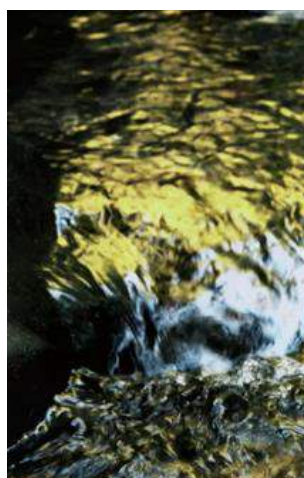
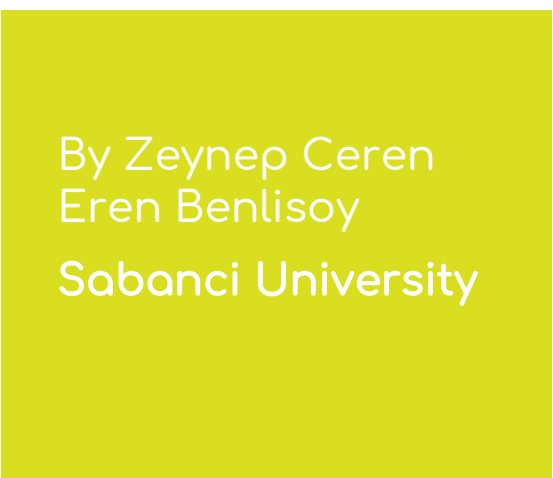




Social relations, individual attitudes and migrant integration experiences in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Turkey

Country Reports on policy outcomes



REPORT  
<https://whole-comm.eu>





# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	2
Abbreviations .....	6
Executive summary .....	3
1. Introduction .....	7
i. Background on the Whole-COMM framework .....	7
ii. Background on the National Context .....	8
Turkey's Integration policies .....	8
Turkey's Housing and Labour Markets .....	9
Background on the local case studies in Turkey .....	11
2. Methodology .....	13
i. Case selection .....	13
ii. Fieldwork .....	14
ST East Marmara .....	14
ST Central Anatolia .....	15
RA Mediterranean .....	16
iii. Fieldwork limits and challenges .....	17
iv. Data Analysis .....	18
3. Main findings per locality .....	19
i. ST East Marmara Locality .....	20
Background on the local context .....	20
Fieldwork in ST East Marmara .....	24
Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences .....	27
Summary of main insights for ST East Marmara .....	31
ii. ST Central Anatolia Locality .....	32
Background on the local context .....	32
Fieldwork in ST Central Anatolia .....	34
Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences .....	37
Summary of main insights for ST Central Anatolia .....	41
iii. RA Mediterranean Locality .....	42
Background on the local context .....	42
Fieldwork in RA Mediterranean .....	44
Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences .....	48
Summary of main insights for RA Mediterranean .....	52
4. Main findings in comparative perspective .....	54
i. Reciprocal interactions and attitudes, and migrants' experiences of integration .....	54
ii. Value of social-ideational, political/governance and spatial factors in explaining and understanding interactions attitudes and experiences .....	55
5. Concluding Remarks .....	61



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6.	ANNEX.....	63
i.	Interview and focus group information on ST East Marmara.....	63
ii.	Interview and focus group information on ST Central Asia .....	64
iii.	Interview and focus group information on RA Mediterranean.....	65
7.	REFERENCES .....	69

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## Executive summary

Through the three local case studies examined in Turkey, this report aims to explore the factors (social/group, ideational/political, governance and spatial) that are more relevant in shaping attitudes, interactions between long-term residents and post-2014 migrants, and migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion. It addresses three cases: Small-Town East Marmara, Small-Town Central Anatolia and Rural Areas Mediterranean. Based on the data gathered through several methods (interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation), the report discusses the key similarities and differences across the different localities in terms of interactions and processes of inclusion/exclusion **based on the Whole Comm typology**.

As this report will show, while there are certain differences in the specific type of social interactions, reciprocal relations and experiences of inclusion/exclusion in each locality, two main observations are common to all of the localities: (i) **there are no rigid and concrete barriers for migrants and refugees encounters with the long-term residents or local citizens in each locality**. However, **existing encounters do not either seem to bring about better integration, more social interaction or organic relations between these two groups**. The findings reveal very limited social interactions between the migrant and non-migrant groups in the three localities, which have been worsening with tensions and conflicts that have evolved over time (especially in the cases of ST Central Anatolia and RA Mediterranean); (ii) in all three localities **there is the perception that reciprocal attitudes and interactions have evolved in a negative way and the locals have become less hospitable towards and more discriminatory against post-2014 migrants/refugees in their daily lives**.

The reasons behind the nature and quality of such reciprocal relations, social interactions and experiences can be found in a **set of factors** identified by the Whole-Comm project with reference to the work of Phillimore (2020), **including social, ideational/political, governance and spatial dimensions**. In the three cases studied in Turkey **there are several national level governance factors that similarly impact the localities**: Turkey's integration policies are developed and implemented at the national level; migrants/refugees' access to housing is unregulated in Turkey overall; there are many limitations introduced by the regulations on access to formal employment; and recently the government has introduced a de-concentration plan to prevent concentrations of migrant/refugee populations. **Each of these fundamental issues pit the local citizens and post-2014 migrants/refugees against each other**, weakening reciprocal relations and positive experiences.

In contrast to the national context though, **the local level is characterized by a weakness of integration policies**. While there are some examples underlining the extended impact of the mayors on their localities in Turkey to implement better integration policies (Betts and Memisoglu, 2019), it has not been observed in our cases. **The localities either do not have any specific integration policies and practices implemented at the local level (RA Mediterranean) or they do have some implemented in a very limited context (ST East Marmara, ST Central**



**Anatolia**). Sometimes their efforts remain limited due to the absence of sufficient budgetary and administrative support and other structural issues, such as ambiguity in the legal framework concerning municipalities' work for refugees and migrants and other priorities in other sectors (RA Mediterranean). **The limitations of MLG dynamics and relations in localities in Turkey<sup>1</sup> and the "active passivity" of local authorities' in dealing with migration issues,<sup>2</sup>** help us better understand the national and local contexts in Turkey as well as their interplay.

**A combination of the architectural/spatial and ideational/political factors** reveals the fact that post-2014 migrants/refugees generally live in closed communities and experience spatial isolation. They feel uneasy about being present in public spaces in certain locality, especially in the cases of ST Central Anatolia and RA Mediterranean. While in ST East Marmara locality, the **social factor**, i.e., **the aggravated class discrimination linked to the legal status of migrants**, determines the social relations: wealthy migrants/refugees can buy real estate to get citizenship and have better interactions with some locals while poorer migrants/refugees are exposed to discrimination in their daily lives. In RA Mediterranean, on the other hand, **class formation and language** bring together the Syrians under temporary protection and the *Urfalilar* group (those from Urfa province), **the only welcoming** host society in the three localities.

Spatial segregation, in addition to housing patterns, competition in labour market and current economic crisis, seem to trigger further **discrimination and anti-migrant mobilizations in diverse forms**, as revealed by the ideational/political factors. For example, various incidents, such as the memories of a **pogrom in 2017**, in RA Mediterranean locality in which the apartments of migrants in a neighborhood was burnt and migrants were forced to leave, or **local authorities' efforts to encourage migrants/refugees to leave their province in March 2020 for the Greek border**, in ST Central Anatolia in which the national authorities motivated refugees/migrants to migrate to Europe based on a promise of opening borders and **social media posts with hate speech** are still fresh in minds of both locals and migrants, and reshape the reciprocal relations and social interactions.

To summarize, in light of the diverse factors that have hindered better integration of the post-2014 migrant/refugee groups in Turkey in the case of the three localities, the groups were observed to be less willing to stay in Turkey and/or less pleased with their life in each locality. Given that the path(s) to Europe is mostly blocked for them, they are aware that they do not have many options left, except for surviving in these localities, while waiting for their countries of origin to become socially/politically stabilized. Given this bleak context, **it seems more**

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<sup>1</sup> See WP3 report for a detailed discussion of local governance of migration in the three case studies. <https://whole-comm.eu/working-papers/country-report-on-multilevel-dynamics-turkey/>

<sup>2</sup> See WP4 report for a detailed discussion of access to services in the three case studies. <https://whole-comm.eu/working-papers/country-report-on-integration-turkey/>



**important than ever to foster better social interactions, reciprocal relationships and positive experiences between the two groups.**

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my special thanks to all interviewees and participants who shared with me their experiences, feelings and thoughts in this research. I am also grateful to Kristen Biehl and Asli Ikizoglu Erensu for their invaluable comments on this report.



## Abbreviations

CCTE	Conditional Cash Transfer for Education
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
IP	International Protection
PDMM	Provincial Directorate of Migration Management
PMM	Presidency of Migration Management
RA	Rural Area
SMsTRAs	Small and Medium sized Towns and Rural Areas
ST	Small Town
TP	Temporary Protection
TEA	Turkish Employment Agency





# 1. Introduction

## i. Background on the Whole-COMM framework

In the wake of the 2015 so-called “refugee crisis” Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas (SMsTRAs) have been playing an increasing role in accommodating humanitarian migrants. The arrival of asylum-seeking migrants in the EU has peaked after 2014 and EU countries have struggled to re-organise and manage the reception of humanitarian migrants. The lack of immediately available reception facilities in cities, coupled with the dispersion policies implemented by states to ensure an “equal” distribution of asylum seekers across their national territories, has led to the increased involvement of Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas in the reception of people seeking refuge (Flamant et al. 2020). Even though immigrant integration in cities has been in the focus of research since decades now, we know relatively little about smaller towns and rural areas, localities that often have no or little prior experiences with migration. Research has shown, that “the experiences that new arrivals face in the first phase of their reception and accommodation, and the relationships they build in their neighbourhoods and host cities have a long-term effect on their later lives and play a significant role in the way their impressions, aspirations and motivations develop along the way of their integration trajectories” (Seethaler-Wari 2018).

We need to know more; which factors facilitate and which hinder positive experiences when migrants (mainly arrived after 2014) settle in these Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas. The objective of the country report is thus to understand which role specific local contexts (or “local refugee integration opportunity structures”), within the same country, can play in shaping individual attitudes, social relations and consequently migrant integration experiences in SMsTRAs. We define local (refugee) integration opportunity structures, as “sets of resources, arrangements and pathways that can facilitate or block integration” (Phillimore 2020). Among the contextual factors that determine the local opportunity structure we identify, following and adapting Phillimore (2020), four dimensions:

- a) the social dimension, highlighting the individual (e.g., age, gender, country of origin, class, religion) and the group level factors (e.g., presence or absence of support networks, civil society organisations);
- b) the ideational-political dimension, which includes a set of factors connected to discourse, such as media information, political ideology of leaders and the local community, and political mobilizations pro- and anti-migrants;
- c) the factors connected to governance including the impact of housing, labour market, and specific immigrant integration policies and practices, and their implementation at the local level;
- d) the spatial dimension, focusing on the specificity of SMsTRAs compared to cities but also on local socio-economic determinants and on spatial proximity/segregation.

The aim of this report is to identify in the localities analysed in Turkey which factors are more relevant in shaping attitudes, interactions between long-term residents and post-2014





migrants, and migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion. As the displacement of Ukrainian refugees was not an issue in our cases, we have only covered the post-2014 migrants/refugees in our data and analysis, excluding the Ukrainians.

## ii. Background on the National Context

### Turkey's Integration policies

Turkey's integration policies, termed rather as 'harmonization' (*uyum*) in Turkish, are traditionally formed and implemented at a national level. The national migration management actor, namely the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), invests in establishing local level coordination mechanisms, such as the harmonization working groups established under their local branches (the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management, PDMMs), and oversees the implementation of certain integration activities at the local level, such as awareness raising meetings and social cohesion trainings for migrants and refugees. While Turkey has a national policy context that is geared towards defining the mandates and capacities at the central level, in recent years local level actions and policies have gained importance, and formal competencies for local level coordination and cooperation mechanisms are being promoted, as in the case of the establishment of local coordination mechanisms within the governorates and harmonization working groups under the PDMMs.

However, these efforts remain limited due to the absence of sufficient budgetary and administrative support and other structural issues, such as ambiguity in the legal framework concerning municipalities' work for refugees and migrants and other priorities in other sectors. The UN agencies, as well as other international and national civil society organizations operating in Turkey, have been taking a more active role in contributing to integration activities and meeting the needs of refugees and migrants through joining ad-hoc referral mechanisms in the localities. There are policies focusing on integration/harmonization that are led by the PDMMs in each locality, but they are still in the initial development phase since the relevant programs and activities are mostly planned at the national level, organized as one-off events and fragmented across different sectors that prioritize some other issues such as access to employment, education and social assistances.

The protection that is granted to Syrian nationals who have arrived at or crossed Turkish borders in large groups is "temporary protection" defined based on the international literature. It gives Syrians the right to stay and the right to access to health, education, social assistance, psychological support and labor market. Applicants and/or beneficiaries of international protection have the rights to access to education and health as well as the right to work with various types of work permit, including exemption certificates. There are also several types of residence permits (short-term, family, student, long-term, humanitarian and permits for victims of human trafficking). Finally, a recent legal change requires foreigners who apply for Turkish citizenship through buying real estate in Turkey to buy real estate with a value of 400.000 dollars. Foreigners are conditioned not to sell these properties for three years.



## Turkey's Housing and Labour Markets

In Turkey, there is no public policy to regulate housing for migrant populations. Syrians under temporary protection are not eligible to buy houses. Foreigners except for those under International Protection (IP) have dispersed throughout Turkish provinces based on their own priorities (kinship ties, economic opportunities and the like) leading to highly concentrated migrant populations in certain metropolises and provinces. A recent change entitled the “de-concentration plan” was made in late February, 2022. The Ministry of Interior stated that foreign nationals will not be granted residency in locations where the number of foreigners make up more than 25 percent of the local population. The plan has now been implemented across Turkey to solve certain problems, such as ghettoization and segregation of refugees, their adaptation to social life, the coordination of social services and security issues. According to the new plan, foreigners, except for newborn registration and nuclear family reunification, are not allowed to concentrate in certain neighbourhoods, and if the concentration happens, those locations are closed to the further settlement of foreign nationals. Moreover, in areas where foreigners make up a large portion of the local population, they will be voluntarily sent back to the province in which they were originally registered.

ST East Marmara is among the first 16 provinces in Turkey that has been closed to foreigners. After that, the de-concentration plan was also implemented in ST Central Anatolia and on July 1, 2022, the Ministry announced that the number of closed neighbourhoods had been increased to 1169 in Turkey.<sup>3</sup> Even though the de-concentration plan has been dubbed by the Ministry as “The fight against spatial concentration”, migrants are used as a political tool by the government to ease the citizens’ reactions against migrants. **The de-concentration plan, in addition to the lack of regulation for migrants/refugees’ access to housing at the national level, reshapes the general situation regarding the issue of housing for migrants/refugees in the three localities in a similar way.**

The Turkish economy has been traditionally characterized by a high rate of informality which pushes one out of three workers into the informal labour force (Uysal, 2020)<sup>4</sup>. While only three people out of ten have a full-time formal job, broad unemployment rate is 22.6 percent (which is 29.1 percent for women and 41 percent for youth).<sup>5</sup> The number of young people who are neither in education nor in employment has risen from 21.9 percent (2018) to 23.5 percent (2019) in a short time, and unemployment from 20.3 percent (2018) to 25.4 percent (2019).

Given this, access to employment remains one of the main needs of the population at large (Sivis, 2021)<sup>6</sup>. Yet, high inflation and deepening economic crisis have been the new normal for Turkey that bring about competition between the host community and migrant groups over

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.goc.gov.tr/mahalle-kapatma-duyurusu-hk2>

<sup>4</sup> Uysal, G. 2020/3. Informal Employment during the Covid Pandemic. TESEV Briefs.

<sup>5</sup> <http://disk.org.tr/2022/05/calisabilir-64-milyonun-sadece-208-milyonu-kayitli-tam-zamanli-istihdamda/>

<sup>6</sup> Sivis, S. 2021. Integrating Bottom-up into Top-down: The Role of Local Actors in Labour Market Integration of Syrian Refugees in Turkey. *International Migration*. Vol 59: Issue 4.



limited jobs. In other words, a race to the bottom characterizes the labour markets for both groups. In this context, the majority of post-2014 migrants/refugees work informally and under precarious conditions. **That is why, the major problem for migrant/refugee groups is not the lack of access to employment, but rather the lack of access to decent work with minimum wage, social security and basic workers' rights.**

**Compared to the post-2014 migrants'/refugees' access to housing, their access to employment has been subject to more regulations, again at the national level though.** Regarding formal employment, Regulation on Work Permits of Refugees under Temporary Protection (2016) provides the framework for employment. Foreigners are required to obtain a work permit before starting to work. Work permits are granted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services. Foreigners under international protection and temporary protection are entitled to apply for a work permit no earlier than 6 months from the issue date of their identity cards. Applications for a work permit can only be submitted by employers, who need to submit them online through the e-Government portal by selecting the module reserved for foreigners under temporary protection. However, the number of issued permits for Syrians from 2016 to 2019 was only 132,497, which is quite small given the large working age population of Syrians, which was 2.1 million in 2019 (Kirisci and Uysal Kolasin, 2019 in Sivis, 2020: 192). That is why, it is estimated that 750.000-1.000.0000 Syrians are in the informal economy (Sivis, 2020).

The Turkish Employment Agency (TEA) nationally offers an exemption certificate to those who are working in agriculture and husbandry in every province (predominantly Syrians under temporary protection and Afghans under international protection). Having an exemption certificate means the holder of the certificate is involved in formal employment without getting a work permit. However, the Agency imposes a six-month waiting period before one can apply for an exemption certificate (Revel, 2020) and another requirement that one can only apply by going to an office located in one's province of registration, both of which are discouraging criteria. In addition, once one is involved in formal employment with an exemption certificate, one is no longer eligible for cash assistance (ESSN and CCTE). Last but not least, the unclarity about whether workers with a certificate will have the right to the pension (in Turkey or Syria) is another discouraging factor (Sivis, 2020).

An Exit Strategy has been developed by national authorities in connection with the call for the second tranche of EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) in order to increase Syrians' participation in the formal employment. The Exit Strategy is mainly targeted at the cash assistance program ESSN (Emergency Social Safety Net).<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the Ministry of Labour and Social Services has taken action through its Directorate General of International Labour Force (DG ILF) and TEA to adapt the beneficiaries of the ESSN (167,000 Syrians), as the main

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<sup>7</sup> The ESSN Program provides cash assistance to more than 1.5 million refugees living in Turkey through a partnership between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Turkish Red Crescent Society and with funding from the European Union (EU). Every month, each family member receives 155 TL (euro 8.3), enabling them to decide for themselves how to cover essential needs like rent, transport, bills, food and medicine. The program offers additional quarterly top-ups based on family size. The ESSN is the largest humanitarian program in the history of the EU and the largest program ever implemented by the IFRC. <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency-social-safety-net-essn>



targets of the strategy, to formal employment and decrease their financial needs. The exit strategy has three main components: (i) active labour market programs, (ii) support for the private sector and (iii) harmonization/social cohesion. The Eleventh National Development Plan (2019-2023) also addresses harmonization<sup>8</sup> in the “Harmonization Strategy and Action Plan”, which introduces ‘access to the labour market’ as one of its six thematic areas.

## Background on the local case studies in Turkey

### ST East Marmara (Small Town in East Marmara Region)

Situated in the East Marmara region, the first case is a small size town with a population between 100.000 and 150.000. It is located in a province that, over the course of the past 15 years, the period covered in this research, has observed annual population growth rates that are substantially higher than the national average. Unemployment levels remained slightly above the national average in 2008 and 2013. Local politics in this case is characterized by a clear divide, with the social democrats (Republican People’s Party, hereinafter “CHP”) and the conservative ruling party (Justice and Development Party, hereinafter “AKP”) having very close votes. Over the last decade, the province has seen a significant rise in the share of foreigner residents. While in 2007 this share was very close to the national average, in 2021 this figure peaked to almost 10 times the national average. The province is also host to different refugee groups, including Syrians under the status of Temporary protection and more significantly diverse national groups of asylum-seekers under the status of International Protection (IP), being among the provinces hosting the highest concentration of IP status holders in Turkey. ST East Marmara has had a dynamic housing sector with foreign investors seeking citizenship and citizens selling real estates. Most of the foreign population consists of Iraqis, followed by Iranians.

### ST Central Anatolia (Small Town in Central Anatolia Region)

The second case examined is also a small size town with a population between 100.000 and 150.000. The annual population growth rates at the provincial level reflect the broader trends in the Central Anatolian region, which had mostly remained well below the national average over the last 15 years, and yet in 2021 it rose closer to the national average. In contrast, unemployment levels have remained lower than the national average in 2008 and 2013. In terms of local politics, the conservative AKP party has a stronghold in this case, which is closely followed by the nationalists (Nationalist Movement Party, hereinafter “MHP,” currently the coalition party of ruling government). Over the last 15 years, the percentage of foreigner

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<sup>8</sup> Turkish authorities do not use the term “integration” yet instead introduce the term “*uyum*” (harmonization). The aim of *uyum* is to “facilitate mutual harmonization between foreigners, applicants and beneficiaries of international protection and the society as well as to equip them with the knowledge and skills to be independently active in all areas of social life without the assistance of third persons in Turkey or in the country to which they are resettled or in their own country” (Article 96, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, no. 6458).



residents in the province has consistently remained just above the national average. The percentage of Syrians under Temporary Protection is almost the same as the national average and asylum seekers with IP status also have an important presence in the province, which, like the ST East Marmara locality, is among the earliest satellite cities in Turkey for hosting asylum-seekers.

### **RA Mediterranean (Rural Areas in Mediterranean Region)**

The third case is situated in the rural countryside of a mid-size town in the Mediterranean region. The population of the mid-size town is close to 350.000. In our research, we only focused on certain villages hosting large numbers of Syrians in their peripheries as seasonal agricultural labourers. The mid-size town is located in a province which has had an annual population growth rate very close to the national average over the last decade, while unemployment rates have steadily remained slightly above the national average in 2008 and 2013. In terms of local politics, at both the provincial level and the district level, the nationalists (MHP) have maintained a stronghold in this locality. Over the last decade, however, the social democrats (CHP) have also been gaining power. Over the last 15 years, the percentage of foreigner residents in the province has remained close to the national average, but with an exclusion of the Syrian residents under Temporary Protection who currently make up more than 10% of the provincial population, one of the highest concentrations in Turkey. Asylum-seekers under IP, on the other hand, make up a much smaller percentage than the national average and the percentages in the two other regions.

As this report will show, while there are certain differences in the specific type of social interactions, reciprocal relations and experiences of inclusion/exclusion in each locality, two main observations are common to all of the localities: **(i) there are no rigid and concrete barriers for migrants and refugees encounters with the long-term residents or local citizens in each locality. However, existing encounters do not either seem to bring about better integration, more social interaction or organic relations between these two groups.** The findings reveal very limited social interactions between the migrant and non-migrant groups in the three localities, which have been worsening with tensions and conflicts that have evolved over time (especially in the cases of ST Central Anatolia and RA Mediterranean); **(ii) in all three localities there is the perception that reciprocal attitudes and interactions have evolved in a negative way and the locals have become less hospitable towards and more discriminatory against post-2014 migrants/refugees in their daily lives in the three localities.**

The reasons behind the nature and quality of such reciprocal relations, social interactions and experiences can be found in a set of factors identified by the Whole-Comm project with reference to the work of Phillimore (2020), which will be discussed after the Methodology section.



## 2. Methodology

### i. Case selection

In the Whole-Comm project overall, case studies have been selected based on a set of the following variables:

Population size <sup>9</sup>	Medium town: 100,000 – 250.000 Small town: 50,000 – 100,000 Rural area: 5,000 - 50,000 and low population density
Presence of a reception center AND/OR Reception facilities	Time period: 2014-2017
Number of currently residing migrants	Time period: arrived after 2014
Share of Foreign Residents	Time period: in 2005 (SF2005)
Variation of Unemployment level AND/OR Unemployment Levels	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARUN) Time period: 2005 and 2014
Variation of number of inhabitants	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARNI)
Regional variation	For example: East / West or North / South, choosing localities from different regions
Local politics	Parties in government and local political tradition, choosing localities with different political traditions (conservative / progressive)

The variables 'SF2005', 'VARUN' and 'VARNI' were used to identify **four** types of localities:

Type A	Characterized by a recovering local economy and an improving demographic profile and migrants' settlement before 2014
Type B	Characterized by an improving economic and demographic situation and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014
Type C	Characterized by demographic and economic decline and migrants' settlement before 2014
Type D	Characterized by economic and demographic decline and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014

<sup>9</sup> Given the current trends in the size of urban populations in Turkey, these figures have been slightly amended wherein a small town has been categorized between 100,000-200,000 and a medium-sized town between 200,000-350,000.



In accordance with the criteria above, the three case studies in Turkey are categorized as: Type A - ST East Marmara; Type B – ST Central Anatolia and Type D - RA Mediterranean.

Following the overall project methodology, in each locality primary data was collected through: participant observation focused on interactions between post-2014 migrants and long-term residents in two selected sites, in-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants and focus group discussions with long-term residents and post-2014 migrants. The participant observation sites were selected to observe whether and how post-2014 and long-term migrants interact, and what the barriers or facilitating factors for this interaction are, while considering the possibility that Covid-19 also might have played a role in changing patterns of interaction. Interviews with post-2014 migrants were aimed at understanding migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion in SMsTRAs and at further analysing the type of interactions already observed through participant observation. Finally, focus groups discussions were aimed at further exploring which variables are more relevant in each locality in shaping positive/negative social relations and individual attitudes.

## ii. Fieldwork<sup>10</sup>

### ST East Marmara

In ST East Marmara, I interviewed 11 post-2014 migrants (6 female, 5 male). 2 of them were single mothers living with their children. Another 2 were young women living with their mothers/aunts without any other family member. Only two women were with their husbands/children. 4 men lived with their families in ST East Marmara, and one man was a divorcee living with his child. The interviewees had different countries of origin: Afghanistan (4), Iraq (3) and Iran (4). They also varied in their migrant status: 7 under international protection, and 4 already citizens or had applied for citizenship via buying property. Their duration of stay in Turkey was approximately 4 and a half years on average. Their employment statuses included unemployed (2), housewife (2), textile worker (1), waitress (1), construction worker (1), teacher (1), and self-employed (3). 3 of them said they had been working temporarily.

In the ST East Marmara locality, two separate focus groups composed of women were conducted in order to avoid any tension between the long-term residents and the post-2014 migrants/refugees. The first group was composed of Balkan migrant women (5 participants) who migrated to the ST East Marmara locality in several waves from the 1960s to the 1980s. All of them were married and had kids. Their ages varied between 50 and 65. They had spent most their lives living and working in the ST East Marmara locality. They were retirees and members of a migrant association at the time. The second focus group was composed of Iraqi and Syrian women (7 participants). I reached out to some of these women (5 women) via the

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<sup>10</sup> See Annex 1 for a list version of all interview and focus groups participants.





help of a migrant women association which had been recently established in the ST East Marmara locality. I reached 2 others (Iraqi and Syrian) through another network, who only agreed to participate after my visit to their homes when I introduced myself and our project. Their ages varied between 30 and 50. Overall, 4 were married, 2 divorced and 1 single. Except for the single woman, all had children (the number of children each had varied between 2 and 6). Their periods of stay in ST East Marmara varied between 2 and a half years and 9 years.

## ST Central Anatolia

In the ST Central Anatolia locality, I made 9 interviews with Afghan (2), Syrian (4), Iraqi (1) and Iranian (2) women (6) and men (3) whose ages varied between 28 and 35. Only one of them (1 woman) was illiterate, and the rest included primary school graduates (3), elementary school graduates (2) and high school graduates (3). One person had a university degree. 3 women were single mothers, and the marital status of the rest was as follows: married with children (mostly 3 kids), engaged, just married and a single person. Women were mostly housewives, which was in line with their previous position in their countries of origin (except for one who worked as a cleaner). The male interviewees had different jobs: construction worker, receptionist and interpreter. The shortest period of time spent by any one of them in the ST Central Anatolia locality was 9 months, including one Afghan woman fleeing from Taliban with a human trafficker had been left in the middle of Central Anatolia when she had had no idea where she had been. The rest had been staying in the ST Central Anatolia locality for more than 7 years. While Syrian interviewees were under temporary protection, the Iraqi woman had a short-term residence permit. Afghan and Iranian interviewees were under international protection waiting to be resettled in a third safe country for several years; in other words, they were stuck there due to the mobility restrictions and the lengthy application procedure, both of which were psychologically depressing for them.

As with the focus group formation in the ST East Marmara locality, the context of rising racism and xenophobia led us to form two groups in the ST Central Anatolia region: one consisting of long-term residents and other of post-2014 migrants/refugees. The focus group of long-term residents had 7 female participants whose ages varied between 32 and 58. There was only one primary school graduate, while the rest were elementary school graduates (2) and university graduates (4). It was a heterogeneous group whose members did not previously know each other, unlike the case in ST East Marmara. The participants included housewives, unemployed, businesswoman, a public officer and head of a local CSO. Two women were divorcees, one was a widow and one a single. The rest were married with kids. The second focus group had 4 participants (3 Iranian women and an Afghan woman) whose ages ranged from 32 to 45. Three women were married and one was divorced. One Iranian woman was a geology engineer, while another had been a university student in architecture before leaving Iran. The Afghan woman was only able to attend up to second grade in primary school in Afghanistan. Two women (one married and one divorced) had kids (3 and 5 kids, respectively). They were from Shiraz (2), Tehran and Zahedan. Their periods of stay in Turkey varied between 2 years and 12



years. They were all under international protection waiting to be resettled in a third safe country.

## RA Mediterranean

In the RA Mediterranean locality, I interviewed 11 Syrian migrants all of whom were under temporary protection and living in tents. The language used during the interviews was always Arabic, therefore, I worked with an interpreter. There were 4 women and 7 men whose ages varied between 20 and 62. 2 people said that they had never gone to school (in addition to one who just finished first grade), while the rest either dropped out in elementary/high school or had to drop out as they fled Syria. All of the interviewees were married with kids, and the number of kids they had varied between 2 and 11. Two men were married to multiple women. They had been involved in agricultural production before migration, either as agricultural labourers or farmers. The rest included mini-bus drivers, small-business owners, and an engineer. Some of them (relatively young interviewees) told that they had been students in Syria. While the shortest period of time one spent in Turkey was 3 years, their average duration of stay was more than 7 years. They were from Raqqa (4), Al Hasakah (2), Deir ez-Zur (1), Aleppo (2), Hama and Tel Abyad (2).

I conducted four focus groups in the RA Mediterranean locality because of its particular socio-demographic features and migration history, as well as the ongoing tension between Syrians and long-term residents living in the villages/district centre. The focus groups were composed of Syrians under temporary protection working as agricultural labourers living in the tent areas (#1), another labourer group called *Urfalilar* (Arabic speaking natives to Turkey who migrated from the province of Sanliurfa and one of the major groups in agricultural production – another major group is Kurdish labourers) (#2) and villagers living next to the tent areas (#3 and #4). All participants were female. While the first focus group with Syrian women had 5 to 10 members (during the focus group, the women were in and out the tents due to their reproductive care responsibilities), the second group of women from Urfa also had a varying number of members (4 to 7). The third one was conducted in a village with women living there. The participants of focus groups #1 and #2 were in their middle-ages (some of them did not know their exact age). Very few had any schooling. They were mostly married with children. They mostly worked as agricultural labourers, but those with a chronic disease or those who were pregnant were not working at the time and were responsible for reproductive tasks in the tent life. Focus group #3 had 7 participants whose ages varied between 39 and 56. All of them were married with children (with 2 to 4 children). 5 of them had graduated from primary school, and one from elementary school. One woman had a university degree from a two-year program (she was the wife of a public officer in the village). 3 women did not possess any land or animal, while the others were small farmers. The focus group #4 was again conducted with rural women from another village close to the tent areas. This focus group had 7 participants whose ages varied between 40 and 65. They were small farmers. Part of their land had been recently confiscated by the state after which they were paid. They were all married with children/grandchildren.



### iii. Fieldwork limits and challenges

To begin with, it was not easy to locate interviewees/participants as I encountered a general feeling of uneasiness and lack of trust towards strangers and academic projects. In addition, the interviews and focus groups were mostly the first time we met one another as the researcher and interviewees/participants, since the project required us to involve new people as interviewees/participants in the WP5 research activities (meaning the persons interviewed under WP3 and WP4 had to be excluded). Therefore, trust-building, which was an essential part of the process given the nature of WP5 research methodology and questions, became a challenge. The lack of trust sometimes led people to give short answers or avoid responding in a proper way (e.g., looking at each other before answering or smiling in a sarcastic way), and they mostly refused to offer suggestions for any other potential interviewee/participant.

In the project team, we decided that mixed focus groups composed of migrants and non-migrants would not be a good idea in the context of Turkey since it was my observation in the previous work package research phases that there were intense conflicts in each locality (especially made worse by the upcoming elections), inter-group relations were tense and migrants/refugees were already traumatized (their past experiences of migration were still fresh in mind and their recent experiences were mainly negative). That is why we concluded that mixed groups might cause further harm. I also noticed that gender roles could be significant and having mixed groups of women and men together could also be a bad idea as it may silence women in the focus groups. Therefore, we planned to conduct two focus groups consisting only of women in each locality: one with migrant women and one with local/citizen women. We believe that having focus groups with women prioritizes the gender perspective and women's experiences in the three localities, and it can be an advantage for our research. In this framework, I also limited the size of focus groups to six to seven women per group.

In the case of RA Mediterranean, the precarious working conditions of the Syrian agricultural labourers (long working hours, poor infrastructure doubling the burden of reproduction, etc.) meant there was little time to make the interviews and a very small population was available during the daytime. Therefore, I was only able to interview those who took a day-off or who were elderly or pregnant. Language was another problem encountered in the focus groups with post-2014 migrants/refugees and the *Urfalilar* group, who mainly speak Arabic, so I had to work with an interpreter. In all three cases, I ensured that a focus group did not have members speaking different foreign languages and that one language was shared, such as Arabic or Farsi, as having people speaking different foreign languages would make it more difficult to manage interpretation/moderation of interviews and focus groups.

Post-2014 migrants/refugees generally live in closed communities, may experience spatial isolation and feel uneasy about being present in public spaces, especially in the cases of ST Central Anatolia and RA Mediterranean, all of which presented a significant challenge in terms of doing participant observation in public spaces. Moreover, gendered codes (my own as a woman, and that of a majority of the research participants who are women) limited both the



spaces and times to conduct participant observation. Secondly, the fact that I do not speak Arabic/Farsi prevented me from having a full understanding about the details of daily life. Last but not least, some of the participants/interviewees reproached me several times by making statements such as: “We are asked the same questions over and over by researchers who come and leave when they finish their research, yet nothing changes in our lives”. Such encounters and statements were discouraging for both the researcher and participants. Yet, there were others who thanked me and said that it was a first that someone had asked them about their feelings and thoughts which they appreciated a lot.

#### iv. Data Analysis

The data collected through different methods in this research was analysed in several steps. For interviews made with the post-2014 migrants/refugees and the focus group discussions with migrant and non-migrant groups, I carefully read the transcriptions to highlight or underline the key words, phrases or major ideas. I also paid attention to any repetitive expressions used by the interviewees/participants, their gestures and mimics and moments of silence during the discussions/interviews in order to interpret their narratives and their individual stories. I also took into consideration my field notes I took during participant observation in each locality. Then I categorized the data especially with reference to the four dimensions: spatial/architectural, ideational/political, social/group level and governance. In the Whole-Comm project it is argued that these dimensions shape and reshape the social interactions, reciprocal relations and migrants’ experiences in integration process. In this study, I created categories and sub-categories combining certain codes (such as employment, housing or spatial patterns). I also did a thematic content analysis to see if there are any other different reasons in addition to the determined factors. Finally, I analysed the data to understand which factors are more important for relations between locals and migrants/refugees in our three localities. Annex I provides a more detailed overview of the methodology and methods used, along with the ethical aspects.



### 3. Main findings per locality

Migration remains a very politicized and polarized issue in Turkey. The anti-migrant/refugee sentiment embraced by a large portion of the host society has recently tripled with economic devastation and upcoming elections. Moreover, in the Turkey case the lack of regulation and control mechanisms related to labour and housing market access of migrants/refugees go hand in hand with the centralization of power (referring to centralized understanding of migration management from top to bottom). This leaves very small room to local level manoeuvres in our three cases.

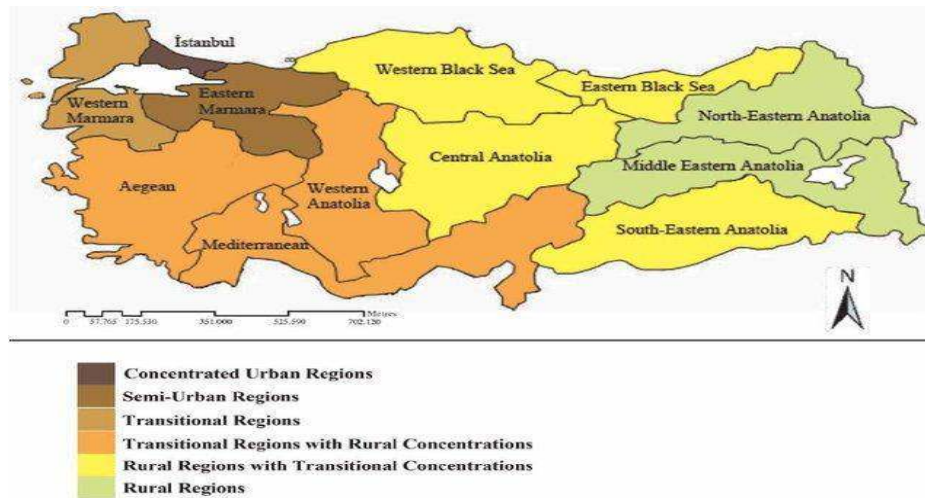
Local authorities in these three cases were aware of the reactions of the local groups against the migrants/refugees. That is why they, worrying about their own political future, mostly preferred not to take any actions in relation to the issue of migration. The lack of necessary budget also made them incapable, while the repetitive motto was “They are not our voters, after all!”. In addition, the blurred migrant category of the Syrians under temporary protection (whether it is really temporary) makes it difficult for local authorities to intervene.<sup>11</sup>

The sub-sections below present an overview of the localities studied with reference to basic socio-economic characteristics, social and physical infrastructure and the place of migrant/refugee groups in labour and housing markets in each locality. The findings from the three cases presented below reveal the fact that this national context has a significant role in paving the ground for encounters of migrants/refugees and local citizens in the labour and housing markets.

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<sup>11</sup> See WP3 report for a detailed discussion of local governance of migration in the three case studies. <https://whole-comm.eu/working-papers/country-report-on-multilevel-dynamics-turkey/>

### Classification of NUTS1 regions in Turkey\*



\* Figure extracted from Hürriyet G. Ögdül (2010) Urban and Rural Definitions in Regional Context: A Case Study on Turkey, *European Planning Studies*, 18:9, 1519-1541.

#### i. ST East Marmara Locality

##### Background on the local context

ST East Marmara has **well established social and physical infrastructures** in general, including schools, youth centres, sport associations, religious sites, supermarkets, ethnic markets, social services, schools, public parks, means of transportation (buses and mini-buses in the city centre and ferry from/to Istanbul) and religious places. The locality **does not have a refugee reception centre**. While mini-buses, municipal buses and taxis are available for transportation, there are not many mini-buses for transportation from the peripheral neighbourhoods, so it may take time to reach the centre. The locality is also well known for its long coastlines, beaches, parks and walking paths.

In ST East Marmara, **the foreigner population consists of middle and upper-middle class foreigners, mainly from Iraq and the Gulf States, and poorer Syrians, Afghans and other refugee groups. The middle and upper-middle class groups hold residence permits or have acquired Turkish citizenship, and mostly live in a single neighbourhood located in the city centre, referred to by the locals as “Arabistan” (Arabs’ Land in Turkish), “Iraqi Neighbourhood” or “the Republic of Iraq.”** The residents of the neighbourhood come from different countries (Iraq, Iran, Gulf Countries and Syria). The real estate market in the locality is dynamic, for example, there are currently no houses left for sale in the so-called Arab neighbourhood. At the time of fieldwork in early 2022, the average rent was TRY 3000 (euro 178). This so-called Arab Neighbourhood is quite different from another one known among locals as the **“Migrant Neighbourhood”** that is also located in the city centre and was created as part of a social housing project funded by European financial sources for Balkan migrants who arrived in several waves to ST East Marmara, while the biggest wave was during the 1980s. It is narrated by the Balkan migrants that there were negative local reactions against





the Balkan migrants acquiring houses at that time. Today, it appears that **the Balkan migrants' have taken the turn to similarly react against the newcomers**, although there is no social housing involved and the clientele includes wealthy foreigner populations that are buying real estate mainly in the city centre (especially in the so-called Arab Neighbourhood).

**Other migrants/refugees are not able to buy property or cannot afford high rents, so they search for places to live either in other districts of the ST East Marmara locality or in the peripheral neighbourhoods of the city, such as the one where the Roma community lives.** This dilapidated neighbourhood is under the scope of an upcoming urban renewal project, and is now hosting, alongside its Roma inhabitants, those migrants/refugees who are financially struggling. There are mini-buses and buses connecting this neighbourhood to the city centre, but there are not many of them, which presents a challenge to its local communities. The economic hardship of the poor locals and migrants/refugees prevent them from using mini-buses or buses as they cannot afford the cost of transportation. This is especially challenging for extended families. The neighbourhoods located on the outer hills of the city (including part of the Roma neighbourhood) also seem a little bit insecure, especially for women or children (if they walk alone), due to insufficient street lighting, stray dogs and empty streets.

The conditions described above contribute to a **significant class-based contrast** between the two groups of migrants/refugees in ST East Marmara: wealthy foreigners who mostly own property in the locality and/or have other capital investments to rely upon, on one side, and poor migrants/refugees who cannot even afford the cost of a trip to the city centre, on the other side.

Some migrant groups run their own **small businesses**, some of which are informal, such as groceries, barber shops, restaurants/cafes, real estate agencies or smart phone dealers. There are some who own a vehicle and run a small-scale transportation business in the locality, which can be easily recognized by their specific license plates containing the letters "MA" (which is only given to foreigners in Turkey). Unlike the case in ST Central Anatolia, in ST East Marmara migrants/foreigners are **informally employed in the service sector in a visible way** (e.g., as a waitress at a tea/coffee shop), hence serve as cheap labour without any social security. Throughout this project, I met many **skilled members** of the Iraqi community, including a graphic designer, a painter, a public officer (in Iraq) and a businessman and several others who used to be bureaucrats in Iraq. Iraqis with a medical degree can work as a doctor in a private hospital in Turkey if they have acquired Turkish citizenship. **The tourism sector** has some formal employment opportunities at boutique hotels or hotel chains run by foreigners for those with language skills.

Finally, as **for the low-skilled and poor migrant populations**, it is reported that many migrants work **in the agricultural sector**, mostly in **greenhouses**. Hence, agricultural production in greenhouses appears to be the most accessible sector for migrants, and it is further said that migrants first try their chances at working in a greenhouse as it is seen as the easiest way to integrate into the labour market. In urban centres, migrants seemingly dominate the recycling





sector<sup>12</sup>. ST East Marmara is also known as a place for retirees and summer vacationers. Migrants can have a job as a cleaner or gardener at the (summer/permanent) houses of locals. It is safe to say that **the majority of the migrants/refugees in ST East Marmara are unskilled/semi-skilled working without social security on a daily basis**. They primarily do jobs that are physically demanding (e.g., as a porter, construction worker, carpenter, apprentice, greenhouse worker, etc.). For instance, Syrians/Iraqis mostly work as a mechanic, plumber or cabinetmaker. They fill the gap for semi-skilled workers in the local economy. In fact, there are some local workers in the textile sector who have quit their jobs to get a better-paying job at another factory in a different city, and small-scale textile ateliers hire migrants to some extent.

**In ST East Marmara there are 2 organizations that were identified as being active in providing services to migrants/refugees.** One is a branch office of a migrant and refugee support organization with its registered office in Ankara and a number of branch offices all over Turkey including the ST East Marmara locality. It provides socio-legal support to refugees/migrants to ease their access to the rights and services. It has both Turkish employees and migrant employees (mostly as interpreters, as I observed). Its operations are pro-migrant.

The other is a branch office of an umbrella organization serving primarily the “Turkic” Balkan migrant communities, which arrived in Turkey in masses during the 1980s, in the wider East Marmara region, including the ST East Marmara locality. Their primary goal is to protect the cultural values and traditions of their communities living in Turkey and lobby for their rights. Its members/leadership are Balkan migrants. However, the association is not pro-migrant per se as they appear to discriminate against the new “non-Turkic” groups of migrants/refugees in the ST East Marmara locality.

There are also a few informal migrant support groups in the locality. For instance, Iraqi migrant women have recently established a group with an aim to empower Iraqi migrant women who encounter different problems in social and work life in the ST East Marmara locality. Its leadership/members are Iraqi women, and it is pro-migrant. There is another informal group that was established jointly by Iranians and locals living in ST East Marmara locality. It provides socio-legal services to Iranian migrants and works to improve social cohesion between local and migrant groups in ST East Marmara. It is also pro-migrant.

**Pro-migrant or anti-migrant mobilization in ST East Marmara:** We were told that there had been no demonstrations to date, either pro-migrant or anti-migrant, in the ST East Marmara locality. Yet, locals have reacted against migrants on social media platforms from time to time, which has mainly been about migrants’ use of public parks or noisy migrant neighbours. There was also one particular event that raised a lot of reaction among locals: in 2016, there was a news report about an Iraqi boy (16 y/o) kicking a kitten, which immediately spread and caused

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<sup>12</sup> Migrants/refugees involved in the recycling sector sort out the garbage to collect and sell plastics, papers and metals.



huge discontent. Many long-term residents ripped the boy to shreds on their social media accounts. Representatives from the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) visited the family of the boy and advised them not to go outside/leave their home for a while, until the local residents calmed down. The PDMM also contacted the migrant community leaders<sup>13</sup> who had come to play a significant role in fixing things with the local community and asked for their help. The leaders posted on their social media accounts to request the migrant community to be calm and cautious, and advised as follows: “If something wrong happens, it is the fault of the person who did it, not of the whole community” (Expert Interview with the PDMM). Meanwhile, the Iraqi boy was still under arrest after the incident on charge of torturing animals. I was informed during the interviews that this incident also negatively impacted other migrant/refugee groups in the locality, as they began feeling more insecure after witnessing how locals exploited this incident to express their more general anti-migrant/refugee thoughts. This brought about further separation between the two groups.

There have been no mobilizations organized in favour of migrants/migration by the local community. According to the interviews with Iraqi and Afghan community leaders, their communities have shared ideas with local authorities about holding events/activities “to share their culture, cuisine or folklore with the residents of the ST East Marmara locality” or “to thank the city for accepting them”, but none has been accepted by the Governor and this might have something to do with the upcoming elections (e.g., because they do not want to call the presence of migrants in Turkey to public attention).

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<sup>13</sup> One of the significant means used by PDMMS to reach out to the migrant populations and also increase local social cohesion is collaborating with community leaders (defined as *kanaat önderleri* in Turkish) who are believed as wise, notable and respectful people by their own community. Community leaders are determined by the local authorities in each province and are regularly invited to meetings with PDMMS. They take on responsibilities such as spreading new and relevant information among their communities, solving daily tensions and crises between migrants and locals, and delivering information to the local authorities about their community’s needs and problems.



## Fieldwork in ST East Marmara

### Participant observation

Two public parks were selected for participant observation in ST East Marmara. Both of the parks are places that migrant/refugee groups and long-term residents of the ST East Marmara locality all commonly use and come across each other. Both parks are open to children, youth, elderly and everyone else during day and night, and entrance is free of charge. Participant observation in these parks took place in August, 2022 during two weekdays and was carried out both during the day and night.

Park 1: This park is located in a central place along the coastline of ST East Marmara. It is an impressive wide park that also has many playgrounds for children. There are always people using the park which is surrounded by benches and tea gardens/cafés. There is a beach about 100 meters away, so it is possible to see children playing in the park in their swimsuits. The child and adult population in the park increase as the temperature decreases during the day. The most crowded time of the park as I have observed was after seven in the evening. The circulation is fast with new kids and parents coming and going all the time. The usual users of the park include grandparents bringing their grandchildren, retirees sitting alone, and adolescents. The park is used by both foreigners and Turkish people. The demographic profile of the park shows that the ST East Marmara locality has also received a lot of internal migrants: It has Bulgarian migrants as well as those coming from provinces such as Urfa and Manisa. There are no obstacles (fences, gates, etc.) that would make it difficult to use the park as a public space. Once you arrive at the city centre, the park is open, safe and accessible. For many refugees/migrants, going to the city centre itself, where the park is located, appears to be the main obstacle: putting together the money to get on the minibus to go to the centre turns into a bigger challenge, especially for crowded families, because for example, the cost for a family of five to go to the centre can be a big expense item.

The park seems to be open to everyone who overcomes the main obstacle. During my stay in the park, I did not witness any argument or tension between children or adults. In general, though, park visitors tend to sit/spend time with their acquaintances, and the park does not seem to lead to opportunities of establishing social relations with strangers. There is no interaction between different groups, even if they use the same space for a long time. In fact, people use discriminatory expressions very easily and loudly; for example, a woman was cleaning a bench before sitting on it and she was surprised to see that it was very dirty and 'What on earth is this? Why is it not clean yet?' she said. 'It is because of the Arabs,' replied the woman sitting on the next bench, 'They are here all day as they cannot stay at home. Arabs are filthy and their children climb on the benches with their shoes on and soil them.' She spoke loudly while there were many Arabs around.

Park 2: This second park is used by migrants/refugees and locals with a much lower socioeconomic status compared to the users of the first park. It is a rather 'common-people's place with a single tea shop nearby and only a few playgrounds and with an area that is less



than a quarter of the other. The benches of the park form a circle around the park. The park is also next to a market place. Those women who go to the market allow their children to play in the park. The regulars of the park are mainly old women, of around 90 years of age, who know each other and meet on the same benches every day at the same time. Retired men also spend time there a little further away from these women. This, like the other, is a newly built park. An old woman I met in the park told me that the park had been only used by men, and women could never spend time there. At the time of the interview, men knew it was a women's space, but they still wanted to sit there and women chased them to go and sit somewhere else. There are hawkers in the park who sell toys to children. Beggars come and go, begging in Arabic.

As detailed in the next section, an Afghan interviewee (31-year-old, asylum-seeker, female) talked about the park: She was not able to go to the park whenever she wanted because the minibus cost was very expensive for her with her three children. This usually kept her from going to the city centre. As a matter of fact, access to public spaces primarily depends on the class background, which affects especially migrant/refugee women, who are held responsible for care work, in a much more oppressive way, marginalizing them and confining them to their houses. Women do not go out much, except for the purposes of going to the market (for home shopping), accompanying their children to and from school whereas men are usually out to work/search for a job all day long.

I wandered around the park around nine o'clock in the evening to see how it looked like at night. Although located on a busy street leading towards the market, the park area was partly dark. The lights of the tea garden next to it did not fully illuminate the park and the street lighting was not enough: some places were bright and others were dark. I was walking through the woods which was dark when I was verbally abused by a middle-aged man sitting on a bench there. I kept walking towards the park with quicker steps and the man started to follow me. I sat on a bench in the park and checked to see if the man was coming. In the park, a few children continued to play despite the darkness while their parents were sitting on benches. When I saw the man approaching, I got very afraid and went to sit next to a crowded group of women. The man waited for a while, wandering around, and sat next to another lonely woman and harassed her. The woman got up and sat on a bench near us. The man then went back to the bench where he had been sitting in the dark.

I started chatting with the women. They were from the province of Bayburt, located in Central Anatolia. One of the women told me that she got married and settled in the ST East Marmara locality. She was warned about how this park and its surroundings turn into a place where men pursue opportunities for sexual intercourse. She said there were also drunk people. "Although it is a playground and in a central location, this place becomes deserted at night, turning into a men's space. The fact that the Police Department is next to the park does not seem to make any difference," she told. The women were there simply because they had to wait for something/someone and they formed a large group. The woman I spoke to was waiting with her mother and child for her husband's shift to be over.



As the park was relatively dark, I could not see who else was there, but I did not hear a child playing and speaking Arabic or any other language. The people there were mostly locals. So, I started walking towards the other park. Unlike the first park, the second park was bright and still crowded. The cafés and restaurants around it were full, and there was a constant action on the streets. Women, men, youth, elderly and children were outside. I could tell from their clothes and language(s) spoken that there were a lot of foreigners in the park and on the street. After 12 or 1 at night, I was told that this area was also dominated by drunks and men.

### **In-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants**

During the selection of the interviewees, I appealed to several public institutions (such as PDMM and Women and Family Services Unit in the Municipality). PDMM provided me with the contact details of community leaders. I had thought it would be easy to reach others by using a snowball technique, once I had this first set of contacts as post-2014 migrants/refugees. Yet, it was nothing like I expected: most of the post-2014 migrants/refugees I interviewed refused to refer me to others for an interview saying they did not know anybody or did not feel close to call/ask people to participate (mostly Iranians and partly Iraqis)<sup>14</sup>. That is why I once again had to turn to the institutions/CSOs. I generally interviewed the male interviewees in a public place (cafes, associations, etc.), and I visited the female interviewees at their homes for the interview, except for those who had a job. I interviewed the textile workers after their shifts and the waitress while she was working – because her working hours were quite long.

### **Focus groups discussions**

I conducted two separate focus groups in ST East Marmara region: one with long-terms residents and one with post-2014 migrants/refugees. While the first group was composed of Balkan migrant women, the participants in the second group were Syrian and Iraqi women.

I reached out to the first group through their association which was established to protect their cultural identity from assimilation in the Balkans. In the ST East Marmara locality, the members keep strong ties with each other and have cultural activities and follow the current political developments in their locality (e.g., by participating in the municipality council) and in their countries of origin in the Balkans (e.g., by voting in the elections there). I met the Balkan migrant women at their association's building where a meeting room was reserved for our focus group study. Women were excited, comfortable, and open. Their opinions about the post-2014 migrants/refugees, or more generally about "the foreigners in ST East Marmara" were diverse, like their diverse political orientations. Although they mutually agreed that their position as Balkan migrants should be differentiated from other "foreigners, asylum-seekers",

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<sup>14</sup> There might be several reasons behind such attitude (such as lack of trust to the academic projects or to the researcher as well as over and over being asked the same questions) as mentioned in the section Fieldwork Limitations and Challenges.



they had disagreements in terms of living together with such foreigners. Some of them easily expressed their very racist/xenophobic opinions, which was not considered abnormal by the others.

The second focus group was conducted in the meeting room of another association that provides socio-legal support to the refugees. The interpreter of the association voluntarily assisted me during the meeting. I contacted the interviewees that I had met during the previous phase of the research, who are also post-2014 migrants/refugees, several times in order to request them to refer me to new persons, yet it did not fully work. I appealed to a public officer who was in charge of the distribution of humanitarian assistance in ST East Marmara, and she gave me the contact details of an Iraqi woman, who wanted a face-to-face meeting before accepting my invitation to the focus group. After we met, she agreed to join and bring a friend. Finally, I called a community leader who directed me to an Iraqi migrant women association. With the help of this association, I had an adequate number of participants, including Iraqi and Syrian women. The women were comfortable answering my questions, and they talked about many problems and demands concerning themselves and their children.

### Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences

Based on the data gathered from the interviews, focus groups and participant observation, it is safe to say that **local social interactions are limited and weak between locals/long-term residents and post-2014 migrants/refugees in the ST East Marmara locality**. The former has a generally **hostile and not welcoming** attitude towards the latter and this is felt by the migrants/refugees.

Notably, **not only are relations between groups weak, it appears that some post-2014 migrants/refugees also have weak intra-group relations**, which became also evident when trying to use the snowballing method for finding other interviewees. Many of the interviewees stated that they did not have any close friends/neighbours among the locals where they lived, worked and/or socialized.

*I have nobody. No one local. I only know one, two, three people. One of them is here, the mukhtar: Mr. X. (Interview #4, Iranian, 47-year-old, asylum seeker, female, ST East Marmara Locality)*

*I have no one [to have a heart-to-heart talk]. I have an aunt. We also have a few Afghan friends – no Turks – but they go to work. I have neighbours, one or two, but we are not that close. We are not friends. (Interview #1, Afghan, 39-year-old, asylum seeker, female ST East Marmara Locality)*

*She has a mother and daughter. I have another sister. No one else (from my family). My aunts have been living in the same place for three years. But they do not have the neighbours over or*



*go to their homes. (Interview #2, Afghan, 31-year-old, asylum-seeker, female ST East Marmara Locality)*

Based on my experience in participant observation, **architectural and spatial formation** of the public parks enables equal and easy access to these areas, if the migrants/refugees are able to afford the cost of transportation. Some of the interviewees lived in the peripheral neighbourhoods with poor housing conditions far away from the city centre, as they could not afford higher rents, which was the main barrier for them to reach the public parks given the total cost of transportation for the whole family. In this sense, **class as an individual factor, in connection with social/group factors**, is the determining factor in shaping the social interactions between groups.

*I cannot come here often as with my three children the minibus cost is too expensive. That's why we do not usually go (to the city centre). When I was pregnant with my daughter, I walked all the way back and forth because we could not afford getting on the minibus. I walked all the way, sometimes carrying the kids as they got tired at some point. I was also very tired, very very tired. I sometimes cried out of exhaustion, while I continued walking. (Interview #2, Afghan, 31-year-old, asylum-seeker, female ST East Marmara Locality)*

**Individual/social interactions in the parks were limited.** While people from both sides heavily used the parks with their children, there were two different worlds without proper contact. For instance, some of the interviewees or local/migrant people that I met during the participant observation stated that they commonly used the parks, but they mostly did not know each other due to **the language barrier and existing anti-migrant stereotypes**. I witnessed several times that locals did not hesitate to express their **racist/xenophobic thoughts** in the parks. I observed that migrants'/refugees' use of Arabic language made their diversity invisible (those from the Gulf countries, Syrians and Iraqis all speak Arabic, yet different dialects) in the eyes of locals.

There are **no specific measures/policies created to regulate the encounters of these two groups in the public parks**. The use of public parks by the migrants/refugees has been a major source of tension in the locality and the solution of the municipality in turn was to open more public parks in the ST East Marmara locality. In other words, **the lack of specific integration policies at the local level, as a governance factor**, seems to raise the tension between the groups.

In line with the above observation, when I asked “who do you talk to about your problems?” their answers generally included close members of family or nobody. While there were several cases setting a good example for the local neighbouring interactions between the migrants/refugees and the locals (e.g., locals helping those needed furniture), it was still clear that **migrants/refugees were marginalized at their apartments**. Some of the local participants in the focus group especially mentioned their discontent with having a “foreign” neighbour.





They said that they “intentionally” kept their social distance with those living in their building as they “do not want foreigners (in their apartments, in their locality or in their country)”. Yet, there were other local women who disagreed with the previous group saying people’s countries of origin did not matter to them, but they only wanted to meet good people as their neighbours. Nevertheless, only one of them seemed to have a close relation with her foreign neighbour while the others with positive attitudes only greeted their neighbours seeing them and helping their neighbours from time to time with clothes for children or with furniture. The general experience of the migrants/refugees was in line with all the foregoing. For example, an Afghan single mother told me that the neighbours regularly turned up at her apartment’s door complaining. Another local woman told me that living in a building with migrant/refugee households was the reason behind her decision to sell their apartment.

*They do not want foreigners here. For example, some days it is very noisy outside. But they never complain about it. Only when it is caused by us, foreigners, then they start complaining. For example, when we turn on the TV here, a neighbour comes and tells us not to turn on the TV. They hear a sound, knock on the door and “Why are you making noise?” they ask. Or when we hang out the laundry on the balcony and they see a little water dropping down and tell us to remove the laundry from the balcony (Interview #1, Afghan, 39-year-old, asylum seeker, female, ST East Marmara Locality).*

*This is not the ST East Marmara locality we knew anymore. It is a mess, hot mess... We sold our three houses to get away, out of the ST East Marmara locality. The last block we lived in was like ‘Arabistan’. [Arab’s Land in Turkish] Nobody spoke Turkish there. ‘Come on,’ said my husband, ‘let’s go, what are we doing here?’ We had a piece of land outside of the ST East Marmara locality and we built a house there. We no longer knew anyone living there, but I had known half of the residents. The beach is crowded with many people having a barbecue. There is food waste and garbage everywhere. I have been here in this park once. It was full of Arab children, not a single Turkish child, which made me very sad. Maybe they are trying to Arabize us, I don’t know. For example, Arab children occupy a toy and do not let a Turkish kid play. They fail to learn how to speak the [Turkish] language. I sometimes wonder if this park was exclusively built for them. When we put up the house for sale, we waited for some time to sell it to a Turkish citizen, but no such person wanted to buy it. Only Arabs wanted to buy it. Turkish citizens cannot afford to buy a house anymore (A local woman, university degree, married, 65-year-old, participant observation).*

**In this sense, the overarching fact was that migrants/refugees with a different legal status or country of origin did not have close relations with the locals.** The non-local interviewees usually experienced some exclusion from the locality, with only one exception being recounted as the shared **work spaces with locals**, for example at a cafe or textile atelier. Except for the 3 interviewees who bought **real estate in the locality to gain citizenship and long-term residence permits**, all the rest stressed their unwillingness to stay in ST East Marmara or in Turkey. Those interviewees who were **under international protection had been waiting for their resettlement to a third country for more than 6 years** (in one extreme case, it was 12 years). As such, legal status and long waiting periods seem to serve as factors shaping



migrants' experiences of integration. On the other hand, the experience of those buying real estate appears different. For example, Interviewee #10 (Iranian, 50-year-old, acquired citizenship, male) had a real estate he bought to acquire citizenship. He was also running his business in the ST East Marmara locality. He was very pleased with his social relations with the locals. His case being different from the others described above makes a good example that **the class dimension linked to the legal status of a migrant/refugee marks the nature and quality of reciprocal relations.**

I observed that **post-2014 migrants/refugees using the parks, but not in large groups, knew each other via an association/organization, etc.** They were mostly families or women taking their children out. Regarding **ideational/political factors**, it was clear that **refugees'/migrants' participation in public/social life was limited and boldly differentiated by the distinct class divisions among migrants/refugees.** Two different parks seemed to be used by two migrant/refugee groups with different socio-economic backgrounds. In this sense, public parks were used for relaxation, especially by **poor/unemployed migrants or single mothers** while for **wealthier migrants/refugees, being in public also meant consumption** as the wealthier park was surrounded by cafes and restaurants. Afghan women and men were usually in the first group, while Iranian and Iraqi migrants/refugees with a residence permit (some on their way to citizenship) had rather richer experiences participating in public/social life in the locality. The wealthier park was still alive with people during night, which was not the case for the other park. The poorer park was not even a secure place for women. Yet, I think the question remains unanswered: Would more extended use of public parks and/or greater capacity to consume bring about more social interaction for these two groups at the local level? Another significant note on use of public places is that **gender codes** were significant: the parks were "reserved" for women during the day while they were considered "men's places" at night.

**Regardless of their class status, as migrant/refugee groups become more visible, it seems to be increasing the hatred and discontent of the locals towards them, and these feelings are commonly grounded in some sense of disadvantage**, which surfaced in the focus group with **Balkan migrants: while wealthy migrants/refugees were perceived as threats against the secular way of living, poorer ones were blamed for taking social aid without doing proper jobs**, and in both cases the historical experiences of Balkan migrants were comparatively emphasized:

*I came from Bulgaria in 1992. Back there I had worked in accounting, but I have not been able to do my job here, ever. I have been waiting to, but could not, obtain a certificate of equivalence. I have done every job I could get. I have never thought that I would not do anything else because accounting is a clean business, and I have done cleaning as a job. We have tried really hard to get a job and done any job we could get. My husband is a teacher, but he worked in road construction. We did make it... We had a better life here. It seems to me that this country is becoming more and more Arabized. When I go to the beach, I feel like in some other country.*



*I am very uncomfortable with this situation. Even the number of those with a black chador has increased! You can see them, Syrians and foreigners, wherever you go. Yes, we are migrants too, but we have done everything with our own hands and become who we are now. We were not picky about what we do as a job. (Non-Migrant Focus Group Participant, 55-year-old, female, Turkish citizen)*

**Governance factors seems to be more dominant in this case since precarious housing and labour markets go hand in hand with a not so welcoming local society in ST East Marmara.**

This has strongly shaped the interactions between the two groups, their reciprocal relations and the post-2014 migrants/refugees use of public spaces. Many interviewees and participants in the focus groups with migrants/refugees underlined the economic hardship they faced in work life in the ST East Marmara locality. The migrant/refugee abuse as cheap and informal labour under precarious conditions for lower wages was a common topic during the interviews and focus group study. The locals, on the other hand, frequently targeted migrants/refugees blaming them for locals' economic deprivation, rising unemployment and increased rents. The local women especially scapegoated migrants/refugees as the cause of youth unemployment/underpayment, except for a few women arguing migrants'/refugees' participation in work life would be good for their integration. However, the latter were talking about those qualified migrants/refugees and excluding the masses of uneducated/unskilled migrants/refugees.

In the focus group, it was also interesting to see that Iraqi women were extremely willing to participate in work life from which they were excluded partly due to gender codes. These codes associate women with reproductive responsibilities and confine them to the private sphere. However, Iraqi women made it crystal clear that they would like to participate in work life, which was the exact opposite of the picture drawn by the local people who saw them, especially the Iraqi community, as wealthy people without any desire to produce/work.

## Summary of main insights for ST East Marmara

**Local social interactions are limited and weak between locals/long-term residents and post-2014 migrants/refugees in the ST East Marmara locality.** The majority of the locals/long-term residents are hostile and not welcoming towards the migrants/refugees. This hostility seems to be felt by the migrants/refugees, as many described their **experiences in the locality as being mostly negative/exclusionary with some degree of variation based on social factors, such as duration of stay, gender, class and legal status.**

The post-2014 migrants/refugees with different legal statuses or countries of origin commonly pointed out to **the lack of close relations with the locals.** Almost all of them stressed their unwillingness to stay in ST East Marmara or in Turkey, except for those sharing a work space with the locals and for those buying real estate to gain citizenship and a long-term residence



permit. Many of the interviewees stated that they did not have any close friends/neighbours among the locals where they lived, worked and/or socialized.

**The use of public parks by migrants/refugees has been a major source of tension** in the locality and the solution of the municipality in turn was to open more public parks in the ST East Marmara locality without taking any action to minimize the tensions. Although **architectural and spatial formation of the public parks enables equal and easy access to these areas, only certain groups of migrants/refugees can use them due to the cost of transportation.** Some of the interviewees lived in the peripheral neighbourhoods with poor housing conditions far away from the city centre, as they could not afford higher rents, which was the main barrier for them to reach the public parks. On the other hand, **as wealthier/poorer migrant/refugee groups become more visible, it increases the hatred and discontent of the locals who feel disadvantaged.**

When it comes to the reasons behind the limited social interactions, **governance factors and ideational/political factors seem to be more dominant since precarious housing and labour markets go hand in hand with not so welcoming local society in ST East Marmara.** The limitations of job market, economic deprivation and rising rents have become areas of tension for the locals. This strongly shaped the interactions between these two groups, their reciprocal relations and the post-2014 migrants'/refugees' use of public space.

## ii. ST Central Anatolia Locality

### Background on the local context

As a small size town in the Central Anatolia, this locality has generally proper infrastructure with several exceptions. The centre has the main components, such as several parks (not so many), shops, cafes, youth centre, banks and ATMs. However, the housing situation differs when it comes to where the refugees/migrants dominantly live.

Except for a few wealthy migrants/refugees living in better-off neighbourhoods, the majority in ST Central Anatolia live in deteriorating areas of the town where locals do not prefer living due to the poor housing conditions. This has been the major issue for post-2014 migrants/refugees. Given the hard winters in the locality, heating is another problematic issue. The lack of economic means for access to better housing seems to confine them to stay in these neighbourhoods. Yet, it seems to be an advantage to have easy access to daily jobs without the need to use public transportation which is costly for those households. In this sense, employment patterns matter in housing. For instance, Syrians hired to do seasonal agricultural work tend to live in the districts of ST Central Anatolia, while Afghans under international protection with a relatively permanent residence permit live in the city centre where they can access daily jobs. **General political atmosphere in the province composed of conservatist, Islamist and nationalist views in extreme forms** brings about further discrimination against migrants/refugees. For some interviewees, the high rate of post-2014



migrants/refugees, when compared to the local population of a small city, is an obstacle to adequate housing.

The main economic sectors in ST Central Anatolia are tourism and service sectors. Besides agricultural production and small-scale husbandry in the districts of the locality, its industry is rather limited and yet the construction sector has recently expanded. There are a few brick factories providing the main supply to the construction, in addition to small manufacturing. The post-2014 migrants take the majority of cleaning and construction jobs while working on a daily basis as cheap labour without social security. Migrants find these informal daily jobs in **Workers' Bazaar (day labour/er markets)** where those looking for jobs and employers meet. While the majority are employed in "invisible jobs" (as dishwasher, room attendant at hotels or horseman at horse farms), the skilled migrants seem to have more decent jobs in the tourism sector (such as receptionist) thanks to their language skills (with the exception of tour guiding which foreigners are not allowed to do in Turkey). Tourism sector mostly offers seasonal unskilled jobs to migrants/refugees.

Several interviewees commented on **ignorance and unwillingness of both employers and workers about work permits. Informal employment of the migrants/refugees** as cheap labour (working for less than minimum wage in some cases) under precarious conditions **has been the major obstacle to formal employment**. They end up having to take unqualified jobs not wanted by the locals. Deskilling leads part of migrant labour force participating into semi-skilled and unskilled labour force. **Language barriers** are another obstacle for access to employment. Finally, **rising drug trade in the locality** has been a significant issue. Afghans and Syrians are generally two groups blamed by the locals who accuse them of bringing the drugs and selling it.

**In ST Central Anatolia there are 3 organizations and migrant support groups/anti-immigrant groups that were identified as being active in providing services to migrants/refugees:**

Association A was established as a national formal association. It focuses on needs analysis and humanitarian assistance, health, awareness raising, social cohesion, capacity building, protection and livelihoods. Association A has an office in ST Central Anatolia. It provides services to asylum-seekers and migrants. Its leadership and employees are all Turkish citizens, while it can have interpreters who are migrants/refugees.

As a formal association, Association B primarily focuses on women and girls' rights, domestic violence and child labour. Recently, it has extended its areas of focus to cover asylum-seekers and migrants including both males and females. It provides humanitarian assistance, health, awareness-raising and protection services to those need such services. Its members and leadership are all Turkish citizens, while the employees working as interpreters (Syrian and Iranian) are either under international protection or under temporary protection.

Association C was established as a formal faith-based national association. It mainly focuses on both locals and migrants/refugees to provide them with basic needs. Its members and



leadership are all Turkish citizens. It is a pro-migrant association and yet it is selective in reaching out to needy migrants/refugees as its main motivation is based on Islamic rules (for instance, this excludes needy LGBTQ+ refugees/migrants).

**Pro-migrant or anti-migrant mobilization in ST Central Anatolia:** There was no anti-migrant mobilization in ST Central Anatolia in the form of street demonstrations. According to a CSO officer (Expert Interview, December, 2022), In 2020, after Erdogan's declaration that the Turkish-Greek border would be open to those who wanted to leave Turkey for Europe in March, migrants/refugees living in ST Central Anatolia prepared to leave the locality in large numbers. However, it was not only the migrants/refugees who wanted to leave, the local population demanded that too. The social media posts inviting migrants/refugees to leave the locality, the local press with hate speech and the municipality's efforts to organize transportation (public buses taking migrants/refugees to the borders) eliminated the previous social harmony that had been established between the migrant and non-migrant groups. Although some of the migrants/refugees later returned to the ST Central Anatolia locality due to the tensions they faced at the border with public authorities, they senses this time that they were not welcomed again in the locality. I was told that they had difficulties especially in finding accommodation after they returned.

## Fieldwork in ST Central Anatolia

### Participant observation

For my participant observation, I chose two main areas: cafés/entertainment venues (game centres, including a billiard hall, etc.) and parks. I was informed by interviewees that these are places where migrant/refugee groups and local people encounter each other, albeit at different levels. Both have well equipped infrastructures. The cafés/entertainment venues are located in a neighbourhood close to the campus of a state university (Neighborhood A). Surrounded by neat parks, streets and apartments, Neighborhood A has mostly university students as its residents. I spent time in various cafés in this neighbourhood and walked on its streets and in its parks. I interviewed a café employee. These venues (cafés/entertainment centres) were also mentioned by a young Iranian male interviewee. The participant observation took place in mid-October, 2022 during the weekdays.

Based on the interviews and observations, it can be said that Neighborhood A and the cafés/entertainment venues there have a sterile sociocultural atmosphere that is almost isolated from the central neighbourhoods (Neighborhood B). Contrary to the streets, shops and cafés at the city centre that are empty in the evening, Neighborhood A is socially active until 11 pm when the dormitory gates are closed. Until this time, men and women can spend time together in public spaces and in the cafés and entertainment venues there. As far as I have heard/observed, apart from those foreign students studying at the university and a large group of Iranian youth who come to the billiard hall from time to time, there is no other migrant/refugee community that uses these venues. A long-time barista at the café that is known to be one of the oldest businesses to open also confirmed my observation and told





that these groups did not usually use these venues. He said there were Syrian children begging/selling handkerchiefs, and only those foreigners with a very high income, those who visited to the region on holiday or those who lived in touristic districts stopped by for a coffee. He also told that migration was not a popular subject that was discussed a lot, and that there had been no confrontation with the migrant/refugee groups in the Neighborhood A.

It is seen that migrant/refugee groups and locals/long-time residents are isolated from each other in the use of the mentioned spaces. The spatial segregation of the Neighborhood A from the Neighborhood B has also led to some segregation in social life. These neighbourhoods and spaces are not that far apart, but they are used by completely different groups in different ways. Refugee/migrant groups live in certain neighbourhoods and other neighbourhoods (such as Neighborhood A) do not accept these groups as residents, meaning these groups must pay for transportation to the aforementioned venues. The economic disadvantage of migrant/refugee groups poses an obstacle to access to the venues. The conservative lifestyle of Neighborhood B (the central neighbourhoods/city centre) is in contradiction with the 'casual' lifestyle of the Neighborhood A, namely a student neighbourhood. The segregation due to the different lifestyles of different neighbourhoods also fundamentally affects the post-2014 social interactions between migrant/refugee groups and locals.

My second area of observation was in the parks in the city centre. ST Central Anatolia locality does not have many public parks or gardens. Two central parks used by migrant/refugee groups and locals were visited within the scope of the research. The conservative/nationalist/religious political atmosphere of the city has excessively penetrated the use of public spaces, and precisely for this reason, for example, women's use of public spaces is extremely limited: they only go to such parks near their homes during the day. I went to one of the popular parks with a Syrian mother, whom I had interviewed, and her children. This park is close to a migrant/refugee neighbourhood, within walking distance. She said that she went to the park from time to time, did not meet/interact with anyone there, and no one made her uncomfortable. We went to the park in the afternoon and there were mothers who had picked up their children from school and/or grandparents who brought their grandchildren to play in the park. There were other groups of women sitting in the park. A striking aspect of the park layout is that the seating furniture is mostly isolated from the remaining of the park area. It serves a function to separate those using the seats from the rest of the park. The seating furniture looks like enclosed chambers, rather than randomly positioned benches next to or close to each other, and prevents people from seeing or communicating with each other. The park also has a permanent security guard. As time passed by, young people came to spend time in the park after school and used the seating furniture. I left the park as it started to get dark.

The other park has a similar seating arrangement. It is as if islands of privacy have been created within the public space. This park was mostly used by old men and especially refugee/migrant children playing there after school. It is also very close to another migrant/refugee neighbourhood, so their children often spend time in the park. I observed that women usually





avoided sitting alone in the park, but they were either with other women or with their children. The use of public spaces by women in general, including migrant/refugee women, in ST Central Anatolia locality is limited in the city centre, and parks are no exception. 'Being a lone woman', as locals frequently state, can lead to experiences of catcalling/staring in parks.

As a result, I observed that the few parks in the centre are also used very limitedly by migrant/refugee women and children, among other groups. One of the main determinants of this usage is the existing gender codes in the local conservative/nationalist and religious political atmosphere.

### **In-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants**

I interviewed 11 post-2014 migrants/refugees in the ST Central Anatolia locality. I reached out to some of them through the network of PDMM, especially those who were community leaders collaborating with PDMM. I interviewed the leaders in a café located in one of two shopping malls in the locality. The idea behind reaching out to the community leaders was to reach out to other members of their communities afterwards. Yet, it did not fully work. Then, I got in touch with a local headman of a well-known migrant/refugee neighbourhood. There I found the opportunity to meet post-2014 migrants/refugees and made interviewees with them at their houses. Some interviewees were able to speak Turkish and others communicated through their children as their interpreters. A local CSO also helped me in reaching out to different groups of migrants/refugees. Through their help, I met Iranian and Syrian women with whom I conducted interviews through the interpreters of the CSO. These interviews were conducted at the office of the CSO.

### **Focus groups discussions**

Two focus group discussions were conducted in the ST Central Anatolia locality: one with a group of migrant/refugee women and the other with a group of long-term residents/local women. The participants for the first one formed quite a heterogenous group of women including businesswoman, head of a CSO, housewives, an unemployed woman and a public officer. There were also some women who worked for a women-driven cooperative. Before the meeting, I contacted PDMM and some other public officers for their support in setting up focus groups. I noted a reluctance on their part, while some openly showed a mistrust in the project due to links with the EU, which was seen as taking a hypocritical stance on the migration issue by leaving Turkey to confront the migration problem alone.

The second focus group was composed of Iranian and Afghan women whom I met with at the office of a local CSO in ST Central Anatolia. The Afghan participant spoke Farsi; therefore, the main language of communication was Farsi through the interpreter of the CSO. The participants were asylum-seekers whose duration of stay in the locality had been very long due to their pending asylum and resettlement applications. As explained below in the discussion part, the post-2014 migrants/refugees found this "in-between" waiting situation very hard, both economically and psychologically. It was one of the hardest meetings ever held



during the different phases of the fieldwork for the project. There were moments when women had some difficulty speaking and burst into tears. There were also moments of silence. Even the interpreter herself was quite emotional as she was in a similar situation to the others. I had to offer that we could end the meeting if it was hurtful to recall the memories of the past or talk about their daily traumas and yet they insisted to go on. They asked me to “be their voice” and make them “visible to the eye of international institutions, to the EU and the UN”.

### Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants’ experiences

The neighbourhoods where the post-2014 migrants/refugees and local groups live are clearly separated from each other in ST Central Anatolia. Only the very poor strata of the local people lived in these neighbourhoods together with migrants/refugees. **Such spatial concentration raises social isolation by leading also to a lack of interaction with local communities.** That also seemed to trigger segregation in schools since locals tended to move in large numbers to other neighbourhoods as they did not want their kids to go the same school with migrant/refugee kids. This resulted in almost homogenized schools at the centre – the non-migrant student population in some of them was less than 10% of the total school population. **Spatial segregation and housing patterns** impacted the social interactions in a negative way.

**Spatial/architectural factors, i.e., spatial segregation and housing patterns** in combination with **ideational/political factors, i.e., the limited presence of post-2014 migrants/refugees in the public/social life and the experience of anti-migrant mobilization enhanced by the local political leadership, social media news and post with hate speech,** seem to be the primary determinants in the formation of social interactions between migrant and non-migrant groups in ST Central Anatolia. Moreover, criminalization of the post-2014 migrants/refugees and locals’ blaming them, or even some migrants’/refugees’ blaming other migrants/refugees, for the increased drug sale in the locality further impacted their **use of public places**, including streets. Many interviewees/participants stated that they preferred **not to be outside** after it got dark. Some stated that they were even afraid of their own neighbourhoods due to the drug sales. They told me that they were also afraid of random **police controls** in which they were treated and threatened badly. In addition, many recounted **the events of March 2020** in the locality, when refugees/migrants were urged to travel to the Turkey-Greece border with the help of municipality’s organization, as an incident that negatively reshaped their daily relations and interactions.

[Is there a place you prefer not to go?] *Unfortunately, this is how everywhere in ST Central Anatolia locality is at the moment. We do not go anywhere. When we do go out, there is an increased number of police officers wandering on the streets. They know you have an ID card, yet still they will stop you, ask for an ID and shout at you. They will ask questions for half an hour. Then they shout at you and say: “Leave and never come back to this street again.” I mean they humiliate people. So, we go out in different outfits every day so they do not torture us: one day with a [fake] beard, the next with a hat. So that when they see me again, they will not recognize and stop me. We are tired of this. (Interview # 10, Iranian, 39-year-old, asylum seeker, male, ST Central Anatolia Locality)*



*I go to work at 7:30 in the morning and come home at 8:00 in the evening. Thank God, I mean. I have one day off per week. I usually do not go to crowded places. I do not prefer doing so. (To the Centre) I rarely come here. (Why?) I do not go out because it's crowded and I do not want anyone to get uncomfortable because of my words or gaze. I do not want anybody to get hurt because of us. They do not harm us. (...) Actually, it's like, nothing happened to us, but I see those things a lot on the internet. On Tiktok, on Facebook. I see it there. That's why my gut says if you do not have an errand to run, do not go out. For example, if I go somewhere and some people fight or something, and if someone asks why I am there, I will say that I am Afghan and they might say something good or bad to me. That's why I don't prefer it. (Interview # 6, Afghan, 31-year-old, migrant with short term residence permit, male, ST Central Anatolia Locality)*

**Diverse impacts of governance factors and social factors** have primarily revealed themselves in labour and housing markets, as well as in individual interactions. While the post-2014 migrants'/refugees' experiences in the labour and housing market are mainly negative, some interviewees/participants talked about their intimate relations with their neighbours/employers. Their challenges include **working informally as cheap labour without social security and the difficulty to get a work permit**. The economic hardship they have forced young refugees to work, many of whom could not continue their higher education. It was stated that such situation brought about mental depression too. Migrants/refugees are also blamed for rising unemployment and rents.

In some cases, the difficulties of work life are also accompanied by **unfair treatment by public officers**, which also reflects the general tendency to associate the migrant/refugee labour with unqualified/unfavourable jobs. In this sense, **the legal framework** adds another layer of challenge as the legal requirements for getting a work permit applicable for a foreign worker are not easy to meet.

*We work uninsured. Obtaining a work permit is also challenging. The people I work with like us very much, but they cannot get a work permit because they are afraid that they might have trouble if they do get a work permit for us. We applied for a work permit a couple of times, and the officers said that if our employer had at least 12 insured employees then the employer could get a work permit for us. So, such businesses exist. (Interview # 6, Afghan, 31-year-old, migrant with short term residence permit, male, ST Central Anatolia Locality)*

*I'm a tattoo artist. I have been unemployed for a few months because they do not grant me a work permit. And when we do work, this officer at the police station responsible for migrants, reports us for deportation, for example, if someone works informally. He is like that. I am at odds with him. I was caught working. He said he would deport us because I worked informally. He detained me for two days. My wife and children cried. I had no fault. But they do not allow me to work because I am a tattoo artist. They do not grant me a work permit either. "Go, steal. Do whatever you can. We will catch and deport you." they say. So, I cannot work. I even went to talk to that officer two weeks ago with my daughter. I said I wanted to speak with him and said: "What problem do you have with me?" He told me to get out of there. "You can just go to the villages and be a shepherd, that's all," he said. (Interview # 10, Iranian, 39-year-old, asylum seeker, male, ST Central Anatolia Locality)*



Many interviewees/participants mentioned that it was **not easy for a migrant/refugee to find accommodation** in the locality as the landowners did not want to rent their places to foreigners. As mentioned above, this has brought about ghettoization of migrants/refugees in the dilapidated neighbourhoods. In such a framework, their **positive individual relations with neighbours/employers/landowners** are perceived as lifesaving. Many remember such people with appreciation, as they have helped them overcome the difficulties in daily life. For instance, an employer took an Iranian participant to the dentist, while another helped in bureaucratic paperwork whenever needed. **As a social factor, the presence of informal support networks plays a critical role.**

Regardless of their legal migrant status or gender, the majority of the post-2014 migrants/refugees whom I interviewed underlined **negative attitudes against them and increasing hostility in daily life** in the ST Central Anatolia locality. Many stated that daily life became harder for them as they experienced discrimination more often in public transportation (“people asking why they were there”), while looking for a place to live (“no one renting a flat to foreigners”) or in work life (“people saying they were unemployed because of foreigners”) or in social media posts against the presence of migrants/refugees in ST Central Anatolia. Some said that they were worried about their children too as they heard such discriminatory attitudes (e.g., attempts to beat children) towards refugee/migrant children when they played in a public park.

*It was very good when we first arrived. At least we were able to come home and go out very easily. Right now, we are worried that we will get a bad reaction from someone. That's why I do not go out much. Right now, I do not feel comfortable because we experience discrimination and racism when something happens and someone speaks Arabic. (...) You know, I would like to eliminate the discrimination. There are good and bad Syrians as well as good and bad Turks. I wish they did not assume everyone was bad. (Interview # 1, Syrian, 29-year-old, temporary protection, female, ST Central Anatolia Locality)*

*They say you are a foreigner and have no rights. Once we went to the park and the kids wanted to eat out, so we bought some food and we went to the park. They said it was forbidden to eat in the park. They only say it is forbidden because you are a foreigner. I would also like to change their calling us foreigners. (Interview # 2, Iranian, 39-year-old, asylum seeker, female, ST Central Anatolia Locality)*

*I would like to change how they see Syrians. They cause us a lot of trouble. It is not so easy for us to go out on the street right now. You know, my children do not even know what racism is, but they unfortunately experience it at school. (Interview # 3, Syrian, 26-year-old, temporary protection, female, ST Central Anatolia Locality)*

**The uncertainty and length of waiting times associated with migrant statuses** has also negatively impacted social interactions between groups. The process of determining whether a migrant/refugee will be resettled in a third safe country or will be accepted as a citizen one day in Turkey takes a long time. For instance, most of the Iranian and Afghan refugees in the ST Central Anatolia locality had been waiting for their applications to be evaluated for more



than five years. While waiting, they are required not to leave the locality according to the laws, which makes them feel like they are in a prison. Meanwhile their children have started Turkish schools and yet such children's status as refugees has never changed. They told me that their life was always in-between and this prevented them from getting fully involved into daily life.

*Unfortunately, I cannot (imagine a nice society, good social relations, etc.). Our story here is unpredictable. I do not even get what I need in the first place, and I cannot think of the rest. I simply cannot. I cannot imagine anything else. (Migrant Focus Group, participant # 1, Iranian, 43-year-old, asylum seeker, female, ST Central Anatolia)*

*The most important thing for us is what we dream about, for our children. What will happen to them is not clear. They go to school but what for? We brood about it at night. We are here today, but what's the point? Maybe tomorrow they will send us to Iran or Afghanistan. (...) Our life is wasted. (Migrant Focus Group, participant # 4, Afghan, 35-year-old, asylum seeker, female, ST Central Anatolia)*

*We have lived here for 12 years. For 12 years, I have not been respected as a human being. They have deprived us of respect. I've been here for 12 years and my children have lost dreams. It's over and they could not get anything they have wanted. We are not allowed to exercise our rights as human beings, to live as human beings; for example, when we go to the Immigration Administration, they look at us as if they are saying 'you are not wanted here'. It is not only the Immigration Administration, but also the people of this city are like this. They don't want us. We don't matter. We have no voice, and no one hears us. (Migrant Focus Group, participant # 3, Iranian, 45-year-old, asylum seeker, female, ST Central Anatolia)*

*I cannot stand it anymore. We are all in the same situation. Every day we say we may leave today, but a month has passed, then a year (meaning time has passed), and so on, we cannot leave. We are still here. Yes, we are all here right now, but this is not living. It's like we're all dead here. (Migrant Focus Group, Interpreter, Iranian, in her 30s, asylum-seeker, female, ST Central Anatolia)*

They also mentioned the host society was never fully informed about their presence by the local authorities, leading to some disinformation about their situation. In this sense, **the lack of local integration policies**, which is an important part of the **governance factors**, was addressed by the migrants/refugees who thought if the locality had had such policies in place, they would have been helpful in improving their reciprocal relations with the locals.

Some also told me that they wished local people would stop using the words foreigner and/or Syrian to describe them. The majority of the post-2014 migrants/refugees in this research desire to move to a third safe country tells us that they just want to be in another place different than where they currently are and having an organic relation with the host society does not have a place in their future imaginations.

I also observed such lack of imagination for a society where different groups can live together in another form during the discussions with non-migrant women in the ST Central locality. The



emotions described by these two different groups of women were highly **polarized**. While **hatred/contempt of migrants/refugees** emerged as a common theme in the local focus group, **sadness, depression and desperation** characterized the feelings of migrant/refugee women. In the first group, all the **stereotypes** against migrants/refugees were actively embraced and used to describe these groups, such as “they are immoral/dirty/drug-dealers”, “they do not know the civilized codes of daily life”, “unqualified/uneducated”, “they get cash assistances while our poor people cannot”, “they are traitors escaping from their countries when needed”, etc. It is quite interesting to observe that even such participants who identify themselves as a pro-women rights advocate demanding more freedom for women living in such a conservative locality immediately left their humanitarian attitude, when the topic changed to the migration issue. The super-nationalistic tone was dominant in such participants expressions.

It is also striking that despite their heterogeneity, the local women all shared almost the same opinion regarding living together with migrant/refugee groups in the locality, which was that they did not want to live together with them. Moreover, their perspective of migrants/refugees was a hierarchical one in which Afghans and Syrians are at the bottom and not wanted at all while skilled and educated Iranian refugees were excepted by some of the participants who were businesswomen/employers, since the qualifications of the Iranians matched those required for the labour force in such a touristic locality. While these two groups of women share the same **gender identity**, it does not bring them together. **The nationalistic and conservatist political attitude of the local women against migrant/refugee women** (migrants/refugees in general) are more determining.

### Summary of main insights for ST Central Anatolia

**A set of factors, including architectural/spatial, governance and ideational/political, has dominantly impacted social interactions, reciprocal relations as well as the experiences of the migrants/refugees. Negative attitudes against migrants/refugees and increasing hostility in daily life** over time was a major concern for those groups. Regardless of their legal migrant status or gender, the majority of the post-2014 migrants/refugees whom I interviewed drew attention to the hostile atmosphere in the ST Central Anatolia locality.

Such **polarization** manifested itself during the interviews/focus group discussions whenever the interviewees/participants were asked about their dream society they would like to live in. The locals either did not answer this question at all or gave exclusionary and anti-migrant answers. The migrants/refugees, on the other hand, told that they only wanted “to be somewhere else other than ST Central Anatolia”. The locals mostly expressed feelings of **hatred/contempt for migrants/refugees** enhanced by stereotypes while the migrant/refugee women’s feelings were characterized by **sadness, depression and desperation**.

The neighbourhoods where the post-2014 migrants/refugees and local groups live are clearly separated from each other in ST Central Anatolia. Only the very poor strata of the local people





lived in these neighbourhoods together with migrants/refugees. The conditions for housing in those neighbourhoods were precarious. Given that, it is safe to say that **spatial segregation** and **housing patterns** negatively shaped the social interactions between migrants and non-migrants.

Regarding spatial patterns, I observed that the post-2014 migrants'/refugees' **use of public places**, including streets, had been further affected by **factors such as the locals' accusing the post-2014 migrants/refugees of the increased drug sale**, as well as random police controls targeting post-2014 migrants/refugees which usually involved mistreatment. **Ideational/political factors** go hand in hand in the ST Central Anatolia in the forms of **anti-migrant mobilization, social media posts/comments containing hate speech, and exclusionary practices of the local authorities during the events of March 2020**. Given all of the above, **migrants/refugees can only participate in public/social life to a limited extent**.

**Diverse impacts of governance factors and social factors** have primarily manifested themselves in labour market and individual interactions. **Working informally as cheap labour without social security and the difficulty to get a work permit cause a race to the bottom for labour in general in which migrant and local labour compete with each other**. It is still worth noting that whole most research participants underlined their negative experiences in the labour market, some described their intimate relations with their neighbours/employers as "lifesaving."

### iii. RA Mediterranean Locality

#### Background on the local context

The rural areas in RA Mediterranean have been a significant hub for agricultural seasonal labourers due to a-year-round production of fresh fruit and vegetables on fertile lands. Small-scale production, mostly based on family farming, still persists, though there are many challenges facing contemporary agri-food relations in Turkey. Lack of state subsidy, increasing costs of agricultural production, overlapping with the current economic crisis and high inflation have forced many producers to leave agricultural production. The number of small farmers are decreasing, while an aging rural population is also another challenge. Small-scale production co-exists with large commercial farms based on domestic and export-oriented production. The latter is also connected with packaging and processing units for the products.

In RA Mediterranean, high informality, cheap/unskilled labour force, precarious working/living conditions and unequal power relations between employer/intermediary and workers characterize agriculture and husbandry (such as lack of written contracts, unregistered intermediaries and high control of intermediaries over workers). Before the arrival of Syrians as seasonal agricultural labourers, the dominant group of workers were the Kurdish IDPs and *Urfalilar* (natives of Urfa province) in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean, both of whom arrived in the 1990s as a result of forced migration from the southeast region of Turkey. Today, the majority of the seasonal labourers are post-2014 Syrians.





As noted in the introduction, RA Mediterranean locality that was studied for the project consists of a medium-sized town and its rural countryside. In the town migrants/refugees live in several peripheral neighborhoods, while in the rural areas they live in tents. While the research focused mainly on the tent areas, the public bazaar in the town was also included as a site for participation observation as it functions as a space of encounters between refugee/host groups, along with a neighborhood in the town (Neighborhood A) which is a well-known place for its migrant residents largely composed of Syrians as well as Kurdish and Arab Turks. Before the Syrians' arrival, it was dominated by the Kurdish migrants who migrated to the district in the 1990s escaping from the civil war in East and Southeast Turkey. However, as detailed above, there has been a move of Syrians from peripheral neighborhoods like this to tent areas due to different reasons (hostility of the locals, expensive rents and the like).

Regarding the rural countryside, fertile land and rich sources of water make year-round production possible in RA Mediterranean. Availability of employment opportunities has pulled migrants to the locality for ages, and it is now the case for post-2014 migrants. Housing conditions have always been poor in rural areas for seasonal agricultural labourers, and, therefore, for Syrian seasonal agricultural labourers too. Even though Syrians in the rural areas of RA Mediterranean primarily and dominantly do agricultural work for 12 months a year, they live in tent settlements. In other words, while their work is permanent there, their housing patterns are quite precarious. Following the massive influx of Syrians to Turkey, the Syrian labour force has replaced the Kurdish and *Urfali* labour with almost no change in the housing conditions. In the rural areas of RA Mediterranean, there are 16 tent areas. There is no refugee centre in the RA Mediterranean locality.

Syrians do not live in the villages: one may find only one or two, with their families, employed as permanent farmhand to take care of the household and land, while the vast majority doing agricultural work live in the tent areas. "Rural ghettos" (Pelek, 2020)<sup>15</sup> are characterized with lack of infrastructure (water, electricity, sewerage).

**Pro-migrant or anti-migrant mobilization in the RA Mediterranean:** As it was reported to me during the research, in 2017, an anti-migrant mobilization occurred in the Neighbourhood A in the RA Mediterranean Locality. The flats rented to the migrants in the neighbourhood had poor housing conditions with relatively lower rents. Yet, the arrival of the Syrians in large numbers had increased the rents, and the profile of inhabitants in the neighbourhood changed. Now, as I was told, it is the Kurdish community that rent their places to Syrians. In 2017, the tension and conflict arose between the Syrians and other groups (Kurds, local residences) as well as between different ethnic-religious Syrian groups. The reasons behind the anti-mobilization against the Syrians were diverse, according to different people that I met and interviewed (a community leader, a former residence of Neighbourhood A, ICSOs and public officers). According to some, constantly rising rents for poor housing was a source of

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<sup>15</sup> Pelek, D. 2020. "Ethnic residential segregation among seasonal migrant workers: from temporary tents to new rural ghettos in southern Turkey." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2020.1767077



tension. Others stated that Kurdish Syrians from Kobane region and Kurdish migrants allied against Sunni Arab Syrians. Finally, there were others saying Syrians' running small businesses in the neighbourhood (groceries, mini-markets, tobacco shops and the like) and it had also started causing annoyance among locals. On that day, people took the streets and burnt some Syrians' houses. A large group of Syrians had to move to other neighbourhoods and/or tent areas. Several people were injured. Syrians lost their belongings which was never protected by any public authority. The police forces were there on that day and yet only calmed down the crowds after the houses were burnt. I was told that the anti-migrant mobilization had not been organized by a particular leader/actor. Another incident that occurred in 2019 resulted in killing of a Syrian in another neighbourhood in the RA Mediterranean locality. As I was told, there had been ongoing little instances (verbal or physical fights among a couple of people) since then in different neighbourhoods. The final note on the Neighbourhood A incident was by a former resident who said the Syrians were allowed to live in the neighbourhood at the time on one condition: not to run any business there. They were only allowed to be a tenant in an apartment.

**In RA Mediterranean, there is one association that was identified as being active in providing services to migrants/refugees.** Association A has been operating as an international humanitarian organization in Turkey since 2013. Based in several provinces in Turkey, it is the only international civil society organization that focuses on migrants'/refugees' health, livelihood and protection with a specific interest in those Syrians who are under temporary protection in the RA Mediterranean locality. There is also a platform which is composed of faith-based organizations and pro-government associations in the RA Mediterranean locality. It provides humanitarian assistance to the Syrians under temporary protection, while focusing on social harmony between migrant and non-migrant groups. Their leadership and members are all local citizens. They are pro-migrant organizations.

## Fieldwork in RA Mediterranean

### Participant observation

Within the framework of participant observation, I visited the public market in the town center, which is used jointly by Syrian agricultural labourers and local people, and the tent area in the rural parts where only Syrian and *Urfali* agricultural labourers live. The first participant observation area is an example of a common public space where different groups come across each other, the second is a tent area consisting of tents and is clearly isolated from the villages. The participant observation took place in early October, 2022 during the weekdays.

The public market in the town center is set up once a week, and produce such as vegetables and fruits, clothing and household goods are sold at the market booths, the number of which varies between 100 and 150. Sellers at the market are mostly *Urfali* or Kurds who are internal migrants and have been selling in such public markets for 30 years (I was informed that 90% were from Diyarbakir). I talked to a few sellers who had booths in the market place. They



mentioned a Syrian seller had a booth at the end of the market place that year which was a first. The booths in the market place are officially rented from the municipality with the dues paid to the municipality, but the Syrian seller was working there informally on some cloth laid on the ground.

All the sellers I spoke to thought that an increase in the number of Syrians would benefit the market. On the other hand, they also said that Syrians lacked 'morality' and 'humanity', despite emphasizing the economic benefit they would contribute. The dominant language in the market is Turkish. Yet, some sellers learned some Arabic phrases in order to sell to Syrian clientele, while others stated that they communicated through hand gestures. Mostly women shop at the market and they usually do so after working in the field, that is, after five in the afternoon. Due to the recent decline in purchasing power, sales volume has declined, booths have closed, and the market has shrunk.

I interviewed the Syrian seller (he was 38 years old, had 4 children, his wife was unemployed, and they had been living in a warehouse for 9 years), and he said that he could not work as an agricultural labourer in the field due to his physical condition, and that he started a market booth that year. His customers were mostly Syrians and some *Urfali* labourers. He stated his daily income was 100 to 150 Turkish liras. He said that he had been selling in the market for 3 or 4 months, but he did not know other sellers in the market. He explained that when he started working as a Syrian seller, no one said anything (discriminatory), but no one said 'Good luck' either and he did not know any other seller in the market:

*They might kick us out of here any time soon, you never know," he said. "(...) When it rains, we carry the goods to the shade of the shop across the street, but they immediately come and say 'this is forbidden!'. While walking the path (down the market), I hear them saying 'Şerefsiz' (an without honor) and whistling behind my back. So, we do experience racism. If I answer back, there will be a fight, but I have children. (A Syrian male, seller in the local bazaar, 38 y/o, married with 4 children, arrived in the locality in 2013, participant observation).*

The second participant observation site took place in the tent area where Syrian and *Urfali* agricultural labourers live together. There are about 100 to 150 tents lined up along the water channel of the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works. There are villages surrounding the tent area. Tents are lined up along the canal and the area is divided into two smaller areas by a bridge. The tents on one side of the bridge starts with the *Elci's* (worker's intermediary) two-story mud-brick house, which stands out from the other tents. The tents lined up behind this house differ from the tents on the other side of the canal, with the wire mesh woven between the tents and the canal, and a few washing machines and small refrigerators here and there. On the other side of the canal, there is nothing between the tents and the canal, and most of the people living on that side are Syrians and they are very upset and anxious about this situation. They are afraid of children/animals falling into the water and drowning.

The inhabitants of the tent area are Syrian Arabs and people from Urfa. Kurds who work as seasonal agricultural labourers do not live here. The mother tongue of *Urfalilar* is Arabic, which



has led to a closer relationship between Syrian Arabs and *Urfalilar*. Therefore, the current relations between the different groups in this locality show that *Urfalilar* and the Syrians work and live together, but both of these groups do not go to the surrounding villages (even to those that are very close) and they do not have a relationship with the villagers living there.

The economic segregation within the tent area itself can also be recognized in the organization of the space, as stated above. The bridge separating the tents lined up along the canal is both a physical and social boundary: it separates different economic groups and they do not go beyond the bridge (referring to the villages located here). Living in a tent, as mentioned before, means no infrastructure and extremely primitive conditions: fire is needed to prepare food, bake bread and clean oneself; water is carried from the mosque or fountains in front of some houses are used ; there is no sewerage for toilets and bathrooms; canal water is used for various occasions (such as washing clothes) but it is not safe to drink; garbage is another problem; there is no regular service or place to collect garbage.

In these poor conditions, women are overwhelmed by the workload. They constantly talk about the fact that they have no time because of all the strenuous work they must carry out to meet basic needs, which are seen as women's work. For this reason, most of them said that their leisure activity is to visit or host the residents of another tent, and other than that, women do not move much in the public space: they do not go anywhere, except the market and the hospital. However, it was observed that women are more protective of and watch over each other and they value their relations with their neighbours. It was reported that they cared for each other and each other's children/grandchildren when they were sick.

Although men work under the same conditions as women, they have a very different life after coming back from the field. The gendered division of labour causes women to bear most of the household related workload in addition to agricultural work. In this sense, men do have a 'real' leisure time after returning from work. However, men also stated that they did not go to the centre/village/village coffee house much, instead they hosted guests or visited other tents just like women. Yet, men seem to be responsible for meeting all their external needs. That's why they go out in public more than women.

The working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers, male or female, involve long working hours, disrupting the social relations between different groups. The few hours remaining after an agricultural worker cleans himself/herself and eats after work determines what kind of social relation, he/she will have with others. The location of the tent area also contributes to such limited relations: such tent areas are usually located far away from the city centre, preventing access to the public space in the first place as the public space can only be accessed by private vehicles, so it is not even a question for agricultural workers to go to the centre given the economic burden of such a trip.

### **In-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants**



I reached out to the interviewees through three different sources: a CSO, a public institution and two different farmers. I thought that reaching out to the interviewees through different sources would diversify and enrich the interviewee profile. All of them who helped me find new interviewees were the interviewees themselves from previous phases of our research. My contact from the CSO first directed me to an intermediary who lived and worked with Syrian and *Urfali* agricultural workers. His position was significant as a gatekeeper, so I had to get his consent for participating in our research. Once I met him and introduced our research, he was convinced. Later, I visited a few tent areas together with an interpreter to meet and interview people living there. Despite the fact that I got the consent of the intermediary (or maybe because of that), the people were not very open during the interviews. Some gave us short answers or skipped questions. It was clear to me that they were feeling insecure. It changed a little bit after my second/third visit to the tents. One of the interviewees got angry in the middle of the interview saying:

*You already know what we have been going through here, so why are you asking? All we have to say will just disappear in the water. What good will that do us? No one helps: we wash our clothes with our hands, we cook our meals by making a fire. We cannot even drink cold water. No electricity, as you can see... I mean, people have been coming and going since we came... We have just had some other visitors who only write about this place. We know that it will all disappear in the water. Since we came to Turkey, there is no electricity... no washing machine... We can only have hot water by burning wood. So, this is how we live. Recently, there was this person coming from the RA Mediterranean locality. People here asked if he/she would help. No, he/she said. Then leave, they said, bye bye. If only you'd see the children. It's hot... You cannot stand it if you sit inside the tent. If you go inside my tent, you will get a very bad tan. It was better in Syria. We work from 6 to 6 here. We start at 6 am and finish at 6 pm. (Interview #4, Syrian, 28-year-old, temporary protection, male, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

A public institution provided me with transportation and interpretation services. I visited a couple of tents in the same area I had visited before. I interviewed there one of the community leaders who represented rural areas. Finally, one of the farmers took me to his worker to interview him who was employed as a watchman for his lemon garden. While the other farmer again directed me to his worker who worked as a watchman and agricultural labourer for his fields/gardens.

I made the interviews in the workers' tents/houses. In the majority of the interviews, I was assisted by an interpreter. At other times, a member from the interviewee's family translated the answers for me. It was not easy to make an interview in a tent since such places were always filled with other people (family members, friends) and the notion of privacy was interpreted very differently. As the spatial organization of the tents was not helpful to have privacy (always open "doors"), most of the interviews rather took the form of a small focus group.

### **Focus groups discussions**



I conducted four focus groups in RA Mediterranean since the key actors in the locality to understand the social relations between groups were diverse. Naturally the most significant actor was the Syrian female agricultural labourers. That is why, the first focus group was conducted with them in one of tents with the help of an interpreter. The tent belonged to a Syrian handicapped man who was regarded as a wise person by the others and who had a leading position in the tent area (working as an accountant for the intermediary to calculate the number of days worked by and the wages to be paid to labourers). The women who attended were there with their children, which largely increased the number of people in the tent. Despite the high number of participants (9 women), not all of them were willing to speak up. Some were very hesitant, but there were others who were more forthcoming. I tried several times to ask the same questions to those who were silent but without success.

The second focus group was composed of *Urfalilar* who are originally from the Urfa province and who speak Arabic as their mother tongue (although they are Turkish citizens). The meeting was also held in the same tent. Women were with their children/grandchildren again. They were interested in the topics of the discussion and yet they still could not spend long time in the tent with us due to their daily chores that waited for them (making bread/preparing food/making hot water ready for those who were about to return from the fields).

The third and fourth focus groups were conducted with “the locals” who lived in the villages close to the tent area. These two villages were not far away from each other. The officers/workers from the municipality that I had met helped me arrange the meeting with the focus groups by calling the local headman or their acquaintances/relatives living in these villages. Both meetings were held in the villagers’ houses. While in the first focus group it was the participants themselves who did not want the interviews to be recorded, I did not think it would be a good idea for the second group to whom I was introduced in a short notice. In both of them, women were interested in the topic and yet they had conflicting thoughts and ideas towards the post-2014 migrants/refugees (different levels of hostility and hospitality). These two groups also had different relations with the agricultural workers: the first group of villager women had no relation with those living in the tent areas while some women from the second were friends with some agricultural labourers who were *Urfali* women.

### Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants’ experiences

A **combination of spatial/architectural, ideational/political and governance** factors shapes the interaction between the groups. I observed that Syrian migrants under temporary protection in the RA Mediterranean locality lived in **isolation** from or had **limited interaction with the local communities** due to a set of **governance factors**, including (1) the **precarious working and housing conditions of agricultural labourers** (the fields/greenhouses/tents where the Syrian workers were employed/lived are far from the public places like hospitals, markets, schools and they work long hours, which leaves very little time to have a life out of work) and (2) the local people’s general reactions towards the Syrians which are not welcoming and inclusive (evolving over time in a negative way), and (3) the lack of local





integration policies in rural areas, which contributes to migrants' struggle to overcome the language barrier – a very small group was able to speak Turkish as they lived in isolation due to working and housing conditions, as well as **spatial factors, (4) which is that they ,live in isolation in tent areas far away from public spaces.(4)**

Many participants/interviewees said that they had to work to survive, so they had no time to go to a Turkish language course. Children and youngsters speak Turkish better than the others. Yet, the bullying at school experienced by Syrian children make them detach from education and school. It was a general view that children could not get any benefit from attending the school for their future other than learning Turkish so that they could translate for their parents when they needed it at a hospital, public institution, etc.

**As an impact of the governance factor (labour and housing markets), the precarity of their life, as agricultural labourers,** was frequently emphasized by women and men during the interviews/focus groups. This was their first thing to say regardless of the question, whether they were asked about how their dream society would look like in the RA Mediterranean locality or about what they would primarily like to change in the groups' relations.

*I do not sleep at night as I am a watchman in the field. I sleep during the day. I have no home. I sleep in my car. I have a bed, a blanket, a teapot, and a camp cylinder. Every day they (the owner of the garden) bring me bread and food. It is like that. I work for the lemon garden like this for 2 months. Then, I watch the nectarine for 1-2 months. So, I work 4 months a year. I am a watchman. (Interview #4, Syrian, 28-year-old, temporary protection, male RA Mediterranean Locality)*

*This is our life as you can see obviously... It is very hot at night. How can I describe this life that is as clear as day? It is where words fail. I do not have anything else to say (...) We leave in the morning and come back in the middle of the night. We cannot take care of our children. This has to be the biggest pain in life. I have been here for 8 years. I had a child, but he passed away due to lack of care. (...) I took him to the hospital a day after another but we were told that it was closed because of the holiday. (...) That's why my child died. He had goitre. I told the doctor he had a special diet but they said nothing was going to happen to him. (Interview #8, Syrian, 20-year-old, temporary protection, female RA Mediterranean Locality)*

**The individual factors, referring to age and gender in this case,** impact rural labour markets which do not offer much to Syrians, except for agricultural work that requires hard physical effort. That is why people with chronic diseases or elderly people are generally excluded from working. While the former jobs the male interviewees/participants had are more diverse (garbage collecting, being a shepherd or a factory worker), there was only one woman who had worked in a packaging store before working as an agricultural labourer.

Even though the group of Syrians that I interviewed had been living in the tent areas in the RA Mediterranean locality for more than 6 years, **their local social interactions did not seem to evolve in a positive way.** As mentioned above, **governance factors, their long working hours and living in faraway tent areas** made it almost impossible for them to easily access the public places in the district centre. Very few interviewees (2 males, 1 female) mentioned that they had visited a well-known public park in the town center where the locals also spent time or the Neighbourhood A where many Syrians lived to see their friends.





In this regard, **architectural/ spatial factors** and **governance factors including labour and housing market** determine the local social relations. These factors together also explain why the **Syrian agricultural labourers under temporary protection have their most intimate social relations with the *Urfalilar* group who speak their language and who work and live under similar conditions**. Apart from this group, Syrians mostly did not have any relation to the other groups (ethnically Turkish villagers, Kurds and other local groups). Some mentioned they had once had some neighbours at their previous addresses where they lived in apartments. Economic impoverishment, rising rents in the peripheral neighborhoods as well as the large size of their households and the possibility to avoid paying rent in the tent area (as the land belonged to the state) pushed some of the interviewees/participants to move to a tent area in RA Mediterranean. This tendency to live in a tent area or “rural ghettoization”, as Pelek (2020) indicates, decreased the quantity as well as the quality of the social relations between these groups. **The anti-migrant mobilization in the Neighbourhood A** also shows that **ideational/political factors** are significant as the memory of the incident was still fresh in the narratives of the interviewees living in the tent areas. The incident of Neighbourhood A (2017) made some post-2014 migrants/refugees leave the neighbourhood and find some other place (including tents) to live.

*I was there during the incident. They (the locals) smashed my car. They have allowed the Syrians in Neighbourhood A to stay there, but only as tenants (they can stay in apartments). They are not allowed to open a business. It was a problem involving Syrians, and the Kurds from Diyarbakir. Two Syrian groups had a fight. One of the groups sided with those from Diyarbakir. They are from the same asiret (tribe): Raqqa. They have the same tribe, same homeland. They are relatives. But there are also Kurds and Turks on one side. They took one side and excluded the other. (After the incident of Neighbourhood A, he started talking about tents) Because there is no rent. Rent and electricity. We have been left out a lot. There have been neighbourhood troubles. (Interview #7, Syrian, 43-year-old, temporary protection, male, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

*We were living in Neighbourhood A. There was a fight there with the Syrians. The intermediary found this place (referring to the downfallen building where he now resides). We came here. It's been 4 years. (Then he started explaining the reason for the fight) The Syrians used to live there. There was a fight between Syrians and others living there. There was a Turk, living in the same neighbourhood. I heard he had been stabbed. That's why all the Syrians left: all those involved or not involved. (Then the Syrians) They moved to different places. Our neighbours moved to place with tents. They now live in a tent there. Some moved to the centre (central districts). (Interview #5, Syrian, 24-year-old, temporary protection, female, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

There are also **group dynamics intertwined by individual dynamics** at work restricting the local social relations. Syrian and *Urfali* women in the focus groups frequently pointed out the common life they shared. Based on the **gender codes**, women are considered **responsible for reproductive tasks, in addition to productive tasks**. That is why they emphasized that they “did not have time for anything!”. They are overburdened with multi-tasking and this leaves little room for them to focus on their own things, including socialization beyond the borders of tent areas. Again, due to the gender codes, **women's mobility** is more restricted compared to the men (husband/father) as women always required a male's company. Some women said



they were just like that (referring to not going somewhere on their own). When they need to go to the doctor or do shopping, women always preferred to be with a man. The established gender codes are significant in shaping the mobility, therefore, in the social relations with other groups living in RA Mediterranean.

*We are either at home or in the field. We never travel just for seeing places. (Interview # 11, Syrian, 22-year-old, temporary protection, female, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

*I go to work at 6 or 7 am. I come back by 5 pm. I work in the field. (When I am back at home) I stay at home. (Interview #5, Syrian, 24-year-old, temporary protection, female, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

*I work in the garden. I get up in the morning, do the dishes, clean up. I hand-wash the clothes if it is time for laundry. I only went for three checkups after giving birth. (Interview #7, Syrian, 43-year-old, temporary protection, male, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

*I get up at 6 or 7. I spend the day here (at home). I prepare breakfast for my children. I take care of my children and tidy the house. When I get sick, I go to the town center. I cannot go work in the field. (Interview #9, Syrian, in his 40s, temporary protection, female, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

Syrian and *Urfali* women's excessive workload was also observed by the villager women participants in the focus group #4. Some said even if they wanted to meet with these other groups, it was impossible due to their working and living conditions. However, villager women from focus group #3 were quite clear about their attitudes towards Syrians "in general": they did not want to make any contact with them, and said it was because they were traitors, immoral and insecure. They stated that they would not let any Syrian live in their village (e.g. in saying "we never rent any place to a Syrian"). **The hostile society** could be considered as a part of **ideational/political factor** in determining the reciprocal relations between these groups.

One reason for such a sharp contrast between the two villages could be linked to their distinct socio-demographic histories: while the rather hostile village has a homogenous population, the population in the more welcoming one is composed of diverse ethnic-religious groups who migrated to this village. In this regard, another interesting point was addressed by an *Urfali* woman explaining the reason for her distance to the local population of the surrounding villages. She thought that the farmers/employers who hired them disdained them as labourers without land. As such, **class difference, referring to a social dimension**, can be seen as another reason that prevented them from having a close relation.

The interviewees and the participants further expressed **their experiences of exclusion**. The majority mentioned that the local community made them feel "not wanted as foreigners" in the RA Mediterranean locality. **They were blamed for the decreased wages, rising unemployment, and being traitors (not fighting for their countries at the war, taking cash assistance, etc.)**. For instance, one Syrian man told me that he was frequently targeted at the minibuses because of how he dressed. A Syrian woman said that even though she did not hear anything negative from anyone, she was able to see that locals did "not like them." A young female interviewee told me that she wanted to change the experience of



“discrimination/racism” regarding the relation between the Syrians and the others living in RA Mediterranean.

*Turks do not talk to us at all. Only this family communicates with us. The others only talk if they must for some reason. Otherwise, they never say hi. Even the minibuses won't stop. They won't take us in as a passenger. They won't talk to us. They only stare at us from afar. (Interview #5, Syrian, 24-year-old, temporary protection, female, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

Some think that **discrimination has increased** in RA Mediterranean. The interviewees/participants commonly pointed out that they had greater difficulties in their daily life (in public transportation, at work with co-workers, at hospitals with locals) compared to those they had experienced when they had first arrived.

*When we first came, we did not get such a bad reaction. Now, however, when I go to the hospital, everyone, from the nurse to the doctor, says we should go back to our hometown. They are angry at us right now. 'Why don't you go to your hometown? You live here while our soldiers are there. You are comfortable here. You live here the way you want while we try to protect you,' they say. (Interview #8, Syrian, 20-year-old, temporary protection, female, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

*We are all children of Eve and Adam. We are all Muslims. And we are all sisters and brothers. You will sit next to one, and one will sit next to another one. At work, we argue a lot. 'When we first came, for example, they employed very few workers: about 10 people worked for one man. Now the man employs 200 people,' they say. And we respond as follows: 'You had 10 acres planted, now you have 100 acres. This is a win-win situation. We get what we work for. Why do you exclude us?' I say. Some agree with us, some don't. (Interview #8, Syrian, 20-year-old, temporary protection, female, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

*There is a huge difference between when we first came and the present time. When we first arrived, people were very nice to us, they welcomed us warmly. But later, of course... A bad person has made us all look bad. So, it is different now. The current behaviour [of the locals] is very different from the behaviour we first experienced. (Interview #3, Syrian, 56-year-old, temporary protection, male, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

*So, with the Turks... when we first arrived, it was fine, and there was no problem of course. But then we started having problems. Syrians have had to work since they arrived, so we work. Turks tell us that... their salaries have been reduced because of us. That is what they say. I mean they say this during our usual chats while we are working in the field together. It is said during the conversation. (Interview #1, Syrian, 27-year-old, temporary protection, male, RA Mediterranean Locality)*

## Summary of main insights for RA Mediterranean

A **combination of spatial/architectural, ideational/political, social and governance** factors shapes the interaction between the groups. I observed that Syrian migrants under temporary protection in the RA Mediterranean locality lived in **isolation** or had **limited interaction with the local communities, except for *Urfalilar* who shared the same precarious working and living conditions and had the same mother tongue**. Even though the group of Syrians had been living in the RA Mediterranean locality for more than 6 years, the social interactions did



not seem to evolve in a positive way. Syrians' group dynamics including **gender roles, an aspect of the social dimension**, further impacted the nature of the social interactions, with women experiencing greater social isolation because of their gendered role of carrying out **reproductive tasks, in addition to productive tasks**. They are overburdened with multi-tasking and this leaves little room for them to focus on personal interests, including socialization beyond the borders of tent areas. **Women's mobility was also limited compared to men's** due to gender roles, **which created the need for women to have a male companion when they travelled**.

**The governance factors** manifest themselves in **precarious working and housing conditions of agricultural labourers** (the fields/greenhouses/tents where the Syrian workers were employed/lived are far from the public places like hospitals, markets, schools and they work long hours, which leaves very little time to have a life out of work). **Ideational/political factors** include local people's general reactions towards the Syrians that were **not welcoming and inclusive** (evolving over time in a negative way) and the pogrom that occurred in the migrant neighbourhood in the town centre of RA Mediterranean, which was still fresh in the people's minds, not only in terms of the actual incidence but also the silence of the local authorities afterwards. **The lack of local integration policies in rural areas, a governance factor**, hindered their integration as migrants could not overcome the **language barrier**. **The precarity of their life, as agricultural labourers**, was an issue frequently emphasized by women and men during the interviews/focus groups. Given all the above, Syrians under temporary protection paid little to no attention to the questions about their reciprocal relations/social interactions with the locals as they mostly tried to explain how hard it was to survive under such working and living conditions.

**The anti-migrant mobilization in the Neighbourhood A** also shows that **ideational/political factors** are significant as the memory of the incident was still fresh during the meetings. Some think that discrimination has increased in RA Mediterranean. The interviewees/participants commonly pointed out that they had greater difficulties in their daily life (in public transportation, at work with co-workers, at hospitals with locals) compared to their experience when they had first arrived.



## 4. Main findings in comparative perspective

### i. Reciprocal interactions and attitudes, and migrants' experiences of integration

This sub-section focuses on reciprocal interactions and attitudes and migrants' experiences, trying to establish common patterns or clear divergences between different localities with specific reference to the temporal dimension regarding how the reciprocal attitudes and interactions, and post-2014 migrants' experiences have changed over time.

Based on the narratives of the migrants/refugees and the local citizens/long-term residents in each locality, it is **common that reciprocal attitudes and interactions have evolved in a negative way that has hindered the integration of post-2014 migrants/refugees in the three localities which are respectively characterized as “re-vitalizing, in transition and left behind” based on Whole-COMM typology.** Many local actors, interviewees/participants and local people drew attention to the increased social tension, intolerance and hostility against migrant/refugee groups. For instance, in the ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia localities (respectively re-vitalizing and in-transition), the interviewees/participants stated that it had previously been better in terms of social interactions with the locals (mostly in the forms of solidarity and neighbouring). Their cash and humanitarian needs (clothes, furniture, food, etc.) were met through CSOs or the local inhabitants themselves, and the attitudes of the locals towards the newcomers were (relatively) more welcoming. It was easier to find accommodation as landowners were not categorically against renting their places to the foreigners or these groups were more likely considered as “people fleeing war in a catastrophe and seeking a safe life”. For the RA Mediterranean locality (left behind), more supportive/welcoming relations with the locals was not the case from the beginning since the spatial/architectural organization of the tent-areas where the Syrians under temporary protection dominantly live separated them physically as well as socially from the rural population who live in the surrounding villages.

Although these three localities differ from each other in terms of region, economic-demographic structure, political leadership that runs local municipalities and/or experience of cultural diversity, the assessments by/about post-2014 migrants/refugees mainly focus on the **decreased hospitality of the locals and aggravated discrimination in their daily lives, based on their own narratives as well as the feedback provided in the focus groups with non-migrant participants.** The most frequent instances of daily discrimination occur in public transportation and parks/gardens (experienced more in ST East Marmara locality), at the hospital – especially while waiting for the doctors and at school (in common in all three localities). Some interviewees/participants also mentioned such discriminatory attitudes in relation to the behaviour of public officers/local headmen in neighbourhoods/villages (experienced more often in the RA Mediterranean and ST Central Anatolia localities). Such



attitudes/practices are mostly in the form of verbal rebukes or gestures/mimics of disapproval, while there were also examples of anti-migrant mobilizations in diverse forms, including: social media posts/local news with hate speech (in common, but experienced more often in the ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia localities), house confinement (in the ST East Marmara locality) and small-scale pogrom (in the RA Mediterranean locality). Random police control and mistreatment on the streets are experienced more frequently in ST Central Anatolia according to post-2014 migrants/refugees. On the other hand, there were almost no references made to pro-migrant mobilizations in the localities. Apart from some individual cases where one can find positive social relations and/or interactions between post-2014 migrants/refugees and locals, there are very limited organized/institutionalized/localized pro-migrant mobilizations, which include mainly the efforts of local/international CSOs whose projects are generally short-term, therefore not sustainable for establishing a long-term relation between these groups.

## ii. Value of social-ideational, political/governance and spatial factors in explaining and understanding interactions attitudes and experiences

It is **hard to talk about rigid and concrete barriers for migrants/refugees to their encounters with the long-term residences or local citizens** in each locality. At the same time though, it is **hard to say that existing encounters bring about better integration, social interaction or organic relations among these two groups**. Recalling the WP4 report<sup>16</sup>, there is a similar situation: no barriers to employment and housing exist for migrants/refugees, but almost no formal employment or decent housing is observed for the large masses of refugee/migrant population. Whether through using public parks or local bazaars, based on data gathered through participant observation and interviews with diverse groups in the localities, the encounters between migrant/refugee groups and the locals have not evolved into more interactive and reciprocal relations. I observed that these diverse groups kept living next to each other in the localities, but in their own worlds with limited contact. Therefore, **migrants/refugees only have a little positive experience, limited to individual cases**, such as those involving a supportive employer, a neighbour or a neighbourhood inhabitant.

**The perception/fact that reciprocal attitudes and interactions have evolved in a negative way while the locals are less hospitable towards and more discriminatory against post-2014 migrants/refugees in their daily lives in the three localities** is a complex social reality itself that should be explained as a result of diverse factors within the Whole-COMM typology.

In our three cases, **the combination of spatial/architectural factors (spatial segregation), ideational/political, social and governance factors (primarily labour and housing market)** diversely impact the relations between the groups. They are also the reasons behind

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<sup>16</sup> See WP4 report for a detailed discussion of access to services in the three case studies. <https://whole-comm.eu/working-papers/country-report-on-integration-turkey/>





limited/weakening social interactions as well as migrants'/refugees' negative experiences of integration. For instance, ST East Marmara, classified as a re-vitalizing locality, has a dynamic economic sector and labour market with an unemployment rate below the national average and yet post-2014 migrants/refugees are still **involved in the labour market as cheap and informal labour working under precarious conditions**. In ST East Marmara, the visibility of migrant/refugee labour force – especially those speaking Arabic – is not an issue since they are required to provide service to foreign tourists speaking Arabic. However, in ST Central Anatolia, Afghans and Syrians mostly do **invisible jobs** (dishwasher, room attendant, cleaner, porter, construction worker, etc.) **due to a strategy made by their employers to make such labour force not explicit to the eyes of the locals whose nationalist and discriminatory reactions are clear**. However, part of the Iranian community who are more skilled/ qualified can find more visible jobs. **Syrians in the RA Mediterranean locality work under extremely precarious conditions, bringing further isolation** and making the lower unemployment rate (than the national average) of the locality questionable in terms of the decency and quality of the jobs.

Regarding **the impact of the governance factors on the labour market**, very few post-2014 migrants/refugees are pleased with their working conditions in the three localities. While having a job itself enables migrants/refugees to encounter long-term residents/local citizens, it has now become **a source of tension and conflict between these groups due to the economic decline, increased poverty and inflation**. The post-2014 migrants/refugees are scapegoated by local citizens as a reason for loss of jobs and/or decreasing salaries. However, such discourses are not targeted at all migrants unanimously, as the **legal status of a migrant is closely linked to their class** in Turkey. For instance, wealthy foreigners with a residence permit/citizenship have a lower rate of employment, while the employment of asylum-seekers and those under temporary protection is usually characterized by informality, insecurity and low-wages. In this sense, **the legal status of individual migrants/refugees plays a critical role as a social dimension**.

**The housing/spatial patterns that have evolved in a discriminatory way over time constitute another reason behind the limited/weakening social interactions and are a source of negative experiences for post-2014 migrants/refugees in the three localities, while showing also subtle differences**. In the ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia localities, the neighbourhoods where the poor strata of refugees/migrants dominantly live are within the scope of upcoming urban renewal projects. And in both localities, the wealthiest and the poorest groups of refugees/migrants live in different, almost homogenized, neighbourhoods, leading also to a spatial segregation of schools. Syrians under temporary protection in the RA Mediterranean locality live in complete isolation in tent areas located far away from the district centre. In this sense, their social interaction with the locals is confined to such encounters at the local bazaar once a week, at the hospital and quite rarely in the parks. Even though the tent areas are surrounded by the villages, there is almost no contact with the villagers, implying that social boundaries are as significant as physical boundaries in limiting encounters between these two groups.





In addition, **the right to property ownership**, emerges as a significant determinant to understand the role spatial factors play. While those under temporary protection are not allowed to buy a house for themselves, those with other types of residence permits could buy real estate, mostly in return for citizenship (the case in the ST East Marmara locality). Conceptualized as “**class-based integration**” (Simsek, 2020)<sup>17</sup>, this again brings us to the issue of **class differences** between migrant/refugee groups, i.e., **social dimension**, as mentioned above in the case of employment.

Regarding reciprocal relations and social interactions, **schools**, as an aspect of the **governance factor**, are significant too. Being **segregated and homogenized in terms of student profile**, as in the **ST East Marmara and Central Anatolia localities** (the latter is more segregated), the schools have lost their function to cause encounters between migrant/refugee pupils and the local ones. In ST Central Anatolia locality, in both the schools located in the town centre and close to the migrant/refugee neighbourhoods, in the ST Central Anatolia locality, the student profile shows a population of migrant/refugee students that is more than 80% of the total student population. Many local families do not want their kids to go to the same school as migrant/refugee students hence have started moving away to other neighbourhoods which hardly have any refugee/migrant populations. In RA Mediterranean, on the other hand, a **mixed student profile, has led to bullying at the schools close to the tent areas**. The only positive exception was stated by an Afghan student in an interview in the ST East Marmara who said that “the others” had got used to them, therefore, “do not bully them as they did in the past.” Whether or not such mixed schools have changed the social interaction and/or reciprocal relations between the parents of these students remains a question that needs to be addressed, but extends the scope of our research.

The post-2014 migrants/refugees stated that **learning Turkish** made them more involved in daily life in their localities. It has made it possible for them to go to the doctor, to the public institutions, etc. on their own. The ability to speak Turkish is critical to social interactions through which the neighbourhood relations are established. This is again more valid for the ST East Marmara and ST Central Anatolia localities since Syrians in the RA Mediterranean locality live in isolation under a precarious working regime which leaves little room for socialization anyhow. This also implies the impact of **the lack of local integration policies in rural areas**, as an aspect of the **governance factor**. Moreover, the fact that they are neighbours with the *Urfalilar* in the tent areas and mostly socialize with them has served as an obstacle to their learning Turkish as the mother tongue of both groups is Arabic.

**A set of ideational/political factors, such as, the experience of anti-migrant mobilizations in diverse forms** have also had negative impacts on reciprocal relations and social interactions,

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<sup>17</sup> Simsek, D. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 33, Issue 3, September 2020, Pages 537–554, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fev057>



including a **pogrom in RA Mediterranean** in which Syrians' houses were set on fire by the locals in a mixed neighbourhood, forcing Syrians to leave the neighbourhood, **social media posts and local news including hate speech in both of the ST East Marmara and Central Anatolia localities**, and the **persistent efforts of the municipality in the ST Central Anatolia locality to organize bus trips for migrants/refugees to leave the locality for the Turkish-Greek border in March 2020**. In addition, **random police controls and mistreatment by public officers/police forces** have led refugee/migrant groups to further keep to themselves, especially in the **ST Central Anatolia locality**. The public face of anti-migrant attitudes and discrimination is clearer in the ST Central Anatolia locality, in spite of the fact that its political leadership is pro-government.

The anti-migrant position of the public authorities in ST Central Anatolia who are pro-government might seem contradictory at the first sight. However, **the change on the national policy environment can be characterized by a turn from creation of welcoming hospitality to hostility towards refugee/migrant groups**. The passive attitude of the authorities against incidents like anti-migrant mobilizations, pogrom or hate speech inherently support the hostile environment for refugees/migrants. Especially in the ST Central Anatolia, conservative and religious elements were significant in creating an initial environment of hospitality. Ironically, though, they were also effective in later constructing a hostile environment towards refugees/migrants.

**As an ideational/political factor, the political atmosphere of upcoming national elections** seem to make the issue of migration more important than ever before. Post-2014 migrants/refugees have become a very contested and polarized political subject for different political sides, and any pro-migrant act or move by any political leadership only raises the issue of ongoing intolerance of the local against migrants/refugees. It is clearly seen in all three localities that the **political leadership** takes a rather passive attitude towards the refugees/migrants, while the reasons behind this could vary ("not our voters", ST East Marmara; "waiting for the guidance of the President in the issue of migration", ST Central Anatolia; "blurred migrant status makes our responsibilities unclear and there is no budget", RA Mediterranean)<sup>18</sup>. This context has led the local authorities, public institutions and some of the I/CSOs to focus on **how to reshape the ongoing tensions, instead of eliminating them**. For instance, in the RA Mediterranean locality, one of the state foundations has reorganized its departments to avoid increasing tensions, so now there are two separate offices dealing with the distribution of humanitarian assistance: one providing service to migrants/refugees and one to locals. As I was told, when the locals had used the same room with migrants/refugees to collect social assistance, they had reacted to migrants'/refugees' getting assistance. **Such perspectives have naturally badly affected the relations/interactions between two groups**.

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<sup>18</sup> See WP3 report for a detailed discussion of local governance of migration in the three case studies. <https://whole-comm.eu/working-papers/country-report-on-multilevel-dynamics-turkey/>



Overall, **locals and/or long-term residents in each locality have similar perceptions of post-2014 refugees/migrants, with only one exception.** In our research we encountered **only one “welcoming” group called *Urfalilar*** in RA Mediterranean who share the same working and living conditions with Syrians. **Syrians have strategically allied themselves with the *Urfalilar*** group in the rural areas as both groups of agricultural labourers, while the *Urfalilar* consider them as **“poor and harmless”**. However, the local villagers in this locality are hostile against the Syrians and use the well-known stereotypes against them, such as **“traitor, parasite, dangerous and immoral”**. The **same stereotypes were restated by Balkan migrants** in a focus group conducted with long-term residents in ST East Marmara. Even though there were a few participants in the group who had a more **humanitarian perspective (including empathy or religious tones)** in relation to migrants/refugees, the others seemed very determined in pointing that the issue of migrants/refugees was their **“red line”** and that they would **“never agree to live next to each other”** and that **“they have to go back to where they belong”**. The possibility that their children may have a romantic relationship with a migrant/refugee in the future was stated as their worst nightmare. Here, such **discriminatory statements made by another migrant group in a re-vitalizing locality makes us question to what extent local histories of migration and ensuing cultural diversity is associated with better integration.** Finally, **the locals from ST Central Anatolia made similar racist and discriminatory statements, especially about Syrian and Afghan groups, while Iranians who were considered more educated and qualified were seen as an exception, at least by the employers/businesswomen, due to their better match with tourism sector in the locality.** Overall, a common theme that surfaced in the focus groups carried out in all three localities was that **locals made racist comments without any hesitation.** The participants were **self-confident** while doing so as they knew – as **ordinary people** – that such expressions had been **the new normal in Turkey** for a while and there were no official/legal mechanisms or local/public authority to stop them.

Given the reasons behind limited social interactions, it is not surprising that **the majority of the refugees/migrants participating in this research stated that they were willing to leave to Turkey,** if they had that chance. The primary reason for such thinking is that it would allow them to have a better future for themselves as well as for their children. Many believe that their life opportunities would be much better in EU countries, as they would have more and equal rights, such as access to work permits, which would prevent informal jobs and associated insecurities. A couple of them drew attention to the economic hardship they faced and **requested either to be financially supported or to be provided secure means of working.**

Those under international protection complained about the long waiting periods for decisions on the asylum applications which left them in an in-between state, while those under temporary protection also mentioned having the same feeling of uncertainty about their future as the years passed by. Both groups stated that even though **they knew that they would also experience discrimination and xenophobia in Europe, the prospect of having better working and living conditions with a certain status of stability and legality still attracted them.** Among the Syrians, there were some **who said they would go back to Syria if one certain condition**



**is met, which is a war-free Syria.** Some Afghan and Iranian refugee respondents noted that they wish to **acquire Turkish citizenship** one day which would make it worth the many years of waiting that they had to spend in Turkey.



## 5. Concluding Remarks

Based on data gathered through several methods (interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation) in three localities referred to as Small-Town East Marmara, Small-Town Central Anatolia and Rural Areas Mediterranean, this report discusses key similarities and differences across the different localities in terms of interactions between locals and post-2014 migrants/refugees<sup>19</sup> and processes of inclusion/exclusion.

There are certain differences in the specific type of social interactions, reciprocal relations and experiences of inclusion/exclusion in each locality, but two main observations are common to all of the localities. First, it is **hard to talk about rigid and concrete barriers for migrants/refugees** in their encounters with the long-term residents and/or local citizens in each locality. Labour and housing markets, as well as use of public places, are some of the main hubs where encounters between the two groups commonly take place. However, **such encounters mostly do not bring about positive migrant experiences of integration, better social interaction or organic relations between these two groups.** In other words, the encounters between migrant/refugee groups and the locals have not evolved into more interactive and reciprocal relations. On the contrary, labour and housing markets in particular have become the source of tension itself. As exemplified in this study, **most migrants/refugees report having very little positive experiences in this respect, which is often limited to individual cases**, such as a supportive and compassionate employer or neighbour. The post-2014 migrants/refugees always appreciated the existence of such people during the fieldwork.

The second observation is **the perception that reciprocal attitudes and interactions have evolved in a negative way and the locals have become less hospitable towards and more discriminatory against post-2014 migrants/refugees in their daily lives in the three localities.** The post-2014 migrants/refugees from the three localities commonly drew attention to the hardship of their daily lives when it comes to social interactions and/or reciprocal relations. Schools, hospitals, public transportation, public parks were the primary areas of the hardship where they experienced exclusion. Locals tend to blame the migrants/refugees for outnumbering citizens in hospitals, in the job market, etc., and for growing economic deprivation.

In our three cases, **a combination of the spatial/architectural factors (especially in the form of spatial segregation) and governance factors (primarily labour and housing market)** is the primary reason behind limited/weakening social interactions as well as migrants'/refugees' negative experiences of integration. The functioning of such combination to bring about its impacts in the localities differs by country of origin and legal migrant status (linked to class status).

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<sup>19</sup> As the displacement of Ukrainians in 2022 did not have an impact on the localities studied, they are not included under the broader phrase of “post-2014 migrants/refugees”.



**The housing/spatial patterns have contributed to the limited/weakening social interactions and, in some cases, are a source of negative experiences of post-2014 migrants/refugees in the three localities with subtle differences.**

A set of ideational factors, on the other hand, **such as, the experience of anti-migrant mobilizations in diverse forms**, from a **pogrom** in which Syrians' houses were set on fire by the locals in a mixed neighbourhood and forced the Syrians to leave the neighbourhood.

I also identified **language** (being competent in Turkish), **migrant childrens' school attendance**, **property ownership by foreigners**, and the **political atmosphere of the upcoming national elections** as the other key reasons behind weakening/limited social interaction, reciprocal relations and better practices/experiences for integration in our three localities.

To summarize, in light of the diverse factors that have hindered better integration of the post-2014 migrant/refugee groups in Turkey in the case of three localities, we have found these groups less willing to stay in Turkey and/or less pleased with the life they had in each locality. Given that the path(s) to Europe was mostly blocked for them, they were also aware that they do not have many options left, except for surviving these localities, while waiting for their countries of origin to become socially/politically stabilized. As this report has shown, while there are countless structural elements leading to such disillusionment of migrants/refugees in Turkey (from legal status related uncertainties to informal work to housing precarities), negative encounters with locals are also a significant part of it. In this sense, **it seems more important than ever to find ways to improve social interactions, reciprocal relationships and positive experiences between the two groups.**

## 6.ANNEX

### i. Interview and focus group information on ST East Marmara

#### The List of the Interviews in the ST East Marmara locality

ST East Marmara Locality	Age	Status	Gender	Country of Origin	Arrival Date to Country/Locality	Date of the Interview
1	39	Asylum-Seeker	Female	Afghanistan	2019/2019	13.07.2022
2	31	Asylum-Seeker	Female	Afghanistan	2019/2019	13.07.2022
3	39	Asylum-Seeker	Female	Afghanistan	2018/2018	15.07.2022
4	47	Asylum-Seeker	Female	Iran	2016/2019	17.07.2022
5	37	Asylum-Seeker	Male	Iraq	2015/2018	01.08.2022
6	43	Asylum-Seeker	Male	Iraq	2014/2014	01.08.2022
7	41	Migrant with residence permit buying real-estate	Female	Iraq	2016/2016	03.08.2022
8	36	Asylum-Seeker	Male	Afghanistan	2016/2016	20.07.2022
9	31	Migrant with residence permit buying real-estate	Male	Iran	2011/2021	16.07.2022
10	50	Migrant with residence permit buying real-estate	Male	Iran	2016/2016	16.07.2022
11	25	Asylum-Seeker	Female	Iran	2017/2017	14.07.2022

11 interviews were made in the ST East Marmara locality.

#### The Basic Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Non-Migrant Focus Group Participants in the ST East Marmara

First group was composed of Balkan migrant women (5 participants) who migrated to the ST East Marmara locality in several waves from 1960s to 1980s. All of them were married and had kids. Their ages varied between 50 and 65. They had spent most their lives living and working in ST East Marmara locality. They are now retirees and members of a migrant association. The focus group meeting was held in 3<sup>rd</sup>, October, 2022.





### The Basic Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Migrant Focus Group Participants in the ST East Marmara

ST East Marmara	Age	Status	Gender	Country of Origin	Arrival Date to Country/Locality	Date of the Focus Group
1	31	Migrant with short-term residence permit	Female	Iraq	2014/2018	05.10.2022
2	44	Migrant with short-term residence permit	Female	Iraq	2019/2019	05.10.2022
3	30	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	2013/2013	05.10.2022
4	40	Asylum-seeker	Female	Iraq	2017/2017	05.10.2022
5	36	Migrant with short-term residence permit	Female	Iraq	2017/2017	05.10.2022
6	48	Migrant with short-term residence permit	Female	Iraq	2016/2016	05.10.2022
7	50	Migrant with short-term residence permit	Female	Iraq	2017/2017	05.10.2022

### ii. Interview and focus group information on ST Central Asia

#### The List of the Interviews in the ST Central Anatolia locality

ST Central Anatolia	Age	Status	Gender	Country of Origin	Arrival Date to Country/Locality	Date of the Interview
1	29	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	2015/2015	18.08.2022
2	35	Asylum-seeker	Female	Iran	2014/2016	18.08.2022
3	26	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	2015/2015	18.08.2022
4	34	Asylum-seeker	Female	Iraq	2018/2018	21.08.2022
5	Around 30	Temporary Protection (ex-wife of a Turkish, therefore applicant for citizenship)	Female	Syria	2012/2012	20.08.2022
6	31	Migrant with short-term residence permit	Male	Afghanistan	2018/2018	17.08.2022



7	28	Temporary Protection	Male	Syria	2014/2016	19.08.2022
8	34	Asylum-seeker	Male	Iran	2017/2017	19.08.2022
9	35	Asylum-seeker	Female	Afghanistan	2022/2022	22.08.2022
10	39	Asylum-seeker	Male	Iran	2015/2015	23.08.2022
11	38	Asylum-seeker	Male	Iran	2015/2015	23.08.2022

11 interviews were made in the ST Central Anatolia locality.

### The Basic Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Non-Migrant Focus Group Participants in the ST Central Anatolia

ST Central Anatolia	Age	Status	Gender	Country of Origin	Arrival Date to Country/Locality	Date of the Interview
1	57	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey	NA	19.10.2022
2	42	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey	NA	19.10.2022
3	32	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey	NA	19.10.2022
4	38	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey	NA	19.10.2022
5	58	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey	NA	19.10.2022
6	45	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey	NA	19.10.2022

### The Basic Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Migrant Focus Group Participants in the ST Central Anatolia

ST Central Anatolia	Age	Status	Gender	Country of Origin	Arrival Date to Country/Locality	Date of the Focus Group
1	43	Asylum-seeker	Female	Iran	2018/2022	21.10.2022
2	32	Asylum-seeker	Female	Iran	2020/2020	21.10.2022
3	45	Asylum-seeker	Female	Iran	2010/2010	21.10.2022
4	35	Asylum-seeker	Female	Afghanistan	2015/2015	21.10.2022

## iii. Interview and focus group information on RA Mediterranean

### The List of the Interviews in the RA Mediterranean Locality



RA Mediterranean	Age	Status	Gender	Country of Origin	Arrival Date to Country/Locality	Date of the Interview
1	27	Temporary Protection	Male	Syria	2019/2019	31.08.2022
2	62	Temporary Protection	Male	Syria	2014/2015	31.08.2022
3	56	Temporary Protection	Male	Syria	2016/2016	01.09.2022
4	28-29	Temporary Protection	Male	Syria	2010/2019	31.08.2022
5	24	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	2013/2017	03.09.2022
6	57	Temporary Protection	Male	Syria	2015/2015	03.09.2022
7	43	Temporary Protection	Male	Syria	2103/2016	01.09.2022
8	20	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	2015/2015	01.09.2022
9	Around 40	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	2012/2014	04.09.2022
10	58	Temporary Protection	Male	Syria	2012/2017	01.09.2022
11	22	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	2016/2016	02.09.2022

11 interviews were made in the ST East Marmara locality.

**The Basic Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Migrant Focus Group Participants in the RA Mediterranean (#1)**

RA Mediterranean	Age	Status	Gender	Country of Origin	Date of the Focus Group
1	23	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022
2	20	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022
3	40	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022
4	She does	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022



	not know				
5	44	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022
6	38	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022
7	55	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022
8	20	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022
9	22	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022
10	67	Temporary Protection	Female	Syria	11.10.2022

### The Basic Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Non-Migrant Focus Group Participants in the RA Mediterranean (#2)

RA Mediterranean	Age	Status	Gender	Country of Origin	Arrival Date to Country/Locality	Date of the Focus Group
1	Around 45	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey/Urfa	NA	12.10.2022
2	Around 30	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey/Urfa	NA	12.10.2022
3	Around 50	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey/Urfa	NA	12.10.2022
4	46	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey/Urfa	NA	12.10.2022
5	48	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey/Urfa	NA	12.10.2022
6	Around 40	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey/Urfa	NA	12.10.2022
7	Around 35	Turkish Citizen	Female	Turkey/Urfa	NA	12.10.2022

### The Basic Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Non-Migrant Focus Group Participants in the RA Mediterranean (#3 and #4)

Focus group #3 had 7 participants whose age varied between 39 and 56. All of them were married with children (with 2 to 4 children). 5 of them had graduated from primary school, one from elementary school. One woman had a university degree from a two-year program (she was the wife of a public officer in the village). 3 women did not possess any land or animal, while the others were small farmers. The focus group #4 was again conducted with rural women from another village living close to the tent areas. This focus group had 7 participants



whose ages varied between 51 and 56. They were small farmers. Part of their land was recently confiscated by the state after which they were paid. They were all married with children/grandchildren.



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004714