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Everyday Fear and Tension in Declining Informal Settlements of Turkish Cities: An Outcome of Refugee-Inflow or Neoliberal (Urban) Policies?¹

Dar Gelirli Konut Alanlarında Artan Gündelik Korku ve Gerilimler: Sebep Suriyeli Göçmenlerin Varlığı mı, Yoksa Neoliberal Kentsel Politikaların Etkileri mi?

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Abstract: The increasing social isolation, dramatic decline in relations of trust and solidarity, emerging feelings of everyday fear/anxiety and inter-group conflicts among urban poor are indicators mostly identified with the inflow of Syrian refugees in declining neighborhoods of Turkish cities since 2012. By means of a qualitative analysis of inter-group relations in a multi-ethnic informal (gecekondu) inner-city low-income neighborhood in İzmir, this article aims to question this identification by putting the ‘refugee problem’ in the context of the neoliberal (urban) policies that have been practiced in the last two to three decades in Turkey. The deterioration of social relations in informal poor settlements of large cities in Turkey is rather a function of the multifaceted impacts of neoliberal (urban) policies that have been practiced in Turkey particularly during the last two to three decades, which precedes the influx of refugees. Consequently, it is intended to build a general typology of the impacts of these macro policies on socio-spatial dynamics at the local scale. Taking the growing anxiety and discomfort among migrant groups within urban spaces in Turkey into account, the study explicitly aims at providing indicators for a novel research and furthermore political action steps that consider inter-group relations and social cohesion at the local level.

Structured Abstract: Introduction

The increasing social isolation, dramatic decline in relations of trust and solidarity, emerging feelings of everyday fear/anxiety and inter-group conflicts among urban poor are indicators mostly identified with the inflow of Syrian refugees in declining neighborhoods of Turkish cities since 2012. By means of a qualitative analysis of inter-group relations in a multi-ethnic informal(gecekondu) inner-city low-income neighborhood in

¹ The research data in this article is based on the field research entitled as: ‘806 Patlıcanlı Yokuşu ve civarı sosyo-mekansal değerlendirme niteliksel analiz raporu (The socio-spatial qualitative analysis of Patlıcanlı Slope and its surrounding)’. The research Project was funded by the protocol no: 97509404.301.05.97 signed by İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and İzmir Katip Celebi University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in 2017 as a revolving funding scheme. The author wants to express her gratitude to Dr. Gökhan Kutlu for his unconditional help and the research assistants who work wholeheartedly in this project: Gülgün Barlas, Hüseyin Emre Coşkun, Merve Elibirlik, Damla Kavruk, Servet Kışla, Yasemin Samur.

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İzmir, this article aims to question this identification by putting the ‘refugee problem’ in the context of the neoliberal (urban) policies that have been practiced in the last two to three decades in Turkey.

The qualitative data that will be discussed in this article was gathered in order to provide local information for İzmir Metropolitan Municipality in the provision of an urban renewal project in an extensive area in the historical center of the city. The territory awaiting renewal is an inner city, low-income settlement that now hosts mainly underprivileged Kurdish migrants and Syrian refugees. It is as well a dynamic migrant region that had absorbed various migrant inflows in the last five decades. The housing condition is very poor in general and the residents perceive the neighborhood as a socially and physically ‘deteriorating’ one. There has been a rapid inflow of Syrian refugees in the region and most of the refugees who live in İzmir (estimated to be around 130,000 people) settled around this particular region.

Method

Within the framework of the research, 46 long semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the residents of the slope. 27 of the interviewees were female, while 19 of them were male. Nine of the interviews were carried out with Syrian migrants in the locality, either in Turkish or with the help of translators. The diversity with regard to migrants’ places of origins and temporality of migration had been represented in the sample. Through systematic visits to the neighborhood within a time-period of three months, observations were made in different shops of the market place, in the public park, in mosques, and in the Agora Neighborhood Center (being a division of the Konak Provincial Municipality of İzmir), which plays a crucial role as a community center in the region.

Purpose

The field research in that sense, aimed at understanding the certain general problems in the region: dynamics of social/power relations between migrant groups; the main problems of the neighborhood and problem areas regarding the integration of newly arriving migrants. In the course of the research and analysis, however, the focus shifted more to the problems of social cohesion, the refugee issue and inter-communal relations. As will be shown with the findings of the article: ‘loss of trust between migrants’ and the ‘increase of disparities and inequalities’ constitute the two main reasons behind every day fear and emerging tensions between groups in the locality. It is also important to state that more important than ‘ethnic identity’; factors such as ‘temporality of migration’, ‘to know one another’, ‘socio-economic problems/differences’, ‘trust-damaging impacts of macro policies’ seem to shape the categories of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ from the perspectives of the migrants.

Results

As the field research data indicates most of the unease between migrant groups emerges out of two main sources: i) The loosening of social ties (where Syrian migrants constitute only one important side of the problem by being mostly “unknown” to others) ii) Structural problems (infrastructural problems, problems of security, problems of poverty, the insufficient provision of public services, the inadequacies of public spaces, the informalities in the provision of social assistance, etc.). On part of the poorer migrants in the neighborhood, the recent migration inflow has become a problem of sharing. As also other empirical studies on relations between refugees and underprivileged host communities indicate, the main reason behind the rise of anti-immigrant attitudes is related to the perception of ‘undeserving’ refugees claiming the already scarce resources and causing the life to be more difficult and expensive by their mere presence in the localities.

The presence of Syrian refugees contributes to the anxiety of the settled migrants only because refugees constitute one of the reasons behind the weakening of social cohesion, problems of trust, degradation of the neighborhood or the inability to act in solidarity. The deterioration of social relations and the physical structure in the informal low-income neighborhoods, however, have been mainly brought about by the neoliberal (urban) policies of the last two to three decades. In that regard, the refugee crisis should be perceived as an opportunity to reverse the negative repercussions of neoliberal policies on socio-spatial dynamics in localities. Considering the fact that the great majority of Syrian refugees, live, mixed with Kurdish and Turkish migrants, in deteriorating physical and social conditions of urban low-income settlements that encapsulate socio-economic divides and diverse migrant positions, it is highly important for the government not to isolate the measures to deal with Syrian refugees from the general problems of the communities. Particularly in a context where majority of Syrian migrants plan to stay in Turkey permanently, the practice of urban policies

and social cohesion projects that is locally driven, but centrally monitored, which not only takes refugee problems into their scope, but also considers local problems in migrant settlements within the framework of macro-structural problems, is of vital importance. The municipalities should be given more administrative and financial initiative. In addition, they should be given a regulative power to define the needs at the local level and cooperate with national and international civil society organizations in regulating social assistance, resilience and cohesion projects for urban poor.

Keywords: Urban Studies, Neoliberal Urban Policies, Informal Low-income Settlements, Turkey, Syrian Refugees, Inter-group Relations, Everyday Fear, Security.

Öz: Son yıllarda düşük gelir enformel konut alanlarında artan toplumsal izolasyon, güven ve dayanışma ilişkilerindeki dramatik bozulma, mahalle sakinlerinin artan gündelik korkuları, kaygıları ve gruplar arası gerilim, genellikle son yedi, sekiz yılda yapısal olarak bozulma sürecindeki bu mahallelere Suriyeli göçmenlerin yerleşmesiyle ilişkilendirilir. Bu çalışma, İzmir Agora/Basmane bölgesinde yer alan buna benzer çok-etnikli bir mahallede yapılan niteliksel araştırmanın verilerine dayanır. Sosyo-mekansal bir perspektiften, gruplar-arası ilişkiler, mahallenin yapısal sorunları ve kaygı/güvenlik olgularını inceleyen bu araştırma, ‘mülteci sorunu’ olarak nitelendirilen problematiğin daha genel neoliberal kentsel politikaların bağlamı içinde değerlendirilmesi gerekliliğini ortaya koyar. Suriyeli göçmenlerin son yıllardaki varlığı ile birlikte düşünülen yerel toplumsal sorunlar, aslında neoliberal kentsel politikaların buna benzer ihmal edilmiş/bozulma sürecindeki enformel düşük gelir konut alanlarında yarattığı kümülatif etkinin bir sonucu gibi gözükmektedir. Genellikle, kente ya da mahalleye göçün zamanına, sosyo-ekonomik farklılıklara ve zaman içinde oluşan güven ilişkilerinin var olup olmamasına dayanan gruplar arası ‘tanıdık’ ve ‘yabancı’ algıları, işte bu bağlam içinde gündelik kaygı ve korkulara yol açabilmektedir. Bu çalışma, makro politikaların yerelde yarattığı etkileri anlayarak, toplumsal birliktelik ve dayanışmayı güçlendirecek ve artan ‘yabancı’ algısını tersine çevirmeye yönelik olarak yapılacak proje ve siyasalara veri sağlamayı amaçlar. Oluşturulacak siyasalar, bu mahallelerin fiziksel yapısal sorunlarını toplumsal sorunları ile birlikte ele aldığında, gerçekçi ve başarılı sonuçlara ulaşmak mümkün olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kent Çalışmaları, Neoliberal Kentsel Politikalar, Enformel Düşük Gelir Konut Alanları, Suriyeli Göçmenler, Gruplar Arası İlişkiler, Gündelik Korku, Güvenlik.

Introduction

The increasing social isolation, dramatic decline in relations of trust and solidarity, emerging feelings of everyday fear/anxiety and inter-group conflicts among urban poor are indicators mostly identified with the inflow of Syrian refugees² in declining neighborhoods of Turkish cities since 2012. By means of a qualitative analysis of inter-group relations in a multi-ethnic informal³ (gecekondu) inner-city low-income neighborhood in İzmir, this article aims to question this identification by putting the ‘refugee problem’ in the context of the neoliberal (urban) policies that have been practiced in the last two decades in Turkey. Consequently, it is intended to build a general

² In academic and journalistic writings in Turkey, the word refugee is predominantly favored referring to the forced, war migrants from Syria. Considering the conditions of and the motivations behind migration from Syria, this seems to be a fitting usage. However, legally-speaking, migrants from Syria are not considered as refugees in Turkey due to the prepositions of two legal frameworks that govern the inflow of foreigners and seeking asylum in Turkey. The 1934 Law on Settlement (no. 2510) assigns the rights of Turkish citizenship to the people of Turkish descent only and the 1951 Geneva Convention in addition to its 1967 Additional Protocol geographically limits the right of attaining a refugee status exclusively to Europe (İçduygu, 2015: 4; Üstek-Spilda, 2017: 48, 49). In the article, the concept of refugee will be used referring to Syrian migrants by taking into account this reservation.

³ These neighborhoods were previously called as gecekondu neighborhoods. Gecekondu are houses or settlements literally defined as ‘informal’, sometimes even as ‘illegal’, because they are: “(1) built on public land and/or; (2) constructed on private property (not belonging to the homeowner) and/or; (3) built on shared-title land; and/or (4) constructed without occupancy or construction permits” (Leitmann and Baharoğlu, 1998, p. 99). However, due to a combination of populist politics, amnesty laws that formalize the status of these settlements in years, and state providing utility services to these settlements, it is no longer possible to define these settlements as gecekondu in the traditional sense.

typology of the impacts of these macro policies on socio-spatial dynamics at the local scale. To seek the appearances of “actually existing neoliberalism”⁴ in the general framework of urban and migration policy practices also help to contextualize the practices of neoliberalism in Turkish politics that bring together seemingly paradoxical constituents such as disciplinary coercive/authoritarian forms of state intervention and regulations coupled with moments/practices of deregulation, spontaneity and informality.

The general public opinion, as shaped by media and political discourses,⁵ seems to play an important role in impacting the nature of local everyday interactions of Syrian refugees with their host-communities. Recent polls indicate that attitudes toward Syrian refugees are generally negative and may be hardening. (International Crisis Group, 2018: 6)⁶ The general public opinion, as shaped by media and political discourses, seems to play an important role in impacting the nature of local everyday interactions of Syrian refugees with their host-communities. However, a more in-depth look into everyday social relations in the localities leads us to the fact that the everyday tensions and uneasiness between migrant groups there cannot be exclusively explained through public representation of refugees, let alone with the mere presence of Syrian migrants in these neighborhoods during the last seven to eight years. The deterioration of social relations in informal poor settlements of large cities in Turkey is rather a function of the multifaceted impacts of neoliberal (urban) policies that have been practiced in Turkey particularly during the last two decades, which precedes the influx of refugees. The social assistance schemes⁷ that had been designed as an alternative to the social/welfare state policies of the past; the neoliberal re-structuring of cities and their integration into global investment schemes; the conduct of many large-scale urban transformation projects, which mostly result in the demolition of entire inner-city or peripheral gecekondu/informal settlements and the subsequent massive displacement of the urban poor; the “informal divide and rule”⁸ strategies of the project implementers in the application of these projects; “territorial stigmatization”⁹ processes that serve the purpose of legitimizing the projects and the deregulation practices, which leave many urban neighborhoods to their own mechanisms of ‘development’ and inevitable physical decay following, all result in the general isolation of social relations, the migrants’ weakening sense of belonging to their localities and a general loss of solidarity and trust in urban low-income informal neighborhoods.

The qualitative data that will be discussed in this article was gathered in order to provide local information for İzmir Metropolitan Municipality in the provision of an urban renewal project

⁴ Please see Brenner and Theodore (2002). The detailed discussions about the term will be carried out in the following sections.

⁵ Particularly during the election campaign for the national election on June 24th 2018, all the political parties, including the governing party (Justice and Development Party/JDP) emphasized the temporariness of Syrian migrants in the country in their election talks. Most likely as a response to the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments in public, they all give explicit reference to the plan of initiating a ‘safe return’ for Syrian refugees to their home country in their political agendas.

⁶ “In İstanbul, only 15 per cent of respondents said, ‘absolutely not’ in 2009 when asked if they viewed the presence of foreigners in the city as positive; six years later the number giving this response had risen to 34 per cent. In Ankara, the percentage responding ‘absolutely not’ rose from 20 per cent in 2009 to 35 per cent in 2015” (International Crisis Group, 2018: 6).

⁷ The Islamic understanding of philanthropism that had been infiltrated in the practices of these schemes engenders a strong perception of injustice amongst the ethnically and religiously (particularly Kurdish and Alevi groups) disadvantaged groups and leads to social divides at the local scale. Please see Eder (2010) and Demirtaş-Milz (2012) for a detailed discussion.

⁸ Please see Kuyucu-Ünsal (2010) and Demirtaş-Milz (2013) for a detailed discussion.

⁹ Luic Wacquant (2009: 116) defines territorial stigmatization as a “distinctive modality of the collective discredit bearing upon the residents of the neighborhoods of relegation.” Wacquant (2007: 67) emphasizes that discourses of vilification about degrading neighborhoods and their residents are not only being generated from above in public discourse but also reconfirmed from below in the ordinary interactions of daily life. See Uzunçarşılı-Baysal (2013) for a detailed discussion of stigmatization and criminalization with a case from İstanbul.

in an extensive area in the historical center of the city.¹⁰ The territory awaiting renewal is an inner city, low-income settlement that now hosts mainly underprivileged Kurdish migrants and Syrian refugees. It is as well a dynamic migrant region that had absorbed various migrant inflows in the last five decades. The housing condition is very poor in general and the residents perceive the neighborhood as a socially and physically ‘deteriorating’ one. There has been a rapid inflow of Syrian refugees in the region and most of the refugees who live in İzmir (estimated to be around 130,000 people) settled around this particular region.¹¹ The field research in that sense, at first, aimed at understanding the certain general problems in the region: dynamics of social/power relations between migrant groups; the main problems of the neighborhood and problem areas regarding the integration of newly arriving migrants. In the course of the research and analysis, however, the focus shifted more to the problems of social cohesion, the refugee issue and inter-communal relations. The Council of Europe emphasizes the elements of social cohesion as: shared loyalties and solidarity, strength of social relations and shared values, feelings of a common identity and sense of belonging to the same community, trust among members, reduction of disparities, inequalities and social exclusion. (Spoonley et al., 2005: 90-91) As will be shown with the findings of the article: ‘loss of trust between migrants’ and the ‘increase of disparities and inequalities’ constitute the two main reasons behind every day fear and emerging tensions between groups in the locality. It is also important to state that more important than ‘ethnic identity’; factors such as ‘temporality of migration’, ‘to know one another’, ‘socio-economic problems/differences’, ‘trust-damaging impacts of macro policies’ seem to shape the categories of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ from the perspectives of the migrants.¹²

Within the framework of the research, 46 long semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the residents of the slope. 27 of the interviewees were female, while 19 of them were male. Nine of the interviews were carried out with Syrian migrants in the locality, either in Turkish or with the help of translators. The diversity with regard to migrants’ places of origins and temporality of migration had been represented in the sample. Through systematic visits to the neighborhood within a time-period of three months, observations were made in different shops of the market place, in the public park, in mosques, and in the Agora Neighborhood Center (being a division of the Konak Provincial Municipality of İzmir), which plays a crucial role as a community center in the region.

Most of the people living in the region are from Mardin, Southeastern Anatolia and Kurdish in ethnicity. They had come to the region in mainly two waves, during the 1970s and 1980s, by means of voluntary migration, and starting by the mid-1990s, mostly as a consequence of forced migration. On the other hand, the most settled migrant groups who define themselves as Turks, had moved to the neighborhood in the 1950s and 1960s from Konya (central Anatolia) and close-by provinces of

¹⁰ It is important to mention that İzmir Metropolitan Municipality has been governed by Republican People’s Party (RPP) (main opposition party against JDP) mayors without a break during the eighteen years of JDP rule in Turkey. However, the previous practices of urban transformation by RPP municipality in İzmir were also heavily criticized by urban scholars including the author of this article, because of the way they have been carried out. These projects did not include sincere participatory practices and therefore did not divert from the general neoliberal practices of UTPs in İstanbul as realized by JDP. This particular renewal project being conducted by İzmir Metropolitan Municipality at the moment seems to symbolize a break from these previous mal-practices of RPP Municipality in İzmir by integrating a more inclusive and participatory approach. The project that provides insights for this article is part of a large-scale project of the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality who aims at an extensive urban renewal project in the historical city center, stretching between Kadifekale Castle, the Agora ancient archaeological site, the Kemeraltı historical bazaar and the historical part of the Konak/Basmane region. The municipal team as part of the Directorate of Cultural Sites and Historical Assets has several stakeholders and has been very sensitive in carrying out the renewal project without alienating the local population in the region.

¹¹ Similar to other large cities of Turkey, Syrian migrants are dispersed across different neighborhoods depending on their ethnic affiliation. In the Basmane region, there are predominantly Syrian Kurds from Aleppo, but less in number there are also Syrian Arabs. (International Crisis Group, 2018: 4)

¹² Please see Letki (2008) for a similar finding in British context.

İzmir. These were mostly traders and/or having regular jobs and recently very loosely represented in the region. Most of them left the neighborhood as a consequence of second wave of Kurdish migration starting by the mid-1990s and moved to middle class districts of the city. The migrants who arrived in the region during the past five years are Syrian refugees, mostly Kurdish in ethnicity and from Aleppo. Other, smaller refugee groups are mostly from Africa and arrived during the past decade. In such a spatio-temporally layered, diverse migrant society, the inflow of Syrian migrants contributes to the complexity of social problems evolving during the last 20 years. Concerns and anxieties about security, discomfort with newly arriving migrants, loosening of social ties and trust with a nostalgic inclination toward past times, alongside a social and physical deterioration of the neighborhood were subsequently emerging as main themes. Toward the backdrop of this complex inter-social constellation, the author pursues two main goals:

By dwelling into local knowledge, to identify structural reasons behind the anti-immigrant anxieties and discomfort at the local scale, which necessitate an overall framework to deal with the problems of neglected informal settlements and their poor residents in largest cities of Turkey with the practice of neoliberal policies. Doing that, the author attempts to seek the appearances of actually existing neoliberalism in the general framework of urban and migration policy practices in Turkish context.

Taking the growing anxiety and discomfort among migrant groups within urban spaces in Turkey into account, the study explicitly aims at providing indicators for a novel research and political action steps that consider inter-group relations and social cohesion at the local level.

Problematising and Urbanizing the ‘Refugee Issue’: A Local Perspective

The General Profile of Inter-Group Relations in the Locality

The findings of the field research indicate that the underlying reason behind the uneasiness felt on part of the residents about Syrian refugees, is an anxiety that is not solemnly related to the presence of refugees in the neighborhood. This anxiety is caused by a growing alienation among the local residents, due to an increasing number of ‘strangers’ in the neighborhood. As understood from the narratives of the respondents, this feeling seems to grow with the incoming refugees; nonetheless, this discomfort had been there earlier and it was caused by the increasing density and heterogeneity of the population starting by the 1990s as a consequence of forced Kurdish migration. In fact, data analysis verified that the most recurring discursive theme is the social transformation of the neighborhood. According to the more settled migrants that were interviewed, in the past, the social texture of the neighborhood was determined by interpersonal relations, whereas currently, social ties are weakened by the inflow of new migrants. In our qualitative analysis, the theme: ‘the past structure of the neighborhood’ recurs mainly with the themes ‘social relations’, ‘neighboring’, ‘natives’ and ‘security’. The second-generation member of an established Kurdish family, for example, refers to past relations with a nostalgic longing as follows:

The people were much more cultured and well-behaved. The relations with neighbors were so beautiful. At that time, I had all the financial opportunities to live in another neighborhood. Anyhow I preferred to live here, because I was happy and satisfied here. Than in time, here gets so much rotten. Particularly in this last five years, this place is a disgrace (...) It was in the past sparkling. The neighboring relations were tight. Love and respect existed (...) At that time 90 per cent of our neighbors were from Mardin. They were our fellows. The remaining 10 per cent were the people from all over Turkey. (...) We as neighbors could visit each other very often. Evening home visits were possible. In weddings or funerals, people helped each other like family members.¹³

¹³ Extracted from the interview with Mr. Black (05.01.2017). The names of the interviewed migrants and local resident were changed by nicknames in order to guarantee their anonymity.

The early-arrived migrant groups in the neighborhood, despite being from different hometowns, express their trust and emotional proximity to other established migrants. Particularly the Kurdish migrants, who arrived in the region in the 1970s, seem to identify themselves with the established Turkish migrants, namely the ‘natives’ of the neighborhood more than with other Kurdish migrants, who came to the region in the 1990s. Because they have been knowing each other over long time-periods, they distance themselves to newly arriving groups, even though these new migrant groups are from their ethnicity and/or hometown. Nevertheless, such a communal identification is not clearly defined in the discourses of established Turkish migrants toward established Kurdish migrants. In a sense, discursively, the settled migrants seem to accept the Kurdish ethnicity as a homogeneous entity and detach themselves from it and the newly arrived Syrian migrants alike. The following sentence very well summarizes this uneasiness towards ‘ethnically other’ groups: “The Easterners [Kurds] sent us [referring to the already moved out previous residents of the neighborhood] from the neighborhood, it seems that Syrians will send them [the Kurds] from the neighborhood!”¹⁴ However, it is also important to mention that throughout in-depth questioning about their neighbors and trusted people in the neighborhood, many of the settled Turkish people persistently mention the good deeds of their settled Kurdish neighbors. They narrated many incidents in which they retain their relations with and request help or solidarity from their ‘fellow’ Kurdish migrants. When they refer to Mardinli migrants who have ‘damaged social relations’ and ‘brought insecurity’, they were not referring to their ‘fellow’ neighbors from Mardin, but to the ones who started to settle in the neighborhood by the 1990s. Established Kurds are considered as their acquaintances, they are not ‘strangers’ like the newcomers. The social rupture between established Kurdish migrants and Kurdish migrants who migrated to informal settlements later (in the 1990s) as a consequence of forced migration, is also emphasized in other empirical studies. (Erder, 1996: 296; Şen 2007: 275) The most important reason behind this rupture is indicated as the poverty of the latter group, due to their unprepared refuge from their villages in the South Eastern Region of Turkey. The second main reason behind the rupture is the willingness of the more established groups to politically distance themselves from these forced migrants. (Erder, 1996: 296)

The everyday anxiety/fear and feelings of insecurity, which cannot be substantiated by the factual increase in crime rates, is not only voiced by more established migrants in the locality but shared in the narratives of less established Kurdish migrants with regard to Syrians. However, a more in depth analysis of these feelings with regard to both groups signify the important impacts of structural reasons that have given massive harm to trust relations and relations of solidarity at the local level, more than the factors caused by the presence of Syrian migrants. Most of these structural problems could be identified with the neoliberal (urban) policies practiced in the last two to three decades in Turkey. Contemporary regulative problems of the state with regard to the inflow of Syrian refugees in large Turkish cities further contributed to the inter-group conflicts in informal settlements. The following section will be an attempt to display the connectedness between structural and policy-related problems with the socio-economic dynamics of the anti-immigrant sentiments in the neighborhood.

Neoliberal (Urban) Policies and Their Impact on the Weakening of Social Ties, Trust and Solidarity at the Local Level

As ‘neoliberalism’ being a very debated and contested concept in literature on Turkish politics in the last decade, it is important to make a clear definition of it in accordance with the discussions in this article. As Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (2002: 3) in their seminal work on “Spaces of Neoliberalism” put forward, there are some common identifying constituents of neoliberalism on a global scale, which can be summarized as: i) “the deregulation of state control over major industries”, ii) “assault on organized labor”, iii) “the reduction of corporate taxes”, iv)

¹⁴ Extracted from the interview with Mr. Purple (02.12.2016).

“the shrinking and/or privatization of public services”, v) “the dismantling of welfare programs”, vi) “the enhancement of international capital mobility”, vii) “the intensification of interlocality competition” and viii) “the criminalization of urban poor”. What Brenner and Theodore (2002: 4) define as “actually existing neoliberalism”, however, attempts to theoretically contextualize these general components as being embedded in specific national, regional and local historical/political/social contexts. These constituents then, are articulated with and defined by the “legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulating practices, political practices.” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 4) In Turkish context, this contextual articulation leads to the emergence of “authoritarian practices”¹⁵ that are not necessarily in opposition with the innately “anti-democratic tendencies”¹⁶ of neoliberalism coupled with strategic employment of deregulation and informal policies. (Tansel, 2008: 207) Disciplinary coercive forms of state interventions in the “creation of new development areas”, conduct of urban transformation projects (UTPs) and “razing public housing and other forms of low-rent accommodation”; deregulation as in the form of “elimination of rent controls and project based construction subsidies” and/or in the form leaving certain neighborhoods to their own ‘development’ dynamics in line with the spontaneous/market induced priorities of neoliberal re-structuring of cities; informality in state practices (divide and rule strategies in the conduct of UTPs), (the use of informal and ambiguous clauses in regulations open to multiple interpretations) and informality caused by state practices (the informal consequences of the weakening welfare schemes in dealing with urban poor and their replacement with informal/philanthropic social assistance schemes) all constitute the repertoire of neoliberal (urban) policies practiced in Turkish context. (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 23-24) Some of these practices could be identified with regard to their impacts on local dynamics within the context of the research findings shared in this article.

1999-2001 economic recession in Turkey signifies the turning point in the state’s response to urban movements, the urban poor and informal low-income settlements. (Eraydın and Taşan-Kök, 2014: 118) The urban land that started to be perceived as a tool in redistributing national wealth by means of the liberal policies of 1980s, turned into an actual and most important instrument of economic growth with the Justice and Development Party (JDP) coming to power in 2002. (Eraydın and Taşan-Kök, 2014: 118) For the purpose of “(re)positioning cities within supranational capital flows”, the most relevant two “moments of creation” in Turkish context, which are: “the creation of privatized, customized, and networked urban infrastructures” and “the creation of new opportunities for speculative investment in central-city real estate markets” were put into action by JDP’s executive and judiciary interventions. (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 23; Tansel, 2018: 200) As indicated in Table 1, the neoliberal policies aiming at the re-structuring of Turkish cities trigger massive UTPs that are monitored by the Mass Housing Directorate (TOKİ), which was established and given extensive legal and administrative executive powers in parallel with the freedom and initiative acknowledged to metropolitan municipalities in the re-structuring of cities. To handle and transform the informal low-income settlements is legally and financially easier when compared to other residential areas in cities in the context of the foreseen projects. Therefore labelled as ‘ideal’, they are being given priority as transformative spaces. As the UTPs were implemented, most of the inner-city informal settlements had been demolished and the low-income residents of these settlements were forced to re-locate to other more peripheral informal neighborhoods. Some of the settlements

¹⁵ Referring to Tansel (2018: 200), the repertoires of authoritarian neoliberalism in Turkish context could be categorized as: “the centralization of economic and political decision-making, transformation of the rule of law through executive and judiciary interventions, reorienting key administrative and bureaucratic functions of state in line with the governing party’s strategic interests, reconfiguring media ownership through state interventions, de-collectivizing work place organizations and labor relations and producing discourses of mobilization and consent generation.”

¹⁶ “On the one hand, while neoliberalism aspires to create a ‘utopia’ of free markets liberated from all forms of state interference, it has in practice entailed a dramatic intensification of coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to impose market rule upon all aspects of social life.” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 5)

were given, due to their location or legal status, a latent interest in this neoliberal re-structuring process. Patlıcanlı Slope is one of these deregulated neighborhoods left to physical deterioration and consequently a 'social' one. (Please see Table1) "Socio-economic and political processes of neoliberalism have paved the way for the social and spatial segregation of the emerging groups of poverty and wealth in urban spaces, or the emergence of the so-called 'spaces of decay,' 'distressed areas,' and 'privileged spaces.'" (Bartu-Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008: 9) Such deteriorating settlements have turned out to be a degraded shelter for various displaced groups in the neoliberal re-structuring of the cities, namely: i) forced Kurdish migrants (starting by the mid-1990s), ii) the internally re-settled urban poor because of the transformation projects conducted in many city regions during the last decade and, iii) refugees, of which the majority stems from Syria. As mentioned in the previous section in reference to the Patlıcanlı Slope, these inflows also have transformed the social composition and the nature of everyday interaction in such neighborhoods. Most of the established and well-to-do migrants left the neighborhoods for lower-middle, respectively middle class districts. The socio-economic divide between settled and newcomer migrants has become obvious; the percentage of tenancy has increased; the poverty has become harsher; and with the impact of the local repercussions of other neoliberal policy practices, the trust and social solidarity has been dismantled at the local scale, as indicated in 'Table 1'. The traditional networks of clientelism¹⁷ that provide gecekondu dwellers (urban poor) prospects to demand services for collective consumption and the ability of the local community to get organized and act in solidarity, had almost vanished from the scene of urban politics. As Zygmunt Bauman defines with regard to the conditions of liquid modernity, the reciprocity between the state and the urban poor regarding collective redistribution, claims collapses and this is strongly and mutually related to the growth of inequality at the local level (Bauman, 2001:88). In addition to these factors, the destabilizing effects of UTPs cause the collapse of the relative security of tenure in informal settlements, which subsequently leads on part of the residents to an eroding feeling of permanency and sense of belonging. The solidarity and trust between neighbors were also damaged in the conduct of these projects, due to an informal and tendentious treatment of migrants by local governmental officials.¹⁸ As signified in 'Table 1', various "divide and rule" strategies of the local governments serve the objectives of efficiency and frequency in the completion process of these projects. (Demirtaş-Milz, 2013) These projects do not only have impacts on the migrants who were directly affected by the UTPs, but also affected the perception, sense of belonging and feelings of security on part of the migrants who live in similar conditions close to the demolished neighborhoods. Kadifekale Urban Transformation Project that was conducted between 2010-2013 for example, has had a considerable impact on the residents of adjacent locality: Patlıcanlı Slope, as gathered from the narratives of the respondents.

¹⁷ Clientelism refers to a process in which the engagement of the local political actors in social relations on the horizontal level by means of their ethnic and hemşehri (hometown commonality) identities and their affiliation to the political party structures on the vertical level enable them to be powerful actors in local politics and to mediate between local people and party politics. (Ayata-Güneş (1994) and Kurtoğlu (2006) quoted in Demirtaş-Milz, 2012: 33)

¹⁸ The state officials develop in the conduct of these transformation projects various informal strategies in order to break the potential resistance and collective demands on part of the migrants groups. (Kuyucu ve Ünsal, 2010; Demirtaş-Milz, 2013) Please see 'Table 1' below for details.

Table 1: The Local Repercussions of Neoliberal Urban Policies

Neoliberal Urban Policies	Structural Local Repercussions	Local Social Repercussions
Selective neo-liberal re-structuring of cities	<p>Transformation of some neighborhoods into high-rise apartment gecekondus houses low in construction quality.</p> <p>Transformation of some neighborhoods into middle class or luxurious residential and/or business areas by means of contractors, Mass Housing Directorate, and local governments.</p> <p>Some neighborhoods, due to their location or due their legally protected status as historical and cultural sites, have been left to their own local dynamics. In such neighborhoods, it is possible to observe physical deterioration of infrastructure and the housing stock. Patlıcanlı slope with its two/three-story apartment gecekondus (poorly re-constructed either by the owners themselves or by the hand of private contractors) and with its poorly protected historical housing stock is one of these deteriorating neighborhoods (Balaban, 2011: 2170).</p>	<p>Move of more established migrant groups (mostly house owners) out of the decaying neighborhoods.</p> <p>The inflow of poorer segments of urban population into the decaying neighborhoods.</p> <p>Increasing tenancy.</p> <p>Increasing poverty.</p> <p>Loosening of social ties and social solidarity.</p> <p>Demise of the old forms of clientelistic relations.</p> <p>Increasing anxiety and feeling of insecurity.</p>
<p>Urban Transformation Projects</p> <p>Massive demolition of inner-city or peripheral informal settlements for middle-class or luxury housing projects.</p> <p>Territorial Stigmatization as a legitimizing discourse for the conduct of UTPs.</p>	<p>House owners in the conduct of the UTPs attain certain rights:</p> <p>Value definition for their houses in the expropriation process.</p> <p>Right for social housing in the outskirts of the city.</p> <p>Tenants have no legal status in this process.</p> <p>The official informal strategies for the fast and efficient conduct of the UTPs:</p> <p>Divide and rule strategies.</p> <p>Offer of widely differing values for houses in similar conditions in the expropriation process.</p> <p>The postponement of the collection of the rubbles of already demolished buildings as a psychological strategy.</p> <p>Land speculation as a result of UTPs that leads to value increases in house and land</p>	<p>Official informal strategies of 1874ort he implementers weaken the chances of resistance and community building.</p> <p>Trust and solidarity between neighbors has been deteriorated.</p> <p>Weakening of the sense of belonging among the residents due to stigmatization.</p> <p>The in-city displacement leads to a feeling of second displacement 1874ort he Kurdish migrants who already settled in these neighborhoods as a result of forced migration.</p>

	values in nearby informal neighborhoods.	
Declining welfare services and the introduction of informal social assistance schemes.	<p>Increasing poverty.</p> <p>Growing socio-economic discrepancy between migrant groups changing by the length of stay in the city.</p> <p>Informal processes of administering the social assistance schemes (social aid in cash and kind).</p> <p>The muhtars¹⁹ (local headmen) in the neighborhoods are given extensive authority to define eligibility for social aid.</p> <p>Local governments channelize social aid donated by private entities and waqfs in the neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Ethnic and political identities have become crucial in defining who gets social aid.</p> <p>Trust between neighbors and migrant groups has been deteriorating, due to the perception of injustice, informing activities between neighbors, and mal-practices of social aid.</p>

Moreover, process and discourses of territorial stigmatization provide a legitimizing ground for the project coordinators. As mentioned above, within the context of Kadifekale UTP, the project was legitimized in public discourses via territorial stigmatization as the Kadifekale of ‘un-aesthetic looks’, dirty streets, marginal lives, being a ‘crime hub’ and etiquetted as a ‘stain’ at the very center of the city. (Saraçoğlu and Demirtaş-Milz, 2015) Luic Wacquant (2007: 69) defines the most important negative consequence of this stigmatization process as the dissolution of place, ‘that is the loss of a humanized, culturally familiar and socially filtered locale’. As also signified by the findings of the research, these degrading discourses are adopted to a large extent by the migrants themselves and this increases their anxiety and fear about the ‘dangers’ of living in such neighborhoods with the newly arrived, ‘less known’, ‘other’ migrants groups (particularly refugees), without most of the time a factual reason behind their fear. UTPs that lead to the eviction of the neighborhoods and the internal displacement of migrants to other low-income settlements, particularly distress those Kurdish migrants who already settled in these neighborhoods as a consequence of forced migration. As indicated in ‘Table 1’, this means a second displacement for them, which leads to a feeling of detachment from the informal ties of relative solidarity and though restricted, the possibilities of community help that they found among their fellow people after their forced displacement from Southeastern Anatolia. On the other hand, in the discourses of more established migrants, the only way to return back to the beautiful past times of the neighborhood is via an overall transformation project that will demolish all the houses and re-build a ‘clean’ and ‘safe’ space, which inevitably brings about a ‘social cleansing’ as well. In the narratives of these respondents, one can sense the urge to get rid of these unwanted groups but at the same time the internalization of the urban ‘aesthetic’ as imposed on city spaces in the last two decades. From the perspective of migrants, the persuasion of the project implementers for an in-situ rehabilitation and/or any form of resistance against demolition seems to be erased from among the list of possible actions that can be taken. This signifies the hegemonic power of these projects and power of the new culture of urbanization in Turkey that had been applied in the last two decades. TOKİ way of re-urbanization, which includes common phases of demolition, attempt of erasing spatial memory, creation of tabula rasa spaces and

¹⁹ Local people, mostly with regard to their political affiliation or/and their sectarian, hemşehri and ethnic identity, select their muhtars. Therefore, the muhtars’ power to define the people in need has been perceived as partial by local people. (Demirtaş-Milz, 2012)

erection of high rise apartments seems to be erasing in a hegemonic way any idea seeking an alternative urban space. The established migrants who are house owners, but no longer live in Patlıcanlı Slope, seem to lose any connection to the neighborhood. In that regard, the only way for them to earn money from their houses is to rent these houses in really bad conditions to Syrian refugees for inflationary prices. For the poor segments of the host community, this means an inflationary increase in rents due to increasing demand translated into a feeling of anger directed against refugees rather than the house owners who earn unjust money from this opportunity.

Another neoliberal policy-problem with regard to the loosening social trust and bonds at the local level is the decline of welfare state services, respectively their simultaneous substitution by social assistance schemes during the last two decades. These schemes merge and regulate public/private initiatives and processes that also contain informal and subjective stages, particularly in identifying people in need. They do not resemble the social state policies of the past. These new social assistance schemes are mostly inspired by the Islamic philanthropic tradition of community help and pave the way for informality rather than a rights-based approach. (Eder, 2010) The neoliberal transition that had been carried out in Turkey under the impact of political Islam, brings social assistance to poor population where public (provincial directorates, municipalities, muhtar-local headman) and private (private companies, religious waqfs, foundations, NGOs) agencies cooperate, in which public actors generally assume a regulative function. In most cases, municipalities and related units of provincial directorates channelize social aid by waqfs or NGOs to urban poor such as: aids in cash during Ramadans, coal distribution in winter times, soup kitchens, education aids to students at the beginning of each semester, group circumcision/wedding ceremonies or monthly allowances. (Demirtaş-Milz, 2012: 47) In such circumstances, the political affiliation of the municipality or the sectarian and religious affiliation of the waqf or NGO could again play a role in the partial treatment of urban poor and exclusion of certain underprivileged ethnic groups. (Eder, 2010; Demirtaş-Milz 2012) Even in cases where the social provision is provided impartially, the ethnically disadvantaged groups carry a perception of injustice, owed to the informal aspects of the system. Since the evaluation of 'eligibility' necessitates decision-making processes that cannot be possibly isolated from politics, the issue of social aid has always been a matter of partial treatment in the eyes of migrants vis-à-vis other migrant groups or their neighbors. Such practice of informality also encourages some migrants to inform on others for self-interest. Gossip that always plays a role in *gecekondu* life has been re-functionalized in this new context. Gossip that once served to control people in parallel with social norms turned into a new tool of making private information about the lives of families public in order to exclude some migrants from the opportunities of getting social aid. The narrative of an old widow woman in Patlıcanlı Slope constitutes a suitable example in that regard. This woman demanded from muhtar 'eligibility' document in order to apply for social aid with the claim that she has nobody who can provide financial help. Her son who had been in a process of divorce came and stayed with her one weekend. Her neighbors informed on her by talking to muhtar with the claim that her son 'permanently' stays with her and provides her financial help. For this reason, her application for social aid had been turned down by the muhtar. This case reflects how the informal mechanisms triggered by the system could lead to the further deterioration of trust and neighboring relations. The integration of Syrian refugees into this context and the policy problems regarding the unregulated, unsystematic and inefficient social assistance schemes provided for the refugees (by NGOs, municipalities and provincial directorates) lead to even greater frustration among local migrants.

Consequently, the most recurring code associated with Syrian refugees in the analysis of data is 'social aid'. Associated codes, such as 'social relations', 'strangers', 'concerns of security', 'lack of neighborliness', 'rents' (referring to increasing house rents in the neighborhood after the arrival of Syrian refugees) are sequentially listed from high to low frequency. It is also important to mention that the respondents who voiced the injustices in provision of social aid to Syrian refugees are

commonly late-comers, forced Kurdish migrants who suffered the most from poverty. As indicated by 'Table 2', the administrative unwillingness the government in cooperating with national and international NGOs (due to security concerns) and in generating funds to develop well-regulated social assistance schemes and the administrative/legal incapacitation of municipalities (as the most relevant agency in their encounters with the daily social problems of localities) in dealing with problems of social cohesion in the neighborhoods intensify the scale of the problem). Municipalities who face the most important problems with regard to refugees in urban settings either do neglect the refugee population in their districts or develop improvisatory measures with these problems. A recent empirical study (Woods and Kayalı, 2017: 19) on the operations of the municipalities in Istanbul with regard to refugees indicates that there are severe problems in communication flows and information sharing between municipalities, provincial directorates and state's relevant agencies (please see table 2). In that respect there is a considerable imbalance among municipalities as to the quantity and quality of the services that they provide for refugees.

Table 2: The Local Repercussions of Refugee Policies

Drawbacks in Refugee Policies	Repercussions	Repercussions in informal low-income settlements
Refugee status was not being granted to Syrian migrants in Turkey. "Temporary Protection" status was granted in 2014. ²⁰	Integration policies are not on the agenda of the government. Almost all of the Syrian migrants in cities had been registered ²¹ , however: The possibility of finding formal jobs for them is still very limited; Most of the Syrian children could not be integrated into the formal education system; ²² Syrian migrants can attain health services, however, particularly communication problems decrease the quality of service provision.	Unemployment and striking poverty of many of the Syrian families, Idle public presence of most of the Syrian children and youth in public spaces of the neighborhoods subsequently, lead to increasing concerns of security on part of the local migrants.
Lack of trust culture between civil society and state in Turkey ²³ and state's hesitancy to cooperate with NGOs (particularly with international NGOs) due to its centralistic and security-centered approach. The limitations of state in generating international funds for social	Limitation of the number of the actors operating in the field (Mackreath and Sağınç, 2017: 20, 46). Eclectic and inefficient attempts the NGOs and local governments in sustaining social assistance.	Syrian migrants in the neighborhoods frequently demand help from their neighbors. Syrian refugees' being in need and search for help during the day lead to a feeling of uneasiness for local migrants.

20 An attempt to improve the fragmented and insufficient structure of the refugee legislation was first made in April 2013 with the adoption of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection. The law recognizes the principle of non-refoulement and formalizes the status of temporary protection. It also establishes the DGMM (Directorate General on Migration Management) under the Ministry of the Interior as a separate agency, to centralize the asylum applications and affairs of immigration. (Tolay, 2014: 3) Alongside the new law and the organizational structure, a new Temporary Protection (TP) Regulation came into effect on 22 October 2014 that is expected to create a more effective system of providing Syrian refugees with satisfactory protection and humanitarian assistance.

21 In 2016, 2,834,441 Syrian refugees (1,323,054 women/1,511,387 men) were given a temporary protection status, by February 2017, 2,910,281 Syrians were registered in Turkey. 259,238 (9 per cent) of the registered are hosted in refugee camps and 2,651,043 (91 per cent) are residing among host communities according to the DGMM (Directorate General of Migration Management). (3RP, 2016: 31)

22 According to the statistics by September 2016, the number of Syrian children who could take formal or non-formal education is 341,689, while 845,364 children are still not enrolled into any schooling system. (3RP, 2017: 35)

23 "Political upheaval following the July 2016 coup attempt has exacerbated the challenge of integrating Syrians. NGOs and INGOs operate in an atmosphere of heightened suspicion. Over 100,000 civil servants have been purged for alleged links to "terrorist organizations", and nearly 1,500 NGOs were closed." (International Crisis Group, 2018: 10)

cohesion/resilience projects at the local scale. ²⁴		Considering the weaknesses and informalities in the social assistance schemes of Turkey with regard to urban poor (please see table 1), the unregulated help being available for Syrian refugees creates a perception of injustice on part of the poorer segments of host community.
In legal terms, the main responsible agencies of migratory issues are local branches of DGMM (Directorate General on Migration Management) and AFAD in addition to the provincial offices of relevant ministries. (Mackreath and Sağnıç, 2017: 20) Municipalities, administratively and financially, are given secondary role in dealing with the refugee crisis. Problems of regulation between the relevant branches of state and municipalities with regard to refugee policies.	Mostly because of the legal/administrative limitations and in some cases, for political reasons, the municipalities are hardly keen on developing systematic policies and projects with regard to refugees in their localities.	Lack or insufficiency of projects of social cohesion, conflict resolution and social resilience at the local scale.

The Syrian migrants at the local level, particularly in urban settings, are generally left on their own. Their continuous search for social aid and help constitutes one of the main reasons behind host community's everyday anxieties about them. On the other hand, eclectic and unregulated attempts on part of the NGOs and municipalities to sustain social aid for refugees alone, lead to rumors at the local level that Syrian migrants are getting regular state aid, which inevitably causes a perception of partial treatment on side of the host community. Gökarıksel and Secor (2018: 12) denote in reference to their field research on the encounters with Syrian refugees in multi-ethnic migrant Turkish neighborhoods that the disadvantaged social groups in host communities, due to their feelings of abandonment by the Turkish state and due to a wounded attachment to their own subjugated identity or position, hardly develop empathy with the challenges that refugees face. In such "heterogenous assemblage of wounded subjects, the ongoing, everyday pain felt by the poor and the marginalized in Turkey comes up against the (humanitarian, national and ethical) demand to feel pain for the refugee." (Gökarıksel and Secor, 2018: 12) Subsequently, the refugee problem is far and utmost a sharing problem for the disadvantaged groups in the low-income settlements in Turkey. However, it is equally important to underscore that the problem of sharing has not emerged as a side-effect of refugee inflow, but rather as a consequence of neoliberal urban and identity policies of the right-wing populist politics effective in Turkey throughout the last two to three decades. The existing problem has only been intensified through the refugee crisis.

Many poor respondents claim that their applications for assistance were rejected by the provincial directorate, while Syrians had received aid. They voice their complaints about the muhtar who refused to ascribe eligibility to them in order to get a monthly allowance from the provincial directorate. Their fragile perception about the issue of 'citizenship' contributes to the sensitivity of

²⁴ As indicated by the '3RP Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan' reports of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, when compared to other dense refugee-receiving countries such as Lebanon and Jordan, Turkey made the least appeal and got the least funding, despite the fact that it hosts the greatest number of refugees amongst the three. It is also evident with the reports that while other countries raise funding through a very diverse and multiple international agency portfolio, Turkey cooperates with a limited number of international fund raising agencies. (3RP, 2017: 53)

the subject matter. In the neighborhood, there are a number of organizations that provide unsystematic assistance to Syrian migrants. ASAM (Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants) provides cash assistance for the registered migrants. The second and most appreciated local NGO is what the local people call 'Nuri Hoca Foundation' under the formal name 'İlim Yayma ve İsrâfî Önleme Derneği' [Foundation for the Spread of Islamic Knowledge and Prevention of Squandering]. This foundation is giving service in the garden of a mosque in Basmane and provides food, clothing, and cash assistance. Faith-based organizations provide mostly material aid and daily needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey, while rights-based NGOs, on the other hand, carry out advocacy, reporting, monitoring, and awareness-raising activities. (IGAM, 2013: 14) The Nuri Hoca foundation seems to provide impartial assistance to all Syrian refugees in the neighborhood as understood from the narratives of the respondents. However, due to its private and unregulated nature, such NGOs may practice partial treatment.²⁵

Due to the lack of efficient, regulated and cohesive social assistance schemes, the Syrian migrants look for daily help via informal means. The elderly Syrian women wander during the day and visit NGOs, shops, soup kitchens and state offices in search for social aid. 'Agora Semt Merkezi' (Agora Neighborhood Center), a community center of the Konak District Municipality in the neighborhood constitutes the most important spatial reference point for the Syrian migrants. This center, based on the proactive approach of the municipal officers working there, initiates projects and workshops in which Syrian and local migrant women and children come together and do activities together. Due to the social cohesive approach of the people working in the office, local women come to know about Syrian women and their daily problems. It is possible to observe the positive impact of this center for the social cohesion at the local level. As mentioned in 'Table 2', the municipalities are given an administratively and financially secondary role in easing the pressure of the refugee crisis. The municipalities who develop social assistance schemes and cohesion projects at the local level, conduct these projects by applying for international funds, through the initiative of their project development units.

Everyday Fear and Concerns of Security

Interviewer: Do you feel yourself safe when you walk at night in the hood?

Lady Red: Yes I do, I never walk without a knife.²⁶

Considering the transformation of social relations in the neighborhood mentioned above, 'trust' has become the most important issue with regard to daily social encounters and the positioning of the migrant families themselves vis-à-vis other groups. It is, in that respect, not a surprise to find out that the code 'insecurity' is intertwined with the codes 'neighborhood in the past,' 'neighborliness' (here it denotes the narratives that express longing for neighborliness), 'social relations,' and 'the drug use and sale in Agora Park' (the main public space of the neighborhood). As elaborated above, other than the code: 'social aid', the most recurring codes associated with 'Syrians' can be listed consecutively as: 'social relations', 'strangers' and 'security'. Many other empirical studies reveal that concerns about security and the decline of neighborliness are two closely interconnected themes. (Karadağ, 2015; Erman 2017; Erdoğan 2018) However, the decline in neighborliness does not appear as a direct function of the inflow of Syrian migrants in the detailed analysis of research data. The women, referring to a general loss of social binding and relations of trust mention that the old ways of socializing for women, i.e.: 'gather to drink tea in the houses' is no longer practiced or very rarely happening. They prefer getting together with their neighbors in summer time outside the houses on the street. 'You cannot trust anyone!' is one of the most recurring

²⁵ As Erman (2017: 107) points out with reference to her research in a refugee-receiving neighborhood in Ankara, a faith-based NGO provides assistance exclusively to Syrians who oppose the Syrian regime, while excludes other Syrians. (Erman, 2017: 107)

²⁶ Extracted from the interview with Mrs. Red (02.12.2016).

themes in the interviews. Their hesitancy to give hints about their socio-economic conditions, family life/relations and the interior of the houses lead to such a behavioral pattern. The informal neoliberal policies are also very strongly effective in the loss of trust and social closure. For example, informal social assistance schemes and informing on one another about the socio-economic conditions of one constitute one of the strongest reasons of families keeping their 'private' lives to themselves as mentioned in the previous section.

The fear and anxiety as a function of the increasing number of 'strangers' in the neighborhood is projected upon Syrian migrants, the 'least known' among the 'unfamiliar' groups. Other empirical studies indicate that from the perspective of the local residents, crime rates, particularly theft, violence, and forgery, appear to increase with the coming of Syrian migrants. Provincial Directorates and Police Departments calculated, though, that the crime rate among Syrian refugees is even below average. (Erdoğan, 2018: 118) Particularly the respondents of Turkish ethnicity (the most settled migrants) refer to a permanent feeling of insecurity in their daily social encounters. None of the respondents, however, could give an example for an actual case of crime committed by Syrian migrants. The established migrants, who know most of the migrants in the neighborhood, mentioned that they feel safe, even under dangerous circumstances (not even drug dealers would hurt them, because they know them). An anecdote by the daughter of a wealthy and respected Kurdish shop owner constitutes a good example for this: "My husband is very angry with these youngsters who use and sell drugs (...) But God knows, they won't hurt us, they know us. They respect us. If they wouldn't have known us, they may give harm. I could not guarantee then their goodwill."²⁷

In accordance with the code co-occurrence map, when all the narratives under the code 'security' are analyzed, most of them refer to 'drug use and drug selling' that is considered to be the most pressing security problem of the region. Drug sale seems to be scrutinized by an established Kurdish family, who has been living in the neighborhood for the last thirty years. Despite the fact that they are known and identified by the residents as in the business of drug sale, the general feeling of insecurity is mainly identified with the presence of 'strangers' in the neighborhood. In essence, the main security concern is 'drug sale and abuse' however, the implied actors of insecurity in the region are 'strangers', mainly Syrians. After an in-depth analysis of the data emerge certain reasons behind the unsubstantiated threat perception on part of the host community about Syrian migrants: Firstly, the absolute poverty situation that most of the Syrian migrants living in the region find themselves in and their being 'in need'/'in demand' all the time seem to make the more settled migrants in the neighborhood subjectively uncomfortable. This concerns them in the sense that Syrian migrants could do something like stealing from them or they could demand things from them. In addition to the fact that they are being 'unfamiliar', their living conditions are poor, which makes them, from the perspective of the host community, vulnerable to the temptations of crime. Subsequently, anecdotes charged with risk perception are circulating:

Syrians affect our lives so much, you cannot believe... I cannot leave my child in front of the door even. A woman [Syrian] came by the last day, [give a pause] you are also my brother [to the interviewer]. She wanted something, she was trying to explain, I did not understand. It turned out later that she wanted pad [hygienic pad]. Even, to go in and get what she wanted, gave me willies, do you understand? I was concerned, my child was in front of the door... She wanted to come in later, I think she wanted to put the pad on or something. Though my husband was not at home at that time, I said that he was home. When I went in and out of the house, I felt scared. I thought, maybe she wanted me to go into the house in order to do something to my child.²⁸

²⁷ Extracted from the interview with Mrs. Lilac (19.01.2017).

²⁸ Extracted from the interview with Mrs. White (04.01.2017). the presence of ablished migrants. igrants as a t houses t is the demolition of the inner-city gecekonduties of social assistan.

The language barrier is the most significant second factor behind this threat perception, because it prevents any chance of better acquaintance. In everyday life, women and children (Syrian and local) have more possibilities of interaction than men, even though, mostly the encounters between children are hindered by conflict-burdened misunderstandings (manifest in racist jokes and cursing). Communication problems play a crucial role in preventing integration, but to know language of another does not necessarily guarantee a healthy communication and consequently, future possibilities of social cohesion. One of our Syrian respondents' harsh and negative approach to her neighbors is related to the fact that she could comprehend Turkish and therefore, the extent of discrimination and exclusion in daily encounters:

The neighbors how can I say, they are bitchy (...) When they talk to me, they talk in a nice way but after me they talk bad. "These are Syrians, these are..." They are against Syrians (...) Nobody likes us (...) A woman told another one, they were talking next to me: "The Syrians are bad and they are taking a lot of aid from state. The state looks after Syrians better than us, giving money and card to them. I heard this..."²⁹

The third factor behind the unsubstantiated threat perception on part of the host community particularly about the safety of their own children is the idle public presence of most of the Syrian children and youngsters. They are most of the time out on the streets, in impoverished clothing. In a number of interviews, the local residents stated unison about Syrian youngster that they initially came well-mannered to the region, but in time, with the conditions they that they had experienced, they adopted new behavior patterns such as cursing, fighting or using drugs. In that respect, the presence of Syrian teenagers and children in the public park (Agora Park) was associated with the drug abuse and sale on part of other youngsters from Mardin. Acts of vandalism, e.g. uprooting of the small trees in the park are ascribed to these kids and listed as reasons for mothers not to let their children go out or interact. One of the respondents used the word 'occupation' when she talked about the presence of Syrian kids in the park. This discourse of occupation seems to reflect the host community's perception of the public presence of Syrians in general. The concept of occupation is also given reference in another empirical research conducted in İstanbul. A muhtar (local headman) complained about the Syrians' public presence by saying: "They occupy our parks!". (quoted in Genç and Özdemirkiran, 2015: 114) It is also commonly stated by the concerned mothers that their children are literally 'imprisoned' in their houses, because it is not safe outside. Therefore, when asked about the main problems of the neighborhood, they state the need for a secure playground or a larger community center, where their children can play, practice sports or deal with certain hobbies. Most of them think that their children are 'enslaved to computer or television'.

From the perspective of the poor migrants of mostly Kurdish origin, to share scarce resources that had become more scarce with the neoliberal policies of the last two decades, constitute the main anxiety on part of them with regard to Syrian refugees. Besides, their fragile and ethnically disadvantaged position increases the perception of injustice with regard to the informal applications of neoliberal urban policies. In socio-psychological terms, particularly for late comer Kurdish migrants, their encounters with Syrian refugees in daily life is a reminder of their fragile existence and the memory of forced displacement. As Bauman (2004: 67) indicated with reference to the immigration problem in the times of liquid modernity, the 'strangers' represent the 'great unknown' and particularly the refugees "bring home distant noises of war and stench of gutted homes and scorched villages." This explains very well, from a socio-psychological vantagepoint, why more established Kurdish and Turkish migrants (in the examined regions) keep their distance from late comer Kurdish migrants and Syrian refugees. For the established migrants, on the other hand, this is a strong reminder of "how easily the cocoon of their safe and familiar routine may be pierced or crushed." (Bauman, 2004: 67) The anxiety of more established migrants with regard to the presence

²⁹ Extracted from the interview with Mrs. Golden (17.03.2017).

of Syrian refugees is related to their perception of being identified with a deteriorating neighborhood. This reminds them of the prosperous times of their neighborhood where social trust and solidarity was very strong and in which they still retained their hope for upward mobility.

Conclusionary Points with Policy Implications

The literature on urban anxiety and fear mostly discusses the fear of individuals to structural problems in their neighborhoods, such as the lack of social cohesion, deprivation in living conditions and the weakening of social ties, rather than the presence of real, actual criminal events. (Ceccato, 2012: 11-12) Most of the unease between migrant groups emerge out of two main sources: i) The loosening of social ties (where Syrian migrants constitute only one important side of the problem by being mostly “unknown” to others) ii) Structural problems (infrastructural problems, problems of security, problems of poverty, the insufficient provision of public services, the inadequacies of public spaces, the informalities in the provision of social assistance, etc.). On part of the poorer migrants in the neighborhood, the recent migration inflow has become a problem of sharing. As also other empirical studies on relations between refugees and underprivileged host communities indicate, the main reason behind the rise of anti-immigrant attitudes is related to the perception of ‘undeserving’ refugees claiming the already scarce resources and causing the life to be more difficult and expensive by their mere presence in the localities. (see Salem 2013: 80) These general prejudiced assumptions also hold true for the residents of the Patlıcanlı Slope. The presence of Syrian refugees contributes to the anxiety of the settled migrants only because refugees constitute one of the reasons behind the weakening of social cohesion, problems of trust, degradation of the neighborhood or the inability to act in solidarity. The deterioration of social relations and the physical structure in the informal low-income neighborhoods, however, have been mainly brought about by the neoliberal (urban) policies of the last two to three decades. In that regard, the refugee crisis should be perceived as an opportunity to reverse the negative repercussions of neoliberal policies on socio-spatial dynamics in localities. Considering the fact that the great majority of Syrian refugees, live, mixed with Kurdish and Turkish migrants, in deteriorating physical and social conditions of urban low-income settlements that encapsulate socio-economic divides and diverse migrant positions, it is highly important for the government not to isolate the measures to deal with Syrian refugees from the general problems of the communities. Particularly in a context where majority of Syrian migrants plan to stay in Turkey permanently, the practice of urban policies and social cohesion projects that is locally driven, but centrally monitored, which not only takes refugee problems into their scope, but also considers local problems in migrant settlements within the framework of macro-structural problems, is of vital importance. The municipalities should be given more administrative and financial initiative. In addition, they should be given a regulative power to define the needs at the local level and cooperate with national and international civil society organizations in regulating social assistance, resilience and cohesion projects for urban poor.

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