian children show that many live with traumatized parents, which is a critical factor making refugee children vulnerable to mental disorders (Daud, af Klinteberg, Rydelius, 2008). Syrian children's drawings often reveal this war trauma and their vulnerability to mental illness (Özer, Şirin, Oppedal, 2013; Sirin, Rogers-Sirin, 2015). This has harmed the academic success of Syrian children experiencing displacement, as shown by an Adana-based survey that compared Syrian students' grades before and after the war (Ulum, Kara, 2016). Poverty complicates all these education problems by creating structural limitations for most urban Syrian families, who often cannot even pay for transportation and supplies for their children's education.

Zeytinburnu: A Micro Context of Immigration, Displacement and Refugee Resettlement

Chosen as the micro context of the Syrian immigration study, Zeytinburnu has received waves of immigrants from a diverse geography over six decades, in addition to internal rural-urban migration starting in the 1970s. It thus includes several groups of immigrants of Turkish origin: Turks from the Balkans, including Bulgarian Turks, who arrived in the second half of the 20th century (Bosswick, 2009); Turkmen and Ozbeks from Afganistan in the 1980s, who formed a large diaspora in the district (Özservet, 2013; 2014); the Uyghurs from the Xinjiang region of China,

[5] Prior to the war, the Syrian government prioritized girls' enrollment nationwide, and the girls' school enrollment in Syria was 80%, with over 93% of children enrolled in primary school with gender parity (Onishi, 2013).

and Kazakhs from Afghanistan (Shichor, 2003; Çakırer, 2012). Immigrants of Turkish origin are called "kindreds" (*soydaşlar*); treated therefore as being in line with the 1934 Law on Settlement, they have the right to migrate to Turkey because of their "Turkish descent and culture" (Öner, Genç, 2015: 26). However, Zeytinburnu's previous trend of receiving foreign ethnic Turkish immigrants has changed with the arrival of Syrians since 2013.

Syrians fleeing to Turkey have been attracted to Zeytinburnu because low income immigrants can work in its textile and manufacturing workshops. Syrian men currently make up the majority of Zeytinburnus' textile workforce while women contribute to garment and diverse textile industries doing home-based work, as observed by the researchers. Syrians in our sample made their way to Zeytinburnu directly from the Syrian border[6] by bus (72.9%), car (10.5%) or on foot (21%).[7] Most surveyed Syrians (64%) were attracted to Zeytinburnu for "finding a good job there", which was mentioned as the primary reason[8] for living there. Having family members and relatives also pulled many Syrians (25%) to this district. According to the *mukhtars* in the focus group discussion and individual interviews, "Syrians prefer Zeytinburnu because it is central and accessible by public transport facilities" (*Mukhtar 6*); "there is work here in the textile factories" (*Mukhtar 2 and 4*); "they (Syrians) populated all the textile factories" (*Mukhtar 2*). Not only Syrian labor, but also capital has moved to Zeytinburnu, where small-scale Syrian business, groceries and small shops have multiplied, thanks to the tax exemption privilege granted to Syrians under Turkey's temporary protection regime. The *mukhtars* also talked about growing Syrian business: "They (Syrians) do not pay tax, so they can sell things at a lower price" (*Mukhtar 2*); "this is not fair", "we (Turkish people) lost order and peace here" (Zeytinburnu), "our neighborhoods complain a lot" (*Mukhtar 5*). These negative opinions of Syrians, according to Daniel J. Hopkins (2010), could be the result of "sudden demographic changes" in local communities due to the huge number of Syrians taking refuge in Zeytinburnu over a very short time.

Confronting prejudice in Zeytinburnu further complicates the life of Syrians facing dire conditions of poverty and displacement. Most of the Syrian families surveyed tend to live in low rent basement or top floor apartments that often lack sufficient facilities for sleep, personal hygiene, food preparation and storage, and an environment for comfortable relaxation and learning. Lack of privacy creates extra stress for women and young girls, who constantly worry about covering their body properly so as not to "provoke" their men-folk. The observed Syrian children showed signs of challenging changes in their lives. Older male children are forced to grow up fast to contribute to the household budget and help the family survive: they are both bread-winners and the liaison between the family and public institutions as to translate conversations

[6] The majority (96%) in the sample did not stay in any of the refugee camps.

[7] Out of a total number of 380 respondents, only 2.3% took a flight to Istanbul. Others did not answer the question, probably meaning hiding an illegal entry method.

[8] An open-ended survey question was asked to find out the reasons for settling in Zeytinburnu.

from Arabic into Turkish. In coping with desperate circumstances, female children above 12 years old are often expected to mature quickly to be ready to become a wife and mother. Child marriage and its causes were difficult to discuss with the respondents in Zeytinburnu. However, the fieldwork data demonstrates the reality: almost one fourth of the Syrian homes visited by the researchers had young children living with the parents, yet hardly any teenage girls. Perhaps, this suggests that young females had been married off by the parents, as a means to reduce the financial and moral burden on the family, which is also a common practice among Syrian refugee families in Jordan and Lebanon (Smith, 2017).

The early marriage and motherhood of Syrian girls apparently alarms the host community in Zeytinburnu as the *mukhtars* frequently mentioned the high fertility rate of Syrians: "there are too many Syrians, who have many children" (*Mukhtar 1*)' "women, even young women as young as 14, give birth every year" (*Mukhtar 2*); "we will be a minority in our country" (*Mukhtar 4*). They think that the Syrian refugee population is constantly increasing, becoming a threat to the country's demographic composition. The perception that Syrians overwhelmingly populate districts in Istanbul is also noted by Deniz Genç and Merve Özdemirkıran (2015), who interviewed *mukhtars* in several districts of Istanbul. While seen as a threat by many in the host community, Syrians in Zeytinburnu also perceive risks, particularly a fear of criminal involvement, with 26% thinking that there is a risk of being pushed into crime. In addition, a significant minority (25-33%) worry about being targeted by human smugglers, extremist groups, drug traffickers or criminal networks abducting children.

Diverse Uses of Smartphones by Syrian Refugees for Survival and Integration: Global, Regional and Local Turkish Contexts

Among the diverse purposes of using smartphones, ranging from surfing the Internet to social media posting, the device has also become a safety tool for everyone, but particularly for women (Lindsay *et al*., 2013; Rahman *et al*., 2015). The increasing refugee crisis has made it essential to refugees' safety, as shown by UNHCR report (2016). Looking at the larger regional context, several media reports reveal how smartphones are becoming a tool of safe travel for Syrian refugees under conditions of war and displacement, helping them survive perilous situations when they cross borders, legally or illegally. For example, Syrian refugees crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece with the help of human smugglers were reportedly using their phones to reach Greek Coast Guards to be rescued from deadly seas after their boats ran into trouble (Kingsley, Kirchgaessner, 2016).[9] Another example of smartphones saving lives

[9] During 2015, more than one million refugees reached the EU via the Aegean Sea.

is the story of Al Beni and six of his friends from the southern Syrian city of Sweida, who had all landed on the coast of Lesbos in September (2015). When their boat ran into trouble at sea, Al Beni and his friends called the Greek coast guard on their cell phone. He said: "We have all of their numbers. We have GPS in our cell phones. We contact them via WhatsApp and they come and save us" (Watson, Nagel, Bilginsoy, 2015). Refugees also plot their journeys from Syria to Europe using tools like Google Maps. Thus, the high level of smartphone ownership among refugees (nearly 87%) has enabled many to arrive safely in Europe (Mchugh, 2016).

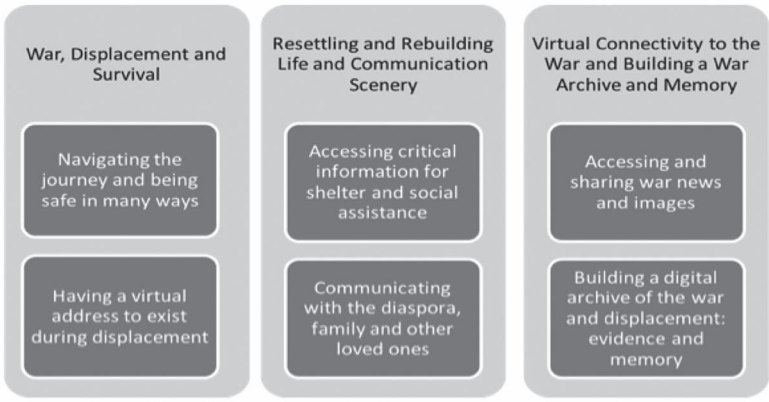
In Turkey, smartphone ownership by many Syrian refugees in the camps was noticeable to government agencies (AFAD, 2014), which reported that 90% of Syrian women in Turkey owned a mobile telephone, while 91% of Syrian women inside and outside the camps used a mobile phone to communicate with their relatives (*ibid.*). Separated from their husband and other relatives, many Syrian women living in Turkey were able to remain connected to relatives outside Turkey via smartphone, thanks to telecommunication companies that recognized the connectivity needs of Syrians refugees and promptly improved their infrastructure. Amongst them, Turkcell Company erected cell towers to provide connectivity in over 25 camps while employing Arabic-speaking staff at Turkcell shops in the border area. To deal with Syrian refugees spreading from border cities deeper into the country, including areas without previous cross-cultural experience and insufficient bilingual retail staff, the company built an Arabic-language call center (2014).

Smartphone, Life and Survival in the Zeytinburnu Context

Syrians living in Zeytinburnu have one important thing in order to survive: a smartphone. Even though there was no furniture and even no carpet in most of the flats surveyed (May 2016-March 2017), refugees had Wi-Fi connections, many children had tablets, and adults had the latest branded smartphones. Their smartphones deployed a wide range of technologies and platforms for communication, enabling calls, text messages, Skype, Google Maps, Facebook, Yahoo Messenger, WhatsApp and so forth. To them, the smartphone means "life" and "hands and feet", as described in an informal interview. One Syrian woman said: "Fortunately, we have the smartphone to communicate… My husband can call and see how the children and I are doing; we can also reach family members in Syria and learn about their living conditions… the children play with the smartphone and also use it for their homework".

The diverse yet related categories of smartphone uses by Syrian refugees should be apprehended in three major settings or processes: war and displacement; settling and rebuilding a new life; virtual connection to the war and the construction of a war memory (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Conceptual Categories of the Diverse Use of Smartphones by Syrian Refugees in Zeytinburnu, Istanbul, in Three Settings or Processes



In the context of war, displacement and life-building settings, smartphones have enhanced security by giving the Syrian refugees an address where they can exist while navigating their way to safety. Given these diverse security concerns, the smartphone is a safety tool for reaching other family members in an emergency and checking if someone outside the home is safe. The smartphone is also a tool of socialization and social connection for many Syrian women, who face social isolation due to their staying at home to take care of young children. The smartphone also helps both Syrian women and men to ease tensions, to share pain and feel better by connecting with loved ones in and outside Turkey in order to talk, and feel that they are alive. As a young Syrian woman interviewed in Zeytinburnu put it: "A smartphone is a must for me and for my grandmother who lives in Aleppo. We chat by using smartphone apps, exchange pictures on social media." This shows how smartphones connect Syrians to their diasporic networks, their country of origin and communities in Turkey. It is a tool of connectivity for diaspora communities (Karim, 2004), forming a "virtual diasporic space" (Mitra, Schwartz, 2001).

Syrian refugees also use their smartphones to record their journeys of displacement and new life in Turkey, as well as to receive and spread Syrian war news and images (e.g. photos of enemy soldiers' corpses or their own soldiers' heroic images); that is, a visualization of the war. Through their apps, smartphones virtually connect Syrian refugees to the war, which is also a de-territorialized combat, enabling them to know how the "enemy" and "our" soldiers or groups are doing. The smartphone is a "new medium of war information", where war and displacement events are reported (May, Hearn, 2005). The use of smartphones for building a digital archive of the Syrian war and displacement, and for providing evidence and memory is important. Given that archives are political spaces of contested memory and knowledge, controlling them is important: "there is no political power without control of the archive" (Derrida, 2002: 46).

Innovative Uses of Smartphones and Integration of Syrian Refugees in Zeytinburnu and Turkey

Much of the literature investigating the integration of the migrants and refugees indicates that key issues are employment (Castles *et al*., 2001), housing (Phillips, 2006), language (McBrien, 2005; Warriner, 2007), education (McDonald, 1995; Gidley *et al*., 2010; Taylor, Sidhu, 2012), and health (Duke, Sales, Gregory, 1999; Ager, Strang, 2008). Before analyzing the Syrian refugees' use of smartphones for integration, the term itself needs to be defined. Four themes are critical to the key domains of integration: "achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practices regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment" (Ager, Strang, 2008: 166). Refugees therefore need to acquire skills and knowledge to flourish in these domains.

In Turkey, observation data showed that Syrians have developed their own strategies of integration using various smartphone communication instruments and have thrived in these four domains of integration. First, Syrian refugees in Zeytinburnu access job and professional opportunities by communicating on Facebook and WhatsApp. Regarding language and education, many Syrians use the smartphone as a learning tool (e.g. for children's homework or language learning). In general, Syrians with smartphones benefit from Turkcell's apps to meet the requirements of integration, including learning language, advancing in education, accessing critical information to cope with daily life challenges and getting access to public services (e.g. health, education, legal aid). For example, the "Hello Hope" app helps them get information about how to register at the nearest service points, and how to access various public services. More specifically, it helps locate "nearby sources of services and support via GPS technology, and contains an FAQ tab which includes information on essential processes such as registration, obtaining official papers and access to health and education services".[10] It also teaches basic Turkish words and expressions in both written and spoken formats.[11] Moreover, it connects users to an Arabic call center with just one click, which is often used by Syrians for emergency counseling. As the Turkcell manager interviewed here noted, this is "thanks to the operators, who help the Syrian refugees waiting anxiously on the phone and answer all types of questions".[12] Thus, the functions of the Arabic call center go beyond its originally planned translation services due to the way Syrians use it and the way the operators show flexibility as a gesture of humanitarian kindness. A common example of demanding emergency information is asking for help to contact Turkish hospital doctors. Other counseling examples have saved people's life, as seen

[10] GSMA, 2016. "Refugees and Connectivity", *GSMA. Com*. Access: https://www.gsma.com/refugee-connectivity/case-study-turkcell-refugees-as-valued-customers/.

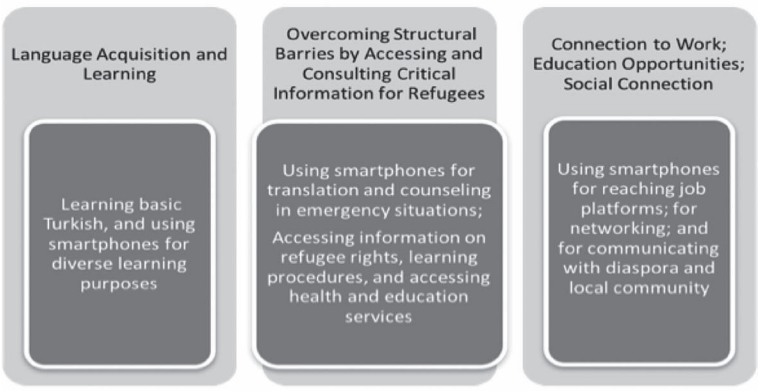
[11] The menu of "Learn Turkish" provides support in the form of instant audio translation: the user speaks Arabic into the handset and the phone provides a translation into spoken Turkish.

[12] This information was given in the interview held on November 15, 2016.

in the case of a Syrian in Çanakkale who called the center just before boarding a boat to cross the Aegean (2015). By warning him about the risks associated with this illegal journey, the operator convinced him to cancel his "unsafe" journey to Europe. The next day, the man called the center and thanked the operator for "saving his life".

Based on the above analysis of the qualitative and documentary data and following the Grounded Theory approach, we developed a conceptual framework defining the core domains of integration. We thus described how Syrian refugees innovatively use the smartphone to acquire the abilities required in these domains (Chart 2). One such skill is learning Turkish, which is critical for the social integration of Syrian adults and children (Tunç, 2015).[13] In the domain of social rights, smartphone app services enable Syrian refugees to learn their rights, to reach information on employment opportunities and to access social assistance, which are all essential as to overcome the cultural and structural barriers hindering their integration. The smartphone is also a tool for forming social connections within and between groups within the community – one of the "key domains of integration for the refugees" (Ager, Strang, 2008: 166). This finding is consistent with other studies showing how communication technologies enhance integration (Blommaert, 2016).

Chart 2. Conceptual Framework Outlining the Uses of Smartphone and Telecommunication Services by Syrian Refugees in Zeytinburnu, Istanbul, in the Core Domains of Integration



Conclusion

The study focusing on the Syrian refugees' uses of smartphones in the larger context of displacement, resettlement, and integration into the Turkish society shows that the smartphone is an existential *dispositif* in the sense that it strategically empowers these people through diverse uses of connectivity and in making homes away

[13] Most Syrian women (84%) wish to learn Turkish (Tunç, 2015).

from home. The refugees' way of using smartphones indicates their perpetual inventiveness: they use it as a GPS to navigate at sea or on land, as a diasporic space to connect for finding shelter and work and to be informed about the situation at home, as a learning tool, as a *dispositif* for building a war archive, and as a social assistance tool for integration.

Despite being a non-human entity, a smartphone is part of the refugees' lives, a virtual lifeline and tool for safety and survival. In coping with their everyday life difficulties and struggling to survive in emergencies, the refugees invent new links with the powers of life, which respond to their contingency needs created by each immediate situation (e.g. needing translation in a hospital). They shift from the intended purpose of Turkcell services and modify the diverse functions of smartphones depending on their situational needs. They empower themselves strategically by inventing new practices with their smartphones in order to integrate the host society by learning the language, and to access education and work. For these Syrian refugees living in Turkey the use of smartphones and apps is continuously evolving in a constant interplay with their contextual needs and motivations of.

At the same time, some refugees also use smartphones for illegal activities (e.g. navigating illegal journeys with the assistance of smugglers), which makes the device a *dispositif* to counter technologies of domination and surveillance. This could be a topic for further research.

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