“I AM NOT A REFUGEE”: SYRIAN PROFESSIONALS IN İSTANBUL

by

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ABSTRACT

The Syrian refugee population of three million in Turkey consists of a wide spectrum of people that includes low-wage workers to wealthy businessmen setting up factories, from conservative Islamists to radical leftists. By acknowledging this diversity, this thesis focuses on unpacking the multi-layered and differentiated experiences among those more "fortunate" refugees, (a paradoxical-sounding and often overlooked category), namely, Syrian professionals in İstanbul and their self-perceptions that center on forced mobility experiences. Based on the qualitative research, which includes 19 formal in-depth interviews and participation in many social activities such as home-gatherings and social outings, the argument is twofold: first, that the interlocutors exhibit a particular type of class-based management of refugee-ness by strategically drawing on their previous economic resources, social networks and cultural competencies while also striving to accumulate new ones. Building on this argument, this thesis claims that the interlocutors do not want to be perceived as a part of the larger Syrian *refugee* community. This becomes a way of escaping from the precarious refugee situation as well as -deliberately or indeliberately- asserting their differences based on cultural competencies and wealth. These arguments are not a refusal to acknowledge the shared difficulties and anxieties of forced mobility and the ongoing war in Syria among Syrians, but rather, they highlight the differential vulnerabilities, concerns and ways of dealing with refugee experiences.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, social class, middle class refugees, refugee experiences, mass refugee influx, refugee subjectivity

ÖZET

Düşük ücretli işçiden fabrika açan zengin iş adamına, muhafazakar İslamcıdan radikal solcuya, Türkiye'deki üç milyon civarındaki Suriyeli mülteci nüfusu çok farklı kimlikteki insanları kapsıyor. Bu çeşitliliğin farkında olarak, bu çalışma kapsayıcı mülteci kategorisinin içinden çelişkili gözüken ve gözden kaçan, daha "şanşlı ve zengin" mültecilerin çok yönlü ve farklılaşan deneyimlerini incelemektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, bu çalışma İstanbul'daki Suriyeli profesyonellerin zorunlu göç deneyimlerine ve kendilerini nasıl algıladıklarına odaklanmaktadır. 19 derinlemesine mülakat ve katılımcı gözlemden oluşan nitel araştırmaya dayanarak, bu çalışmanın iki temel argümanı vardır: Birincisi, görüşme yapılan kişilerin mülteciliği sınıf temelli olarak idare ettikleri görülmüştür. sergilemektedir. Bu idare biçimleri görüşmecilerin daha önceden biriktirdikleri ekonomik kaynakların, sosyal ağların ve kültürel yetkinliklerinin stratejik olarak kullanımına ve yeni oluşan ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel kaynakların birikmesine bağlı olarak geliştirilmektedir. İkincisi, görüşmeciler, kendilerinin Suriyeli <u>mülteci</u> topluluğunun bir parçası olarak görülmesini reddetmektedir. Sınıf temelli mültecilikle başa çıkma çabaları ve kendilerini mülteci topluluğununa ait görmemeleri, hem güvencesiz mültecilik durumundan kaçmaya; hem de kendilerinin kültürel yetkinlik ve ekonomik sermayelerine bağlı olan farklılıklarının, farkında olarak veya olmayarak, öne çıkarmalarına sebep olmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma yukarıdaki iki argüman aracılığı ile zorunlu göç ve süregiden Suriye'deki savaşın sebep olduğu ortak zorlukları ve kaygıları reddetmekten ziyade bu ortak deneyimin içindeki farklılaşan zorlukların, endişelerin ve mültecilikle başa çıkma yollarının altını çizmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Suriyeli mülteciler, sosyal sınıf, orta sınıf mülteciler, mültecilik deneyimleri, toplu mülteci akımları, mülteci öznellikleri

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A violent crackdown on the uprising by the Assad regime turned into first an armed conflict between the regime and several opposition groups and then into a regional proxy war with the involvement of Russia, Iran, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and several European States including the UK and France. The six years of intensifying war in Syria has had a devastating impact on civilians, cultural heritage, infrastructure and economy. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2015), three in four Syrians live in poverty and 67 percent of the population in Syria lives in extreme poverty. In the context of deteriorating economic conditions, human right violations, atrocities and war crimes conducted by the regime, jihadist groups and militias, over 250,000 people have been killed and two million people wounded (SOHR, 2016). 6.6 million people as of December 2015 (IDMC 2016) are internally displaced and almost five million people fled to neighboring countries including Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt (UNHCR 2016). More than one million Syrians have reached European countries while Fortress Europe has tried to close its doors to refugees (UNHCR 2016). According to official figures, more than three million Syrians currently live in Turkey (UNHCR 2017).

In Turkey, three widespread representations of Syrian refugees shape public discussions and political stands. First, Syrian refugees as “burden,” “terrorists,” “taking jobs of Turkish people,” “threat to national security,” “cowards,” who escape from

fighting for their homeland. Second is Syrian refugees as “fellow-Muslims,” “orphans,” and “our guests.” In response to the first reactionary discourse and second depoliticized, more self-praising attitude, several activists assert that Syrian refugees are neither a burden nor guests, they are people with a right to seek asylum. To draw attention to this, some of them share several stories of refugees from their own voices. Yet, the refugees “given voice” are mainly highly educated and with greater social capital, they are entrepreneurs who open bookstores, artists who exhibit their own works and so on. These “productive,” artistic” and “intelligent” refugees become the third representation of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Although the lines between different representations blur when several political and media actors strategically use different representations of Syrian refugees for their own ends, this war of representation silences significant differences and inequalities among Syrian refugees. Syrians in Turkey are a diverse refugee population holding different class positions in Turkey. The Syrian refugee population of three million consists of a wide spectrum of people that includes low-wage workers to wealthy businessmen setting up factories, from conservative Islamists to radical leftists.

By acknowledging this diversity, this thesis focuses on unpacking the multi-layered and differentiated experiences of Syrian refugees based on class differences rather than reaching a general conclusion about Syrian refugees in Turkey. With this aim, I study refugee experiences among those more “fortunate” refugees, (a paradoxical-sounding and often overlooked category), namely, Syrian professionals in İstanbul and their self-perceptions that center on forced mobility experiences. I ask (1) how Syrian

professional refugees navigate difficulties of forced mobility and refugee-ness, -the state of being a refugee-, in İstanbul? (2) How do they perceive themselves in the larger Syrian refugee community?

Critical scholarship focusing on people's experiences in refugee studies highlights the heterogeneity of experiences of displacement and dispossession based on various factors including age, gender, religious identity and disability status (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et. al 2014). However, the ways in which class and socio-economic inequalities have an impact on refugee experiences is surprisingly understudied, let alone the experiences of more "fortunate" refugees. From this perspective, this study is important for understanding the uneven and differentiated experiences of being a refugee as they intersect with the changing socio-economic positions held by refugees.

1.1 Methodology

This study is based on the qualitative research I conducted, which includes 19 formal in-depth interviews and participation in some social activities such as home-gatherings and social outings in İstanbul between January and June 2016. Interviews took place in locations that my interlocutors chose, which were usually coffee shops, bars and restaurants around Taksim and Kadıköy. At times when my interlocutors felt uncomfortable about being recorded, I did not record those interviews. A few times I visited my interlocutors in their workplaces and houses to conduct an interview. In formal interviews, I was particularly interested in my interlocutors' life stories as they centered on their forced mobility experience. Through these life story interviews, I collected data

about their lives before moving to Turkey, the journey from Syria to Turkey, their lives in Turkey and İstanbul and their future plans.

My aim in these life story interviews was to be able to situate the experience of forced mobility in their lives and the larger context of socio-economic changes. Yet, it should be noted that the series of events unfolding in Turkey after my fieldwork that include a naturalization plan for Syrian refugees in June and the coup attempt in July, along with other events in Syria and other countries have seriously impacted my interlocutors' experiences and discourses. Particularly, a citizenship path that has been proposed is not about providing citizenship for all Syrians, but only skilled ones. Considering educational backgrounds and professional skills, this naturalization project is directly related to my interlocutors. However, I was not able to analyze the impact of these serious factors as my fieldwork and this work should be understood in its own temporality, which was between January and June 2016.

I reached out to my interlocutors through using my social contacts, which consisted of Syrians living outside of Turkey, Turkish citizens working with Syrian refugees, and other foreigners who knew some Syrian people living in Turkey. Through these different networks, I developed relationships with a relatively diverse population. It should also be mentioned that all the names, as well as some occupations and personal details have been changed to protect the anonymity of my interlocutors.

Even though the aim of my fieldwork was to approximate forced mobility experiences and self-perceptions of Syrian professional refugees within a larger refugee community, I do not claim an objective representation of professional refugees'

experiences because of the various limitations related to the design of my fieldwork as well as my own positionality as a researcher. The fieldwork was mainly based on in-depth interviews, which limited my ability to discover the "real," and "objective" journey of forced mobility. Rather than participating in these processes, I evaluated people's experiences based on their reflections and articulations. Some of their reflections on various experiences, especially, on the process of acquiring work permit and citizenship provided us with perceptions of and imaginaries based on these processes and do not necessarily reflect legal requirements in their entirety. Although they might reflect how these legal requirements are experienced on the ground, it should be highlighted that there are certain discrepancies between their reflections and objective requirements on paper. I do not dismiss those articulations, which sometimes consisted of contradictions and false information as mere fabrications. Rather, these articulations, along with others helped me to explore how my informants made sense of their experiences and perceived themselves, even though realities might be different or more complicated.

Another reason why I refuse to claim an objective representation of Syrian professionals is related to my positionality. As other fieldworkers, I did not enter into the field with a —seemingly— natural and apolitical position enabling me to discover the realities of Syrian professionals. My own background, contradictory identities, assumptions and foreknowledge about Syrians and theories on migration shaped my interactions with my interlocutors' articulations, our interaction as well as the analysis of fieldwork. Being a young Turkish woman, who has experiences in other Arab countries and intermediate knowledge of Arabic had both advantages and disadvantages during

fieldwork. Some of my interlocutors asked me whether the project had any political connotations and if yes, they would refuse to be interviewed. Some of them felt uneasy about discussing Turkish bureaucracy with me, some of them were eager to tell me about problems that they encountered in Turkey. These examples reflect the larger issue, that my interlocutors, as many other interlocutors in other studies, decide what they would tell me and what they would not, depending on various factors that cannot be separated from our interactions.

I conducted interviews mainly in English in addition to Turkish and Arabic. During Arabic interviews, one of my Syrian interlocutors served as translator. Communicating in English cast certain limitations onto the analysis as this project is mainly based on interviews and articulations about experiences. English was neither their nor my native language. When communicating through English, sometimes my interlocutors had to simplify their description of experiences even though they might have more complicated and nuanced ideas of several situations and their self-descriptions in their own tongue.

My own positionality related to my background, gender, age, class, citizenship, and previous experiences does not only affect my interlocutor, it should also be understood as a location from which questions were —or were not asked— and written analysis was constructed. For this reason, fieldwork and the writing of this thesis cannot simply be reduced to a mechanical process, in which data were collected and scientific knowledge was transmitted through writing. Rather, it was a process charged with excitement and anxieties. It was exciting to hear stories that challenged many basic

assumptions about refugees, and to change some of my questions based on repeated ideas that I had not previously thought about. As a person believing in the right to seek asylum, it was not easy to listen —and not to react— to some of my interlocutors' thoughts about other Syrians who tried to cross EU borders. And it was harder to find a language to discuss these issues without eliminating the many complexities.

Even though I tried to be as diligent as possible, these limitations and difficulties should be acknowledged before starting analysis, rather than approaching this study as a way to grasp the general realities of Syrian professionals.

From Middle Classes to Professionals and Characteristics of Interlocutors

I started this project with the goal of exploring the experiences of middle class refugees. However, the concept of middle class is complicated, and includes various groups of people, especially when approaching class as not merely an occupational category or the structural location in response to modes of production and wealth accumulation, but also as lived experience and relational social and cultural constructions within the changing social and economic inequalities. This is why some critical scholars (Lange and Meier 2009; Heiman et al. 2012) prefer to talk about middle classes, rather than the middle class. From this perspective, Syrian -lower and upper- middle classes also consist of heterogeneous groups that take into account their occupations, income and ways of life as I will further discuss in the third chapter. Traditional, conservative shopkeepers in Aleppo (Rabo 2005); ulama and religious groups (Pierret 2015); newly rich groups with their rural origin and affiliations to Assad regime (Perthes 1997);

offspring of older elite families, who see themselves as “harbingers of modernity” (Rabo 2005, 97) are, among others, members of the middle class in Syria, who distinguish themselves from each other and the larger population.

Considering the stories that my interlocutors told me about their family status back in Syria, urban-rural origins, and relations with the regime, they would be identified as members of different middle class groups in Syria. Still, the divergences among my interlocutors did not allow me to call them as "representatives" of the Syrian middle classes as I already missed people from other groups such as shopkeepers, artisans and small manufacturers with their assumed distinctive identifications. At the same time, the varied religious, political and cosmopolitan identifications do not allow me to specify their middle class-ness in a certain way such as global middle class, or older petite bourgeoisie. After discovering limited heterogeneity within the group, I take professional as a heuristic term, which hinges upon the middle class characteristics of my interlocutors with their higher education, occupations, individual aspirations and urban origins in order to articulate self-perceptions and experiences.

Age		**Relationship Status**		**Education**		**City of Origin**		**Political Stand towards the situation in Syria**		**Gender**		**Duration of Their Stay in İstanbul**	
20s	5	Single	8	University Graduate	14	Damascus	12	Revolutionary	11	Male	12	4 years	2
30s	8	Married	5	University Student	1	Aleppo	3	Neutral/Reluctant to Discuss	5	Female	7	3 years	6
40s	5	Living with Partners	3	MA	2	Homs	3	Anti-Revolutionary	2			2 years	4
50s	1	Engaged	2	PhD	1	Jeddah (Saudi Arabia)	1					1 year	4
		Widow	1	MBA (in progress)	1							less than a year	3

While the majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey come from rural areas of Aleppo, Idlib and Raqqa (AFAD 2014), my interlocutors are mainly from urban areas, particularly Damascus. All of them are at least university graduates while some others obtained their MA and PhD degrees. These characteristics highlight the urban educated background of the Syrian professionals that I interviewed.

Many of my interlocutors are direct or indirect supporters of the non-violent uprising against the Assad regime that started in 2011 and framed it as revolution, which is why I identity their political stands towards Syria as revolutionary. None of them are—at least not openly—supporters of armed struggle. Some of them are reluctant to talk about the uprising and the current situation in Syria. For instance, one of my interlocutors asked me whether my research had a 'political agenda' and if so, he would not like to be interviewed. Lastly, two of my interviews are highly critical about the uprising in Syria. They have never used the term revolution. However, they highlight that they are neither supporters of the regime nor the uprising. They believe that there should be more gradual change in Syria and this option had lost its ground due to the uprising in 2011.

In addition to information provided in the table, there are some striking similarities and differences between them. First of all, except for three of my interlocutors, all travelled by plane to İstanbul. The main route was to cross the border of Lebanon and take a flight from Beirut to İstanbul while the majority of refugees in Turkey crossed the land border between Syria and Turkey (AFAD 2014). Four of them

came from other countries including Russia, Egypt, UAE and Saudi Arabia by plane. But, it should also be noted that they had lived in Syria and moved to these countries after 2011. Also, the parents of my thirteen interlocutors have continued to live in Syria, in relatively safe areas, which have mainly been under regime control.

5 Ex-Professions or Aspiring Professionals with residence permit	Previous lawyer (currently unemployed), previous pharmacist (currently unemployed), university student, previous lawyer (homemaker), English teacher (homemaker)
8 Professionals with work permits and or residence permits	Computer Engineer, Customer service director, doctor, real estate agents, engineer, professors
6 Freelancers with residence permit (except one)	photographer, painter/graphic designer, journalists, writer

I regrouped my interlocutors into three different categories. The first group consists of Syrians who were professionals or aspiring professionals in Syria. They could not manage to work as professionals in İstanbul and/or they have decided to continue their education. The second group consists of Syrians who continued to work as professionals in various sectors. While some of them have changed their professions, some others have continued to work in their own specialized fields. The last group consists of Syrian professionals working as freelancers in the field of arts or media. As in the second group, some of them have continued to practice in their own field back in Syria, some others have become freelancers and journalists in İstanbul. When I first started my fieldwork, I did not take having residence permits or work permits as significant criteria for choosing my interviewees. However, I later discovered that all of my interviews except for one have either work or residence permits, which is a reflection

of their financial means as this permit necessitates proving the possession of at least 6000 U.S. dollars for one year in the applicant’s bank account during the time of application.

1.2 Arguments and Structure of the Thesis

By following the narratives of Syrian professionals about forced mobility, refugee-ness, and social and economic exclusion/inclusion in İstanbul, my argument in this thesis is twofold: first, that my interlocutors exhibit a particular type of class-based management of refugee-ness by strategically drawing on their previous economic resources, social networks and cultural competencies while also striving to accumulate new ones. Building on this argument, I claim that my interlocutors do not want to be perceived as a part of the larger Syrian *refugee* community. This becomes a way of escaping from the precarious refugee situation as well as asserting their differences based on cultural competencies and wealth. These arguments are not a refusal to acknowledge the shared difficulties and anxieties of forced mobility and the ongoing war in Syria among Syrians, but rather, they highlight the differential vulnerabilities, concerns and ways of dealing with refugee experiences. I will explicate these arguments in the next four chapters.

In the second chapter, I will address several discussions within refugee studies about different categorizations of refugees and refugee experiences, which theoretically motivate me to understand the lived experiences of self-perceptions of Syrian professional refugees in İstanbul. My first aim, for this chapter is to situate this study in a larger theoretical discussion about differential refugee experiences and refugee

subjectivities. My second aim is to critically engage with some analytical tools and frameworks that refugee studies provide us in order to analyse my fieldwork.

The third chapter provides historical and legal background. In the first part of this chapter, I will provide an overview of the formation of middle and upper middle classes in Syria starting from the late Ottoman period until the uprising in 2011 in relation to larger socio-historical changes. Syrian professional refugees with their higher education, cultural competencies and economic resources were—most likely—members of the upper strata of Syrian society. Understanding their experiences of refugee-ness and tracing their self-perceptions about forced mobility necessitate familiarity with the socio-economic changes in Syria, through which the Syrian upper strata, (middle and upper-middle classes) has formed.

In the last part of the third chapter, I will lay out changes in the AKP government's policy towards Syrian refugees over the years. While providing a general overview of the policies, I will pay particular attention to policies regarding legal status and visa regulations, which are directly related to the experiences and concerns of Syrian professionals. My aim in this part is to provide a larger socio-legal framework in which Syrian professionals negotiate their position.

Tracing how my interlocutors navigate İstanbul, in the fourth chapter, I will explicate a particular type of class-based management of refugee-ness of my interlocutors by drawing on Bourdieu's conceptualization of class and forms of capital. To negotiate their vulnerable positions as Syrians and to overcome various problems related to legal status, jobs and housing, this chapter explains how Syrian professionals strategically

mobilize their economic resources (economic capital), social networks (social capital), educational credentials and cultural competencies (cultural capital) as many other refugees do. However, the amount and composition of Syrian professionals' capital differentiate their trajectories as well as their problems even though they also hold a precarious position in their new social and economic environment, which is full of uncertainty and instability.

Building on the previous chapter that discusses the ways in which Syrian professionals deal with refugee-ness, in the fifth chapter, I will discuss Syrian professionals' self-perceptions and how they situate themselves within the larger refugee community. In this chapter, I will argue that my interlocutors deploy a micro politics of invisibility. This individualized tactic is a way not to be labelled as a refugee on the practical and discursive level in order to escape from the precariousness of being a refugee and to deal with stigmas related to the representation of the figure of the refugee in the media and political discussions. On the practical level, I will first discuss their strategic choice of obtaining residence permits to find a position, which is less attached to Syrian refugees in a given legal framework. Second, I will explain their attitudes and thoughts of Aksaray, the most visible Syrian neighborhood in İstanbul and their choice of local and cosmopolitan neighborhoods to settle and hang out. On the discursive level, I will explain their refusal of identification with underprivileged Syrians, their direct refusal of refugee identity and their negative depiction of Syrians trying to cross EU borders.

CHAPTER II

UNPACKING REFUGEE AND REFUGEE EXPERIENCES WITHIN REFUGEE STUDIES

In this chapter of the thesis, I will lay out different approaches and theoretical discussions within refugee studies, which push me to delve into the lived experiences and self-perceptions of a relatively invisible refugee group, namely Syrian professional refugees in İstanbul.

First, I will address discussions on definitions of refugee in the literature in order to address ambiguous legal-political and moral issues that Syrian refugees encounter. Contestations and disagreements about the legal and analytical categorical definition of refugee destabilize our straightforward use of the category of Syrian refugees and help us to understand multifaceted experiences of forced mobility. Yet, this discussion on refugee category does not enable us to explore lived experiences.

At the second part of the chapter, I will lay out discussions on refugee experiences in the literature. Although some scholars aim to capture "the" refugee experiences, several studies, which are tuned to historical contexts and impacts of other identities and inequalities shows us multifaceted and differentiated experiences. As this study is also about how social class and refugee experiences interact, I will pay particular attention how refugee studies approach to social class, a neglected topic, in order to capture uneven refugee experiences. In this part, I will also include Bourdieu's conceptualization of forms of capital as it is used to understand a class based differentiation of refugee experiences in the literature and as I will also draw on Bourdieu's concepts to understand

Syrian professionals' experiences in İstanbul.

Final part of the chapter will be about discussion on refugee self-identifications. While studies on experiences of forced mobility and refugee show us the complicated and differentiated situation of refugee-ness, they do not necessarily talk about how refugees define themselves based on these different experiences and historical contexts. At this point, studies on refugee subjectivities help us understand how people make sense of these experiences as well as how they mobilize or reject politically loaded refugee as a category.

At the intersection of these three discussions in the refugee studies, my aim is to contribute into a broader conceptual discussion on the subjectivities of refugees and differentiated experiences of refugee-ness as this study is about mechanisms of dealing with the forced mobility by a particular class of Syrians in İstanbul; their self-perceptions of forced mobility experiences, how they articulate these experiences and perceptions at the intersection of their class identity in order to define themselves.

2.1 "Who is a Refugee?" Refugee as a Legal and Analytical Category

The figure of the contemporary refugee is a modern phenomenon, whose genealogy can be traced back to post WW II era. Although deportations and expulsions had previously occurred, displaced people were considered as a part of military problem until the end of immediate postwar years. Yet, within the postwar conditions, which included experiences of mass expulsions and flights in Europe, the establishment of institutions, mainly UNHCR, and international law enforcements, refugees have become

a part of international humanitarian issues despite security concerns have still influenced on refugee policies. Refugee, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." Within institutional, legal and practical settings, "refugee emerged as a knowable and nameable figure" (Malkki 1995 p. 498) in the nation-state world.

Starting from the World War II to the current 'refugee crisis,' this known figure of refugee is an object of media and political discussions. Yet, to whom are we talking about when we are talking about refugees, Syrian refugees? Previous studies document that these questions are neither straightforward nor rhetorical. They lay out contestations and disagreements about how to name this figure as a socio-legal category (Shacknove 1985; Randkin 2005) as well as analytical category (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, et. al. 2014).

In the article, *Who is a Refugee?*, Shacknove (1985) aims to provide us a more inclusive definition of refugee since the legal category of refugee confers certain rights on individuals, such as eligibility to material relief, asylum and permanent settlement, international protection. He defends that the refugee status should be granted to the ones who have basic threats to their individual beings. These basic threats, for Shacknove, should not be limited to the category of persecution, as in the definition of UNHCR. That is why he also includes categories of vital (economic) subsistence, and natural calamities. However, he highlights that "[r]efugee status should only be granted to persons whose

government fails to protect their basic needs" (p. 284). So, even though the category of refugee has been expanded, it is still defined within the nation-state framework.

Shacknove and some other scholars (Rankin 2005) also show us various national and international jurisdictions have different definition of the legal category of refugee based on different historical and political contexts while UNHCR definition has still been a reference point. The refugee status, for Organization for African Union, is applied the ones who are "owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality" (cited from Rankin 2005, p. 407). This different definition refers to historical time that OAU Convention was signed in the context of independence movements and decolonization which led to displacement of hundreds of thousands people (Rankin 2005).

Scholars working on refugee studies in Congo, Turkey, Monaco, and Madagascar also points out a political notion of the category of the refugee definition. These four states are a few examples of signatories of UNHCR with a geographical limitation (D'Avanzo 2012). Accordingly, the legal category of refugee is granted to people "fleeing as a consequence of events occurring in Europe" (UNHCR). İcduygu and Keyman (2000) argue that the geographical limitation in the Turkish context is a product of Cold War logic in which "the possibility of becoming both a receiving and a transit country through non-European migration (refugee) flows was not taken seriously" (p. 385).

These studies show us refugee as a legal category is not fixed, rather contested and

changed within historical and political context. There is a need to specify that when we are talking about refugees, we are not always talking about people with -different- legal status, but rather taking refugee as an analytical category to acknowledge a forced nature of migration. Yet, to what extent is refugee as an analytical category well defined?

While definition of the legal category of refugee has been ambiguous political issue, scholars working on migration, citizenship and human rights issue also point out elusiveness of refugee as an analytical category.

Building on Agier (2008)'s statement about the lack of the refugee definition in academia, Wessel (2016) argues that "we don't have the vocabulary to distinguish among different "refugee figures" in political theory yet" (p. 46). For this reason, refugees and undocumented migrants are categorically equated to each other. For Wessel, they are analytically distinguished categories and acknowledging their differences would allow us to understand European refugee policy. In the *Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies,* Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. (2014) also point out "[t]here is no definitive consensus among researchers about where the boundaries of refugee and forced migration studies should be drawn" while researchers cannot answer "[w]ho a refugee is and how we can define and understand" (p. 1). Cernea (1993) also illustrates the lack of substantive differences between "refugees" and "people ousted by development projects," which lead us to questioning usefulness of refugee as a distinct analytical category.

Acknowledging these messy categorizations of refugee in political and academic fields is important to better understand lived experiences and cope with strategies of refugees. Experiences are shaped in the social context, in which legal and social

constructions of individuals' identities by others have a material and symbolic impact on people's daily life. In the context of Syrians in Turkey, who cannot be entitled to a legal refugee status, but are always referred to Syrian refugees in academic and non-academic context. What are the impacts of this seemingly contradictory categorization on the lives of Syrian professionals in Turkey?

It should be also noted that, in this thesis, by agreeing with Malkki (1995) who argues, "term refugee has analytical usefulness [...] as a broad legal or descriptive rubric that includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations" (p. 496), I will continue to use refugee as a holistic concept including different groups of people, who are forced to move, rather than approaching it as a fixed legal or analytical category.

2.2 Experiences of Refugees

Literature on refugee experiences does not necessarily get into discussions on the impact of taking refugee as an analytical category on daily life of people forcing to leave their location. In the most inclusive form, refugee is taken as an analytical category defining the ones, "who have been identified by the international community as asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), development induced displaced persons, or trafficked persons, as well as all those whose claim to such labels may have been denied, but who have been forced to move against their will as a result of persecution, conflict, or insecurity" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et. al. 2014, p. 4).

In response to some scholars (Stein 1981; Aiger 2008) providing ahistorical and homogenized account of "the" refugee experiences, there are other scholars laying out differentiated refugee experiences based on socio-historical conditions (Al-Ali, et al. 2001; Chatty 2010; Malkki 1995, 1996, 2002) and how being a refugee interacts with other identities and inequalities (Lukic, and Nikitovic 2004; Lee and Brotman 2011, Holm Pedersen 2012; Morawska 2010; Koyama 2013; Sanadjian 2002; Van Hear 1998, 2006; Mason 2011; Gill et. al. 2011; Smyth and Kum 2010; Chatelard 2009, 2010; Creese and Wiebe 2012)

Stein (1981) and Aiger (2008) provide a structural analysis of the universal refugee experience while dividing it into different stages. Aiger delineates three sequential stages of the experience that forms the refugee identity; state of destruction; state of confinement and moment of action. Stein, on the other hand, has nine different stages starting from a perception of a threat to "residual states and changes in behavior caused by the experience" (p. 321). The aim of providing 'the' refugee experience is, as written by Aiger, to "reveal the universal dimension of this phenomenon, which is no way ethic or particularistic" (p. 4). Yet, they disregard socio-historical contexts generating different refugee movements and internal differences and inequalities among refugees to portray a unified and homogenized refugee condition. Through this kind of decontextualized representation, the refugee, evokes a kind of person, share "a common condition or nature" (Malkki, 1995, p. 511).

In contrast to this abstract idea of the refugee experience, detailed studies on refugee experiences and practices provide us ethnographically oriented research on

refugee experiences, which are tuned to historical and political contexts leading to different refugee experiences.

Chatty (2010) compares various coping strategies and resilience of Armenian, Circassian and Chechnyan refugees with Kurdish and Palestinians by using oral history techniques. Malkki's (2012) research on Hutu refugees in Tanzania unpacks how institutional and social settings between camps and towns differentiate experiences of camp and town refugees that cannot be simplified under the refugee experiences. Al-Ali et al (2001) compares the experiences of Bosnian refugees in the UK and the Netherlands with the Eritrean refugees in the UK and Germany to highlight different transnational practices of refugees based on historical and political contexts.

Some other scholars highlight the role of skills, demographical characteristics and identities based on education, gender, race, religion, disability, and social class in order to capture different levels of vulnerabilities, inequalities and differentiated experiences among refugees.

2.2.1 Gendered Refugee Experiences

Feminist scholars working on refugees remind us structural inequalities among people based on gender and how refugee experiences have always gendered. In the edited book *Engendering Forced Migration* (2008), Indra highlights gender is not a mere topic or topical framework within the refugee studies. "Gender is instead a key relational dimension of human activity and thought—activity and thought informed by cultural and

individual notions of men and women—having consequences for their social or cultural positioning and the ways in which they experience and live their lives" (p. 2). Following similar line of thoughts, yet without using the term gender, Harrell-Bond (1986) documents different refugee situation for men and women in her influential work *Imposing Aid*. In the cultural context of Uganda, Harrell-Bold argues, women hold consequential economic and social responsibilities, yet Ugandan refugee men are the main recipients of refugee aid programs. In this way, refugee aid programs disempower Ugandan women refugees in the Southern Sudan.

Furthermore, feminist scholars highlight the logic of unequal conditions among different genders to hold a refugee status by pointing on public-private sphere differences in the context of refugees:

> "[T]he key criteria for being a refugee are drawn primarily from the realm of public sphere activities dominated by men. With regard to private sphere activities where women's presence is more strongly felt, there is primarily silence - silence compounded by an unconscious calculus that assigns the critical quality "political" to many public activities but few private ones" (Indra 1987, p. 3)

In this sense, refugee experiences as well as claiming refugee status have different, and hierarchical, meanings and implications among different genders. Gender and gender roles has shaped women's experiences as not being able to get a legal refugee status because of public-private distinction. Also being a refugee could reshape culturally coded gender roles and power relations as in the case of aid programs for Ugandan refugees.

2.2.2 Skilled Refugee Experiences

Studies exploring experiences of skilled refugees also challenge the possibility of 'the' refugee experience by unpacking preferential treatment and implementation of selective policies towards educated, young refugees over dependent, uneducated and elderly ones (Creese and Wiebe 2009; Lukic, and Nikitovic 2004). Therefore, qualified professional Iraqi refugees more smoothly find place in other Arab countries (De Bel Air 2007; Chatelard 2010); skilled and educated Eastern European refugees such as professionals, artists, scientist, intellectuals were able to continue their professions in Western Europe after the ethnic ‘cleansing’ by Soviet authorities (Morawska 2000).

Despite skilled professional refugees are privileged over unskilled and uneducated refugees, some of these studies also document experiences of deskilling, de-professionalization and downward mobility among these refugees because of various reasons including racism, ethnically stigmatized biases, devaluation of previous education and professional experiences (Holm Pedersen 2012; Van Hear 1998; Creese and Wiebe 2012; Smyth and Kum 2010).

In *New Diasporas,* Van Hear's (1998) analysis of the case of Kuwait Palestinians in Jordan who forced to migrate due to the Gulf War in 1991 is an example of these studies exploring differentiated experiences related to skills. He divides Kuwait Palestinians into six different groups based on their skills and professionals. One of these groups is consisted of unskilled workers in Kuwait. They generally could not find regular employment and live in poor and overcrowded place in Jordan. Petty traders and small business owners are part of second group, who does not hold any work related

entitlements. Their downward mobility experience is, for Van Hear, sharper because, they cannot transfer majority of their assets, which are immovable. Professionals and managers, on the other hand find jobs, even though these jobs are not necessarily related to their professions. Van Hear shows us professional and managerial skills are more smoothly transferred from Kuwait to Jordan although all of these groups experience downward social mobility.

To what extent are professional and managerial skills and high educations easily transferable from one social-economic context to another during forced migration? At this point, Creese and Wiebe's study on experiences of well-educated African migrants and refugees in Vancouver, Canada demonstrates us refugees cannot mobilize their professional and educational backgrounds because of racism and lack of cultural capital including recognized academic credentials, right accents, non-racialized bodies and cultural knowledge in the socio-political context of Vancouver, Canada. For this reason, highly skilled and well-educated African refugees experience downward occupational mobility and found "survival employment," which Creese and Wiebe defines as jobs that refugees and migrants have to take even though they are "well below their qualifications – and their dignity – in order to ensure basic economic survival" (61). African refugees and migrants practically and discursively try to manage this situation. On the practical level, African women pursue further education in Canadian institutions in order to get a better job. African men and women also reaffirm their professional status and criticize racism and structural inequalities in Canada.

Sexual orientation, gender and skill are considerably more emphasized factors that

are explored in order to understand heterogeneity of refugee experiences based on identities and backgrounds. Yet, social class and class identities are one of the neglected topics even though it would also help us to move beyond the homogenized refugee experience account. In *Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies,* while editors applaud anthropological and sociological studies highlighting plurality and diversity of human experiences of displacement and dispossessions, they give examples of factors including "age, gender, sexual orientation, health and disability status, or religious identity" (p. 4). I believe that the absence of social class and class identities in the list is not a mere accident, but it rather shows us the invisibility of classed based refugee experiences as well as exclusion of class related studies in the forced migration and refugee studies.

2.2.3 Classed Refugee Experiences

There are different ways in which class is used in refugee studies. Some scholars use class an an analytical category to explain spatial mobility of refugees. Some others approach class as an identity, which is remade through experiences of forced mobility.

Some scholars (Van Hear 2006, 2016; Mason 2011; Chatelard 2009, 2010) approach class and socio-economic differences as an instrument to explore uneven spatial mobility among refugees. While many of people experiencing forced mobility search for security and protection, the ones holding certain social and economic capitals are able to reach certain destinations.

Mason (2011) does not use the concept of class, yet, we can still take her study on the experiences Iraqis seeking sanctuary in Jordan as one of a few studies exploring the role of socio-economic differences among refugees. She draws on the notion of motility in mobility literature referring to "how socio-economic circumstance enables/determines physical mobilities and vice versa" (p. 354). Although pan-Arab ideologies in Jordan leads to open-door policies for people fleeing Iraq, she shows us motility is not experienced evenly among Iraqis in Jordan. She argues, "those without high levels of social or financial capital have been left 'im-mobilised' and this lack of spatial mobility has then re-inscribed their lack of socio-economic mobility " (p. 354). As Chatelard (2010) also shows Iraqis fleeing to Jordan are members of the urban middle and upper middle class who are mainly from Baghdad.

Mason does not prefer to conceptualize these enabling social and economic capitals as a starting point to discuss a more complex issue of social class. For Van Hear, mobilization of different forms of capitals would allow us to discuss the role of social class in the context of refugees and forced migration. In a similar line, Van Hear explores the impact of similar socio-economic differences on spatial mobility of refugees. Yet, building on Bourdieu's forms of capitals, Van Hear conceptualizes class as "a shorthand for endowments of different forms of capital – economic, social, cultural, symbolic, human" (p. 2). He argues that in the context of forced migration, people mobilize and convert these different forms of capitals into each other in order to reach certain destinations, which are more prosperous and desirable such as North America, Europe and Australia. "There is a hierarchy of destinations" for Van Hear, "that can be reached by

migrants and asylum seekers, according to the resources -- financial and network-based -- that they can call upon" (p. 3). In the case of taking irregular routes to reach these destinations, it becomes necessary to get into contact with smugglers (social capital) and to pay these agents certain amount of money (economic capital). Even though the economic capital is the most valorized form of capital, "[s]ome of the poor/less well endowed may be able to draw upon social networks and to convert social capital into the means to migrate" (p. 30). The ways in which individuals accumulate and convert these capitals into each other shape different forms, means, and patterns of migration process in the context of forced migration. For the reason that, this journey, particularly irregular routes, necessitates money, knowledge and social connection to smugglers.

Yet Chatterjii's (2013) analysis of Bengal diaspora challenges Van Hear, Chatelard and Mason's argument related to correlation between spatial mobility and social class in the forced mobility. Even though Van Hear (2014), in his later article, acknowledges that "while the less endowed must leave, the privileged may choose to stay. In challenging circumstances, the well endowed may have the resources to stay put." Yet he is only referring not to leave the conflicted zone by explaining "the means to bribe combatants on both sides of a conflict that [the well endowed] should be allowed to stay on" (p. 113). It appears that once they leave the country, the aim is to reach more desirable places, rather than staying within the neighboring countries.However, Chatterjii (2013) points out some of middle and upper middle class refugees prefer to stay on their region of origin rather than moving forward to affluent Western countries, where they believe they would not be adequately “respected” or “recognized.” Bengalis and Biharis mobilize their

"rich and complex bundles of assets and competences" (p. 284), including cash, education, land, social networks and know-how "to gain a foothold in their new settings" (p. 283) in East Pakistan rather than mobilizing them to reach more prosperous destinations such as Britain.

These studies lay out the uneven impact of previously held resources and positions on migration process and the ways in which refugees deal with the difficulties that they encounter in their new socio-economic context. Presence of well-to-do Syrians in Turkey complicates Van Hear's argument about relation between social and economic capital and spatial mobility. Do they really choice to stay in Turkey, rather than moving to more prosperous destination, or to what extent is it related to their failure to mobilize their capitals? What are some reasons for them to stay in Turkey? How do we can rethink hierarchies of destination in the forced mobility? To what extent does Syrian professional in Turkey share similar thoughts about affluent Western countries?

Even though these capitals and being able to convert them in the needed compositions in order to overcome spatial mobility explains one side of the story, social class is not merely "endowments of different forms and amounts of capital" (Van Hear 2014, p. 104). Following Bourdieu, same scholar that Van Hear builds on his concept of class, social class also provides an identity that is made and remade in relation to new socio-economic contexts, other identities and changes in these contexts and identities. Rather than taking social class as bundles of capitals unequally enabling or limiting people's mobility, Holm-Pedersen (2012) and Sanadjian (2002) show us how class identities of refugees have changed and remade through experiences of forced mobility.

Holm Pedersen (2012) argues, "the geographical movement that refugees make can, in many cases, also be conceptualized as a 'class journey'" (1103). While previous studies, which are mentioned above analyze the role of social class in dealings with refugeeness situation, Holm Petersen examines downward class mobility of Iraqi women in Denmark though the experience of well-educated Iraqi woman, Umm Zainap. Drawing on new social class studies, she has a more complex understanding of social class and class mobilities. In that sense, class is not only related to objective positions and resources that individuals held, but also a cultural identification meaning increase and decrease in forms of capital does not necessarily related to their social status. Capitals have ascribed values in their local contexts that define people's position. For example, level of education, place of living, knowledge of classical Arabic and Arab literary history are markers of upper-middle and middle class, which do not have any correspondence in Danish society. On the other hand, middle class in Denmark is a broad category, which verbalizes large sector of culturally, and linguistically homogenous Danish 'ordinary people'. Middle class identity in Denmark already excludes Muslim women, who are "categorised as 'oppressed', 'traditional', and lacking in 'sexual liberation'" (p. 1111). At the intersection of gender, religious identities, it is hard to get recognition of their previous experiences and resources, and that is why they experience downward class mobility.

While Holm Pedersen addresses the downward class journey of refugees by bringing discrepancies between class makers in different socio-economic contexts that refugees are grew up and settled in, Sanadjian's (2002) study on Iranian diaspora in

London provides us a valuable detailed analysis of how middle class refugees deal with their downward class mobility by expanding "war of position" (p. 92) in their new transnational space. Acknowledging devaluation of previously held capitals in their new context, which can be discerned in "their precarious position in the labour market; their questionable professional competence " (p. 89), Iranian middle class, for Sanadjian, aims to construct a bourgeoisie identity as well as distance themselves from the 'undesirable' behaviors and practices of their fellow Iranians in London in order to surmount their precarious situation in the Western context. This bourgeoisie identification reduces their possibly perceived Iranian otherness and enhancing their assimilation into London bourgeoisie as "restaurant goer," "delicatessen shopper," and "concert goer" (93).

These studies acknowledge social class as a way to explain unequal ways of spatial mobility, which leads to unequally increase in life opportunities in the context of forced mobility. Yet, they complicate the idea of social class in the refugee studies by exploring constructions, and reconfiguration of class and highlighting performative, constructive and embodied notion of social class positions. However, most of refugees have stayed in the borders of their country of origin (Chatterji 2013), these academic works focusing explicitly or implicitly on internal differentiation and social class based identity formation among refugees are based on researches in the affluent Western countries such as United Kingdom and Denmark. Exploring the case of Syrian refugees in neighbor countries including Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan would enable us to explore how social class plays a role in the non-Western context among presence of high number of refugees coming from same country of origin.

As many of these studies aiming to understand refugee experiences based on class, I will also draw on Bourdieu and his conceptualization of different forms of capital. Therefore, it is important to describe Bourdieu's economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital.

Bourdieu talks about four different forms of capitals; economic, social, cultural and symbolic which highlight the social position (Wacquant 1991) in order to capture multidimensional aspect of class, inequalities and power relations. As bearers of capitals, people invest in different forms of capitals and try to convert them to each other in order to secure their position or hold a higher position in the society (Bourdieu, 2011). These capitals are closely related and transposable into each other. The most fundamental one is economic capital as money, fortune and properties. It can be easily transferred into other types. The second one is social capital, which refers to durable social networks and connections of people including family, group and class membership. In contrast to more neutral understanding of social capital, he highlights an exclusionary aspect of this capital, which allows some people to access material resources, knowledge and information. Accordingly, he argues social capital should be analyzed in relation to structural inequalities and power relations which reproduce and shape the class relations within the society.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital points out the relationship between culture and class (Savage 1995; Reay 1998). It can exist in three different forms; (1) embodied form in the bodies and minds of people such as dispositions, manners and behaviors, (2) institutionalized form by diplomas and educational credentials, (3) objectivized form by

material objects such as books, artifacts and paintings (Bourdieu 2011). Cultural capital distinguishes itself through linguistic competence, previous academic culture, diplomas, formal knowledge, taste and general culture and it indicates one's social class position. The absence of cultural capital is used as an excuse for exclusion from resources, jobs, and high status groups. It signifies the class position with relation to other capitals as Jenkins (1982) points out "acquiring its significance only in the context of a complex of social life encompassing social capital (class position and social network) and economic capital as well" (276).

The last form of capital that Bourdieu suggests is symbolic capital. It has a distinct characteristic, which highlights internal and external recognition, legitimacy and prestige of an individual or group within a society. As many scholars argue social identity should be described by insiders as well as outsiders (Jenkins 1996; Brubaker & Cooper 2000), symbolic capital can be seen a basis of social class identity. It is a transversion of economic, social and cultural capitals while struggling for social recognition and power.

2.3 Self-Claimed Refugees

Exploring the role of social class, as not only a way to address unequal material access to various resources, but also as an identity with the interaction of being a refugee also necessitates to understand self-claimed -or self-refused- refugee identities. Scholars addressing refugee identities remind us that being a refugee is not a merely a legal and/or analytical category, but also an identity that people construct, politicize or reject

depending on connotations of being refugee in different local, national and global contexts.

In *Purity and Exile* (1992), Malkki's explores how Hutu refugees in isolated camps internalize and politicize the identity of refugee in order to define themselves as 'a nation in exile' (p. 35) and continue their emotional and political ties to their homeland, Burundi. Wettergren and Wikström (2014) also point out the legal category of refugee matters for Somali refugees in Sweden not only because it provides certain rights, but also it has a symbolic importance implying "public recognition of the asylum-seekers' credibility, of his/her not only 'true' suffering" as well as "'righteous' self-assertion as a political subject" (p.568). These different studies suggest that being a refugee is not only a technical legal issue, but rather it provides refugees as a way of recognition of their political subjectivity.

Scholars also highlight that a negative representation of the abject refugee figure, who is "pathologised and criminalised -and in the process im-mobilised" (Mason 2011, p. 355) in a local and global context. Rather than capitalizing the refugee identity, some refugees, such as Hutu town refugees "tended to pragmatically manage a series of different identities in preference to a primary self-definition as refugees" (Malkki, p. 153) in order to escape from stigmata and danger of refugees such as poverty and lack of freedom.

Iraqis in Jordan define themselves with "various Arabic term, such as muhajirin (emigrants), manfiyin or mughtaribin, the latter two carrying the same sense of alienation as the English 'exiles' " (Chatelard, p. 5). However, this is not only a way to escape from

prejudices against refugees, but also a historical connotation of being a refugee in the Arab world. As Chatelard argues the notion of refugee and Palestinian experiences are inseparable from each other. For this reason, "between Arabs, refugeeness can only signify the experience of individuals who have denied national existence" (p. 16).

These studies intrigue us to ask how Syrian refugees approach to refugee identity? To what extend do they reject this identity of being a refugee with the impact of collective memory related to Palestinian refugees? What does being a refugee mean for Syrians in Turkey when images of refugees crossing to EU border becomes visible in international media? To what extend do they capitalize a refugee identity for their political activity and distance themselves from this identity in order to escape from stigmas and prejudices towards refugees? More specifically, what is the role of their class identities in order in this identification process?

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed different discussion and approaches on refugees and refugee experiences, which shapes the backbone of this study. The first part of the chapter has laid out widely used refugee category is not a fixed legal and/or analytical category. It has been needed to explore how this confusing categorization has perceived and experienced by people who have been possibly labeled as refugees. Second part of the chapter has unpacked varieties of refugee experiences based on macro processes and personal qualifications and identities among different refugee groups and within a

particular refugee groups. It has particularly analyzed how social class has deployed as socio-economic position and identity in refugee studies. At the interaction with the first two parts, the last part has looked at how people deploy or reject the category of being refugee based on their own experiences, different political and social connotations related to the category of refugee. In order to better understand lived experiences of Syrian professional in Turkey and their self-perceptions, the next chapter will lays out (1) socio-economic changes in Syria and its impact on Syrian middle and upper middle classes, (2) presence of well-to-do Syrians in Turkey and (3) Turkish government policies towards Syrian refugees.

CHAPTER III

TRAJECTORIES OF SYRIAN (UPPER) MIDDLE CLASSES AND TURKISH POLICY TOWARDS SYRIAN REFUGEES

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical and legal background of Syrian professional refugees in İstanbul. Therefore, this chapter lays out (1) trajectories of Syrian middle classes in Syria and Turkey, and (2) Turkey's policy towards Syrian refugees in order to better understand Syrian professionals' experiences and their articulations of these experiences. Syrian professional refugees with their higher education, cultural competencies and economic resources were likely members of the upper strata of Syrian society. Understanding their experiences of refugee-ness and tracing their self-perceptions about forced mobility necessitates familiarity with the socio-economic changes in Syria, through which the Syrian upper strata, (middle and upper-middle classes) has formed. I will explain four different time periods in Syria, in which members of the middle and upper middle classes as well as their valorized practices and identities have changed in response to larger socio-economic changes in Syria. Following the first part, I will provide an overview of the presence of Syrian middle and upper middle classes in Turkey. In the last part of the chapter, I will explain two important changes in legal status and visa regulations, in Turkish government policy towards Syrians refugees. It is important to understand these changes over time as Syrian

professionals in Turkey are subject to them and position themselves in relation to these changes. Even though Syrian professionals' experiences and their self-perceptions are not only shaped by these policies, they provide a larger socio-legal framework within which Syrian refugees, including Syrian professionals try to strategically position themselves.

3.2 Historical Formation of the Middle Class and Upper Middle Class in Syria

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to thoroughly examine urban social class structure and socio-economic changes in Syria, there are several questions at the core of this thesis that capture the background and previous experiences of Syrian professional refugees in İstanbul such as how have socio-economic conditions shifted over time? What kind of capital has been valorized and accumulated by the Syrian middle classes? How have their trajectories evolved in relation to the changing socio-economic conditions of Syria? What were their endeavors, aspirations and anxieties before the uprising? How have they distanced themselves from other people in Syria?

Guided by these questions, I will provide a general outlook of socio-economic changes and middle classness in Syria. I will not approach the Syrian middle classes as merely economic and occupational categories in response to modes of production and wealth accumulation. My aim is to understand the dynamic social and cultural construction of Syrian middle classes in relation to economic and political conditions. To do that, I will first discuss the emergence of the new urban middle class starting from the beginning of the twentieth century. Second, I will discuss populist and socialist political practices between 1949-1970 and their impact on the middle class. Last, I will explain

selective economic liberalization (Hinnebusch 1995) policies and how urban middle classes adjusted themselves along with liberalization policies in the Assad regimes.

3.2.1 Asserting Modernity and the Emergence of the Cosmopolitan Middle Class Before Independence

To begin, scholars of transnational history point out the “formations, contributions and complex roles of the middle-class people in the making of modern societies since the mid-nineteenth century in a variety of places throughout the world” (Lopez and Weinstein 2012, p. 21). From this perceptive, Watenpaugh (2006; 2012) argues that asserting modernity is a defining characteristic of the new urban middle class between 1908-1946, during the last period of the Ottoman Empire and French mandate period, in today’s Syria. Members of the new urban middle class were both objects and subjects of modernity in the context of increasing cultural and economic penetration of “western” powers and rapid technological changes. These people, mainly non-Muslims and Sunni-Muslims in the local context of Aleppo, graduated from local missionary schools, “western” style state schools or private schools in İstanbul, Beirut, Europe and the United States. They spoke foreign languages, particularly French. Mobilizing their high level “western” style education, wealth and possessions, they established exclusive social clubs where they could perform their "middle class modernity" (Watenpaugh 2006) by hosting mixed gender lectures, dinners, choral singings and serving alcohol. Asserting modernity by participating in these activities, publishing newspapers, establishing voluntary associations in addition to holding “westernized" education and consuming “western”

goods were some of the ways in which these urban middle class members distanced themselves from "ruling Sunni Muslim oligarchy and subaltern classes of urban and rural poor" (2006, 8).

The new urban middle class in Aleppo had tried to create these new type of bonds based on modern forms of social organizations and "westernized" ways of thinking during the late Ottoman and French mandate period. Even though the idea of being modern has continued to be a significant feature of the well-educated middle class in contemporary Syria, the strong presence of ethnic and familial, and particularly, religious attachments aggravated the creation of wider civil society and political power challenging state authority (Watenpaugh 2006). The lack of political power and continuity of crosscutting as well as overlapping differentiations based on ideology, religious, regional and ethnic identities have relationally shaped practices and discourses of middle classes in contemporary Syria after achieving independence in 1946.

3.2.2 Nationalizing the Middle and Upper Middle Class and Soviet Influence

After independence, Syria experienced various military coup attempts and ruling power changes, which had an impact on the socio-economic policies of the state as well as on members of the urban middle and upper middle class, their values and class status repertoires. The short-lived political union between Egypt and Syria, the United Arab Republic, in existence between 1958-1961, enforced several socialist policies which were intensified under the radical Bath regime (1963-1970). Land reforms and the nationalization process including control of foreign trades, de-privatization of banks,

insurance and energy companies (Al-Ahsan 1984) marginalized traditional landowners and private entrepreneurs.

In this context of strict regulations of a Leninist party-state, some Syrian landowners and larger capitalists immigrated to Lebanon, the Gulf States, and Europe (Hinnebusch 1995). Furthermore, the imports of several luxury goods such as cosmetics, carpets, gramophones and gramophone records, which were to be consumed by the middle classes, were banned (Al-Ahsan 1984). Yet, the expansion of modern secular public education, state bureaucracy and the army led to the rise of salaried, mainly state-employed, new middle classes (Hinnebush 1993, p. 246) who were coming from non-elite families. New job opportunities in the public sector such as lawyers, doctors, civil servants, teachers, scientists and technocrats led to migration from rural areas to city centers (Perthes 1992). It should be noted that one of the reasons these positions were filled with educated young rural migrants is also related to the authoritarian tendencies of the Baath party. “Given that the Bath party’s main sources of support lay in the countryside, not in the larger cities, the employment of educated young rural migrants became a means of strengthening the Bathists hold over the state apparatus and weakening bureaucratic resistance to their rule” (Perthes 1997, p. 106) For this reason, these strata gained expertise in administrative, scientific and educational fields. Also, the Syrian government had provided scholarships for higher studies in the former Eastern Bloc (Zintl 2015) in the context of the Cold War and “anti-western” discourses. Education and experience in the former Eastern bloc and knowledge of Slavic languages and education in Soviet Russia were economically and socially valorized in order to

sustain a respected and comfortable life (Terc 2011) until the 1980s when economic liberalization was introduced and the Soviet Union started to lose their political and cultural influence.

Socio-economic transformations and the redistribution of power through the alienation of old urban elites and the upward social mobility opportunities for rural and lower class people in the earlier Baath period would irreversibly change the demographic distribution in the urban areas. It is argued that after Assad's coup in 1970, positions in state and security apparatuses were filled with rural origin Alawite people of his clan and other minorities through patronage networks (Darwisheh 2013).

3.2.3 Diversifying Middle Classes and Economic Liberalization under Authoritarianism

Fiscal crisis related to insufficient performance of public sector, which was the core of the Syrian economy until 1980s, led to economic liberalization policies and the state had to share the economic power with Damascene elites who were previously marginalized under socialist policies (Heydemann 2004). These coexistence of rural-urban, different religious groups and redistribution of economic powers led to different class distinction struggles where the idea of asserting modernity would become a significant symbol of old and new middle classes under the impact of globalization and increasing neoliberal policies.

Starting from 1990s, loosening import regulations and expansion of private sector led to entrance of new actors such as foreign investors and new local entrepreneurs

(Hinnebusch 1995) while Syrian economy started to integrate into the global market economy. Under the authoritarian rule of the Al-Assad regime, economic participation of new actors did not only depend on restricted market conditions, but also their relation with the regime, which was looking for loyalty and security. Therefore, some entrepreneurs being parts of “selective economic network” (Haddad 2009) opened foreign brand stores, shopping malls, entertainment avenues and established private schools and universities which were significant for the classification struggle of Syrian middle class members.

In this economically opening society, asserting modernity, usage of English, “western” lifestyle and consumption became significant class markers among urban educated middle class in Syria while the idea of self-actualization and developing self were also shared among its members.

The highly valuation of modernity had continued to be a significant marker of elite and middle class status. Newly rich groups who had a rural origin and obtained high level of education “left their rural traditions behind, adopting “western” modes of dwelling, consumption and social behavior” (Perthes 1997). They had started or aspired to live in European style apartment in the suburban areas of the new city quarters (Perthes 1992 p. 213). With the rise of private entrepreneurs and presence of foreign branches, there has been local enthusiasm to consume transnational branches. Consuming global goods such as dressing from Mango would signal their wealth, and cosmopolitan and modern style in the local context of Syria (Terc 2011, p. 112).

They had or aspired to have excellent command of English and foreign education

obtained in Europe, the US or Beirut since it would be a mean to obtain a position in various transnational private and public sectors. This valuation of “western" education could be more visible after the succession of Bashar al-Assad. In this period, various foreign trained technocrats, particularly in Europe and the US, had tried to bring back to Syria in order to be benefited from their “western” and modern education when Syrian economy has transformed social market economy (Zintl 2015, p. 114). A linguistic anthropological study among Syrian elites showed the significance of English language coupled with foreign education as a status marker (Terc 2011). Through linguistic practice of using English-Arabic mix, local Syrian speakers “plug into transnational discourses and information at the same time that it establishes the speakers’ elevated position on the local hierarchy of social prestige” (Terc 2011, p. 101). Newly opened consumption and leisure places such as several malls, cafe shops and restaurants provided new avenues where they could speak English and publicly distanced themselves from others who were not able to go these places as well as who could not advance over English.

Within the same study, Terc also points out self-responsibility and developing self as significant concerns of Syrian elites in neoliberalization process of Syria. Accordingly, urban educated Syrian middle and upper middle class aimed to develop themselves and took initiative to build their profiles through skill trainings, participating in voluntary organizations, taking private courses. The idea of self-responsibility was also shared by ulama and religious middle class. Pierret (2015) argues that within ulama and more conservative and religious middle class people, there was “extraordinary popular

enthusiasm for concepts such as science of management and personal development that is, for a discourse that focuses on individual performance (succeeding in one's career and making friends)" (p. 142).

3.2.3 Distinction Struggles among the Middle Classes

While these three practices and discourses were shared among educated urban middle classes, different groups of urban middle class define their position in relation not only to lower class people but also to other members of middle class. At this point, the impact of regional and religious identities as it interacts with class identities and different approaches to modernity became more visible when they were asserting their middle classness. Social upward mobility of rural Syrians in the cities, particularly to Damascus, would make older members of urban middle classes felt marginalized as "many of the older modes of social distinction [such as higher education, professionals of medicine, law and proficiency in French language] are fading" (Salamandra 2004, p. 154). These older members of middle class could have the similar patterns of consumption with the new members. Yet, older elites differentiated themselves through the ways they talked about consumption, leisure practices (Salamandra). They believed they had a right to modernize, consume and commercialized the district of old Damascus as real Damascenes as opposed to newly rich people, Alawites, The term Alawite did not only have religious connotation but also class affiliated negatively stereotype of rural people who enriched later on

Small entrepreneurs and artisans, who were mainly Sunni Muslims, in the

traditional markets of Syrian cities were also members of Syrian middle class. Members of educated urban middle class “who conceive of themselves as harbingers of modernity and progress view traders… as backward and lacking civilization” (Rabo 2005, p. 97). In response, these shopkeepers pointed out their traditional and conservative identities as generous and respectable men (Rabo, p. 114) in order to distinct themselves from the other members of the same class such as public servants and professionals. They thought the reputation and holding well-known name in the market was more valuable than higher-level education. They perceived their success was result of the hard-work, cleverness and their travel abroad for trade and business. Even though they did not describe themselves as modern or cosmopolitan, their self image resembled transnational self-employed actors thinking that they “can survive and prosper anywhere”. Their way of doing business could easily fit in new neoliberal affective economy in which unique-selves, emotions and personalities are taken crucial role (Rabo, 139).

These different members of Syrian urban middle class cultivated “an aspirational consciousness for freedom, upward mobility and consumer pleasure during liberalization of Syrian economy (Wedeen 2013, 843). Yet, the persistence of Syrian authoritarian regime hindered political mobilization of these middle classes in order to advocate political freedom through Martial law, oppressive military and security services. That is why they expressed their concerns and problems related to freedom and justice in a general terms rather than directly pointed the restrictive policies of the Assad regime (Terc 2011) even though they might be entrepreneurs and professionals interested in economic freedom and business development (Terc 2011) or they might be artists and

intellectual focusing on human rights and social justice (Cooke 2007).

The Syrian uprising began in the economically marginalized rural areas with deteriorating impact of authoritarian neoliberal policies such as high unemployment rates, housing crisis and increasing inequalities (Darwesh 2013) in 2011. Scholars argued that when some of the Syrians started to ask for dignity, freedom and downfall of the regime during these protests, Syrian urban middle and upper middle class -except politically active groups- were reluctant to participate in these activities. Some of them prioritized stability as the neoliberalization policies of the regime enriched them and they were afraid of peasant characteristic of the uprising (Pierret 2015, 146). Some of them hoped that reformer and modern young president would understand the need of political liberties (Wedeen 2013).

However, after a violent crackdown on the uprising by the Assad regime, which turned into, first an armed conflict between the regime and several opposition groups and then into a regional proxy war with the involvement of Russia, Iran, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and several European States including the UK and France, many of Syrians are displaced, including some members of these middle classes whether they are supporters of uprising or not. Yet, where are they now? Do they leave or stay? What happen to internal struggle between these different members of Syrian middle classes? To what extent does their classification struggle move to their new localities? How does perpetuating war in Syria and forced mobility have an impact on thelir lives?

These are difficult questions to answer considering complexities of middle and upper middle class formation in relation to socio-economic changes in Syria. It is harder to answer when we think how forced mobility and experiences of war could possibly lead to downward social mobility, disrupt various practices and ideas of Syrian middle classes as well as how they define themselves and construct their past.

3.3 Middle and Upper Middle Class Syrians in Turkey

On the other hand, Syrian businesspeople, professionals, artists and intellectuals in Turkey give us clue that some of Syrian middle classes and upper middle classes have continued to their lives in their new locality, as a part of larger community of Syrian refugees in exile. This section provides an overview of more fortunate Syrians in Turkey.

While Turkey has spent more than eight billion dollars hosting Syrians (AFAD Website), Syrian businesspeople have had a contribution to Turkish economy over the last six years. According to statistics of the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB 2017), the numbers of registered Syrian-partnered firms are consisted of the largest group of foreign entrepreneurs in Turkey. “The paid-in capital of the 4,000 or so Syrian firms in Turkey amounted to around $220 million in 2015” (Karasapan 2016) excluding several informal Syrian firms and small shops. Furthermore, “Citing sources in the banking industry, Ali Altinel of the Syria Trade Office, a consultancy in Mersin, estimates that some $10 billion of Syrian money has flowed into Turkey’s southern provinces in the past three years, and most of it is now invested in business” (Bıla 2014).

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (until June)
Numbers of Syrian Firms established in Turkey	30	81	165	489	1257	1599	1764	851

Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, Company Establishment and Liquidation Statistics

There have been several organizations and think-thanks such as Watan, Syrian Economic Forum, Syrian Business Council operating in Turkey in order to provide a common platform for Syrian businesspeople and entrepreneurs in Turkey and other countries. Hammada, in the name of *Syrian Economic Forum,* prepared a report called *Crisis of Syrians in Turkey* (2014). Based on their fieldwork in Gaziantep and Kilis, they point out various problems faced by Syrian middle and upper middle class refugees even though they do not specify which Syrians they talk about. This situation can be understood from various problems that is highlighted in the report; such as unfamiliarity with Turkish labor market, difficulties in getting residency permit, "lack of awareness of traffic violations" (p. 4).

Some Syrian opposition institutions have also been established in Turkey since the AKP government provides, according to International Crisis Group, a safe "ground for political and military leaders to organise" (2013, p. 17) and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces is recognized as a representative of the Syrian people by the AKP government (Watenpaugh et. al 2014). There are various

NGOs, media organizations associated with the coalition operating in Turkey. Additionally, there are relatively more independent, Syria focused media organizations and NGOs such as Rozana, Sout Raya, Qasioun in Turkey. They provide broadcasting and humanitarian aid for Syrians within Syria as well as Syrians in Turkey.

Art Centers, galleries, bookstores, cultural houses (such as Arthere, Basmeh and Zeitooneh and Hamish); have been established by some Syrian activists, professors and artists. While galleries provide a platform for Syrian artists to sell their works (Uras 2015), some skilled, educated Syrian refugees have an opportunity to work in these organizations, which sometimes operate in Arabic and provide other services for Syrians.

Presence of these economic, political and arts organizations hinges upon the presence of middle class and upper middle class Syrians that are discussed above in Turkey. Furthermore, it also highlights understanding of a more diverse Syrian refugee populations holding different class positions in Turkey. Three million Syrian refugees in Turkey involve a wide spectrum of people from workers to wealthy businessmen setting up factories; from conservative Islamists to radical leftists. In order to contribute into understanding of heterogeneous Syrian refugees in Turkey, this thesis analyzes experiences of Syrian professionals, who were part of diverse Syrian middle class.

3.4 Policy Changes towards Syrian Refugees in Turkey

There are two significant changes over time about the government's policy towards Syrians that have a significant impact on practices of Syrian professionals. First

one is legal status of Syrians in Turkey and the other one is related to visa regulations. This section of the chapter will provide an overview of these changes.

Turkey's policies and approach towards large numbers of Syrian refugees have been changing for the last six years. As an emergency response, camps, which are officially called as temporary refuge centers, in the border cities have been established. These camps host limited number of vulnerable refugees, who need immediate humanitarian and protection assistance. Humanitarian aids including health service, education, shelter, food, social activities have been provided within camps (TBMM İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu 2012) by AFAD, the disaster and emergency management unit. According to AFAD statistics as of January 2016, only 10% of Syrians are living in camps while more than 2 million Syrians are living in the urban areas. The protection and assistance towards urban refugees are more haphazard and problematic and so some refugees have to work under unacceptable conditions at very low wages. (İçduygu 2015).

The ambiguous legal status of Syrians in Turkey became relatively more explicit within six years. At the beginning, Temporary Protection including an open door policy entering without visa, humanitarian aid and security within camps and non-refoulement, not deporting back to Syria, was mentioned (TBMM İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu 2012) but it was not legally defined until 2013. As stated in parliamentary human right commission report, at the beginning, Syrians were not officially recognized as refugees or asylum seekers but as guests, which did not correspond to any well-defined rights of Syrians or responsibilities of the state.

Over the years, the government has had to admit the protracted nature of Syrian

refugees as the war in Syria has perpetuated. Turkish state has started to look for durable solutions and harmonization of refugees from Syria (Bıla 2014). In 2013, the Temporary Protection regulation provided a legal basis for Syrians, which gave them what was called temporary protection status, to reach primary education, healthcare, free translation services with their temporary protection ID cards. Under this regulation, they are neither refugees nor guests. The reason why they are not identified as refugees is also related to 1951 Refugee convention that Turkey signed with certain geographical limitations. According to the convention, refugee status is granted to people fleeing only from Europe. Thus, Iraqis, Afgans, and Iranians in Turkey are not officially refugees, but "conditional refugees" waiting for their resettlement into third countries. Because of the sheer number of Syrian refugees, the parliament passed a different regulation, the Temporary Protection regulation that I just mentioned, in order to address the significant foreign population influx, while also adhering to the convention agreement. Starting from January 2016, Syrians under the temporary protection regime have been granted work permit under certain conditions such as the number of Syrians should not exceed 10% of the employed Turkish citizens and a Syrian should have the temporary protection ID card for at least six months. In June 2016, after my fieldwork, Erdoğan declared a naturalization plan for Syrian refugees. From official public statements, it can be understood that this project is not about providing citizenship for all Syrians, but only skilled ones. So it shows some of the AKP government's policies toward Syrians operate through moral discourses of deservedness that are punctuated by ideas of economic productivity.

While the temporary protection IDs aim to regulate and control the presence of large numbers of Syrians in Turkey, some Syrians holding a passport can be excluded from these policies through applying for touristic residence permits and work permits for foreigners. Article 25 of the regulation explicitly states that temporary protection IDs are not equivalent to a residence permit. In order to get a touristic residency permit and work permit, Syrians are also subjected to "the general requirements for residency of foreigners under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection" (UNHCR FAQs). These requirements for short-term residency permit include an account statement from Turkish bank proving that a person has at least 500 dollars per month in order to support herself (Law on Foreigners and International Protection). According to the latest statistics in 2015, around thirty thousand Syrians had residency permits and twenty thousand Syrians had work permits. Their numbers are relatively low compared to the numbers of Syrians under the temporary protection regime, but nearly equivalent to the number of Syrians living in refugee camps. Yet, their invisibility compared to refugees living in the camps forces us to rethink certain assumptions of being a refugee. Moreover, Syrians in Turkey are consisted of one of the highest numbers of foreigners who have granted to work and residency permit.

Work Permits

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total Number of Work Permits	16.890	32.272	45.834	52.304	64.547
Number of Work Permits in İstanbul	7.760	11.512	17.709	19.957	22.944
Number of Work Permits Given to Syrian (Male/Female)	118 (96/22)	220 (194/26)	794 (724/70)	2.541 (2.384/157)	4.019 (3.739/280)

Ministry of Labor and Social Security Work Permits for Foreigners Statistics in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015

Residency Permits

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Number of Residency Permits	313.692	379.084	422.895	461.217
Number of Residency Permits Given to Syrians	46.252**	31.715*	32.578*	48.738
	**Ranked 1st	*Ranked 2nd after Iraqi citizens	*Ranked 2nd after Iraqi citizens	*Ranked 2nd after Iraqi citizens

Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management, Türkiye Göç Raporu [Migration Reports of Turkey] in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016

The other change in Turkey's approach towards Syrians is about visa regulation and open door policy. At the beginning, Turkish government stated that border closure was out of the question (BBC News 2011). However, Turkey has started to limit border crossing when the numbers of Syrians fleeing to Turkey have dramatically increased.

Syrians possessing passports are able to enter into Turkey through official border controls. Yet, admissions of people without passports are restricted according to the adequate capacity of camps in Turkey and urgent medical cases (UNHCR FAQ). Amnesty International (2014) reports that some refugees without passports "returned to Syria by Turkish border guards in "push-back" operations across the border" (12) including fatal shootings and beatings.

In December 2015, the new visa requirement for Syrians coming from third countries was declared. This new regulation enacted immediately, after nine days January 8, 2016. The spokesman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that the visa requirement for Syrians arriving by sea or air is to fight against illegal migration (MFA website, 2015). Even though there has not been complete information about the reasons, another Turkish official pointed out there has been increasing numbers of Syrians trying to enter into Turkey with fake passports from Libya and Egypt (Hurriyet Daily News 2016). Syrians trying to cross land borders from Syria were to be supposedly unaffected. But a significant number of Syrians including many of my interlocutors who were living in Damascus came to İstanbul by way of Beirut, and would have been subject to this regulation, even though it was not meant to apply to them.

In addition to these positive and negative policy changes, the unknown future of temporary protection regime puts some Syrians in a more vulnerable position. Temporary protection is internationally accepted practice for the large numbers of refugees. Yet, the temporariness of the protection should be explicitly defined as in the case of EU immigration and asylum law, which declares that temporary protection should take the

maximum period of three years (Peers and Rogers 2006). Absence of time restriction on temporary protection regime force many Syrian refugees to live “in a perpetual legal limbo: legally guaranteed some basic humanitarian services but not any of the protections, rights, or mobility enjoyed by foreigners who have residence permits and certainly not of citizens” (Woods 2016, 13). The Council of Ministers has an authority to decision on the end of temporary protection regime and more permanent solutions (Article 11). Due to the uncertainty on long-term status of Syrians in Turkey coupled with other reasons including better life standards and opportunities, some Syrians in Turkey have considered to move into Europe (Watenpaugh et al. 2004; Woods 2016). More than one million Syrians (UNHCR 2015) have risked their lives and paid significant amount of money to smugglers in order to reach Europe where their rights and responsibilities could be well defined in laws.

CHAPTER IV

A PARTICULAR TYPE OF CLASS-BASED MANAGEMENT OF REFUGEE-NESS

4.1 Introduction

> "My individual life, my house, my dreams… I'll work on them by myself. You know, five years from revolution until now is like one week for me. I became older in five years and what have I done? I have nothing. There are some good experiences. Before, in Syria, I was working, my salary was so high. I had my own community, I was a teacher. I had my social status as a photographer, blah blah… My name… I was working towards on my production company to get more experience. I was so good. ... Five years is like one week. What have I done? What have I done? I just left. I feel like that…"

Milad was raised in a highly educated and secular family in Homs. He completed various courses and certificate programs in order to improve himself as a photographer when he moved to Damascus, in which he was a member of artist and activist circles. Although being in opposition to the Assad regime made his and his family's life in Syria more difficult, he continued to work as a well-known photographer, which provided him with salary and status, as he described.

Milad's longing for his previous life is not exceptional; it was a desire shared among my other interlocutors on different levels. The stories about their lives before fleeing Syria show their comparably economically improved positions and higher social status for various reasons including their occupations, educations, and well-known family names. Some of them are descendants of old Damascene elites, some of them are members of newly wealthy groups formed through economic liberalization. It appears that all of them were members of the Syrian urban middle class. Almost all of their

parents were university graduates and were working as businessmen and/or professionals in Syria. Additionally, the higher education and other academic qualifications of my interlocutors that were mainly cultivated by the best private and public universities in Syria and other Arabic-speaking countries familiarized them with the repertoire of high culture in Syria, and sometimes also in the global context.

However, the uprising, followed by brutal suppression, indefinite war and forced mobility experiences have had a hugely disruptive impact on the lives of Milad and others. In this chapter, I will explain how this particular group of Syrians, namely, Syrian professionals in İstanbul, manage refugee-ness, the state of being a refugee. I argue that my interlocutors exhibit a particular type of class-based management of refugee-ness by strategically drawing on their previous economic, social and cultural capital while striving to accumulate new capital within a constant sense of insecurity, instability, and uncertainty.

Class, for this study, is not only a structural position occupied by Syrian professionals in the economic field or merely a reflection of their economic resources. Drawing on Bourdieu's discussion of class, classification and forms of capital, I take class to reflect a multidimensional aspect of power relations and inequalities in which economic resources, social networks and cultural competencies are entangled within a particular socio-historical context, that is also shaped by the ongoing war in Syria, legal and historical changes in Turkey as well as local dynamics in İstanbul. In this way, Syrian professionals are also bearers of different forms of capital (economic, social and cultural), in which they invest and convert them to each other with an aim to improve their

precarious situation as refugees and secure their legal, economic and social positions. Refugee and migration studies have shown that refugees try to mobilize their previous capital to improve their livelihood (Bankston 2014; Borjas 1994). However, the amount and composition of Syrian professionals' capital differentiate their trajectories even within their precarious positions in their new social and economic environment.

In order to explain, I will first look at how Syrian refugees transfer their economic resources to İstanbul by reverse remittances as well as the limitations and difficulties they encounter during this process. Later, I will look at how they strive to utilize these economic resources in order to gain further cultural competencies and credentials such as higher education diplomas and language skills, which can advance their position in İstanbul. Secondly, I will explain how they mobilize their previous networks (i.e., religious, familial and political), education and cultural competencies to gain access to particular jobs and communities in the context of increasing economic and cultural relations between Turkey and other Arab countries. Lastly, I will analyze how they strategize their credentials and qualifications as well as their dispositions and manners in their dealings with stigma against refugees. Although my interlocutors are in possibly better situations compared to many other Syrian refugees in Turkey who have to depend on financial assistance for their livelihood, their struggle of successfully navigating in the new locality through complex transpositions of their different forms of capital is steeped in anxieties and vulnerabilities.

4.2 Managing Money Movement from Syria to Turkey and Self-Reliance

This section looks at the process in which my interlocutors try to carry their fortunes and revenues in the form of money into their new locality in İstanbul through using formal and informal money transfer networks before entering into the job market. This process is neither easy nor straightforward, thus they must overcome various hurdles. In the second part of the section, I explain how Syrian professionals try to mobilize these economic resources in order to gain further cultural competencies and credentials such as higher education diplomas and language skills, which can advance their position in İstanbul.

Many of my interlocutors cannot or are reluctant to bring many of their belongings and savings when they first leave Syria. While the Syrian government has controlled the surroundings of Damascus, security intelligence or supporters of the regime can confiscate the money. Therefore, it would be dangerous and risky to carry large amounts of money. Moreover, some of them must bribe government employees in order to be able to leave the country. Within this dangerous journey, they bring a certain amount of money, which mainly derives from selling off properties and their savings in Syria, to help them for the beginning of their livelihood.

Afterwards, they utilize informal and formal money transfer networks to receive money from their family members in Syria or other countries as some ways to carry economic resources that help them sustain their lives in İstanbul. At this point, the practice of reverse remittances, meaning "remittances that flow from home communities

to migrants" (Mazzucato 2011, 454), becomes very visible even though remittances from refugees to their families back home is a wider practice for household survival in conflict-affected areas (Jacobsen 2005). In my fieldwork, many of my interlocutors come from better off families and some of these family members have continued to practice their jobs in Syria. Some of their parents and family members work as businessmen, doctors, lawyers, and engineers and have a significant number of properties and savings despite the fact that their economic values have dramatically fallen and/or they lost many of them. Moreover, some others have their family members working in affluent Gulf states and financially support them. Although it is relatively easy to send money from the Gulf states to Turkey, the money transactions from Syria to Turkey are bureaucratically and practically complicated:

> "My father sent me this money from his own bank account in Lebanon. He can transfer the money but only [in] Euro. It's banned for Syrian people to transfer money by dollars. This is from America! Now, it's banned for Syrian people to send any money, [except] Euro. From Western Union, you can but bank transaction you can't. My father sent Euro from his bank account in Lebanon. I have a bank account here."

Jehad, who is applying graduate schools and continues his English education in İstanbul, emphasizes the hurdles of formal money transactions, such as the limitation of international money transfers from Syria and for Syrian citizens—whether it is banned from the US or not, as he explains. Also, he describes the practical necessity of having a bank account in Lebanon since his father cannot send this money from Syria. For this reason, his father has to drive to Beirut from Damascus and takes the risk of money confiscation as well as facing security intelligence in Syria.

In order to overcome this difficulty, three of my interlocutor mention informal money transfer networks. Khaled, who works as a doctor in a hospital where Arab tourists frequently visit describes this informal transnational network of Syrian people in İstanbul and Damascus who are working as if they were brokers. When one of his family members gives one thousand USD to a Syrian working in this network in Syria, another Syrian in İstanbul from the same network calls Khaled and gives the money to him. While Western Union takes seventy dollars for a money transaction of a thousand dollars, these people only ask for twenty dollars. He highlights they are well established and trustworthy people whom his father knows.

Overcoming the difficulties of money transfers by using formal and informal networks and holding a certain amount of economic resources as well as knowing people who can financially support their lives in İstanbul—but also knowing that this support cannot be infinite—are important starting points for understanding the classed nature of their dealing with being a refugee in İstanbul.

The literature in refugee studies shows us that individuals within the mass refugee influx have suffered to pursue their livelihood as war and flight experiences diminish their economic resources (Jacobsen 2005). Their properties might be destroyed and they might have difficulties in reaching their bank accounts and payments within this context. Even if they continue to hold certain economic resources, the sudden and unexpected nature of forced mobility would prevent refugees from mobilizing their economic resources, particularly their properties. This impoverishing experience coupled with a lack of certain economic resources and social support networks force some refugees to

depend on humanitarian assistance in order to build their livelihood—even while these humanitarian aid programs can be ineffective, prejudiced and disruptive to their practices (Harrell-Bond 1986)-.

The similar impoverishing impact of war and forced mobility as it interacts with pre-existing poverty put many Syrian refugees in highly vulnerable positions. “A report published by the UN in March 2015 estimated the total economic loss since the start of the conflict to be $202 billion, with four in every five Syrians now living in poverty—30% of them in abject poverty” (Kaya and Kırac 2016, p. 6). Various reports and academic works highlight the importance of durable assistance programs and the ones that do not create dependence (Corabatir 2016; Kirisci 2014; Kaya and Kıraç 2016). Due to the insufficiency of this assistance and the lack of social rights, some refugees are exploited in the labor market (Amnesty International 2014). In order to support themselves they must find jobs, which are often low-paid ones in the informal economy (Kaya and Kıraç 2016).

4.3 Differentiated Concerns and Vulnerabilities

Juxtaposing these more vulnerable refugees that need immediate humanitarian and protection assistance with Syrian professionals who are able to transfer—albeit with great difficulties—their economic resources, which enables them to be self-sufficient, opens up discussion on the differential concerns, vulnerabilities as well as the different strategic management of being a refugee within a common group. These different concerns, vulnerabilities and management strategies of this experience through a

mobilization of their considerable economic resources is elucidated through four key issues that arise in my interviews; (1) Syrian professionals try to secure their legal position in Turkey with touristic residence permits and reject the temporary protection ID; (2) Some explain their willingness to purchase houses with their previous savings in order to live in their own houses and/or as investment, but are unable to buy because of historical issues between Turkey and Syria that prohibit the selling of property to Syrian nationals. (3) Many aspire to have “decent jobs” rather than enter the job market in any which way, and (4) try to further their education and language skills so that they may advance their position in the job market along with mobilizing their economic resources.

4.3.1 Securing Legal Status and the Issue of Property Purchasing

Touristic residence permits, which I discuss in detail in the next chapter, is among the first things my interlocutors apply for once they move to Turkey. They do not wish to register for temporary protection IDs that aim to regulate, control and provide only a certain type of assistance to large numbers of Syrians in Turkey. One of the main reasons why they apply for a residence permit is to escape from the precarious and unknowable future for Syrians in Turkey. Even though most of them applaud the policy of the AKP government towards Syrians as it provides assistance through temporary protection IDs, they highlight their uncertainties about the continuation of these programs under an unstable political environment in Turkey. In order to ease the impact of radical policy changes towards Syrians in Turkey, my interlocutors are reluctant to have temporary protection IDs for Syrians, they rather try to secure their legal position with the residence

permit, which is applied to all foreigners, not only Syrians. Yet, residence permits are not accessible to various Syrians who do not hold a certain amount of disposable money and/or who do not know anyone from whom they can borrow such money. This permit necessitates proving the possession of at least 6000 U.S. dollars for one year in applicant's bank account during the time of application. Therefore, after overcoming the complicated process of money transfer from Syria/other countries to Turkey, they may have greater options for finding a legal position between applying for temporary protection IDs or touristic residences within the given legal framework in Turkey.

Even though they may have residence permits, Syrians cannot purchase property in Turkey. This is not because they are Syrian refugees, or because they have only short-term residence permits. This is rather due to the historical political frictions between Turkey and Syria on Hatay province that create a problem of land acquisitions by Syrian citizens (Maoz and Yaniv 2013, 94-95). By enforcing the Reciprocity Law in 2012, citizens of Syria, along with citizens of Cuba, Armenia, North Korea and Yemen, are not allowed to acquire real estate. This law has a direct impact on some of my wealthy interlocutors, who plan to make an investment in properties in Turkey. Their aim is to convert their savings and economic resources into the form of property and have a stable place to live or invest. One of my interlocutors tells me he is invested in buying a house in İstanbul even though he is not allowed. He tries to manage to buy a house through nominally opening a small firm, which would enable him to purchase a property under the name of this company. But ultimately, he gives up the idea of home ownership in

İstanbul due to the economic and bureaucratic hurdles that he must overcome to open a small firm.

4.3.2 Looking for a Decent Job

In addition to legally securing their position in Turkey and buying properties, holding certain jobs that are not below their qualifications and are not exploitative is another difficulty that they try to overcome by mobilizing their economic resources. By holding a certain amount of economic capital through money transfer, my interlocutors do not have an immediate need to enter into job market, and they do not want to accept various "un-prestigious," low-paid and insecure job positions. Yet, they become frustrated as they spend long hours job hunting and thus must then decrease their expectations and negotiate their job positions because of their precarious position in the job market:

> "I know brands. I like clothes so much, I like brands so much. I like Massimo Dutti so much but very expensive [laughs]. I went to Massimo Dutti, I wanted to work there. I went to Swatch. When I went, my friends laughed, 'Why are you going to big companies?' I wanted to work in big companies. … I went to Swatch, they told me, 'Give us your CV.' They didn't call me. I went to Zara, MD, Pull and Bear, Zara"

Mohammad tells me he wanted to work in prestigious branches of transnational companies that he already knows and in which he used to shop when he began looking for a job. But none of these companies responded to him. He tells me he became anxious and could not sleep very well because he felt obligated to work and be self-sustaining rather than continue to receive support from his family in Syria. Still, working in unknown local firms remained out of question, let alone working in factories in order to

gain some money to support himself. An employee in one of these transnational clothing companies told him to put his CV on kariyer.net and apply to jobs through that platform. After, eight months of job hunting and submitting over 300 applications, an employer of a transnational real estate company based in the U.S. called him and he started to work there before moving to another real estate firm. During this period, his father had sent him money for rent, daily expenses, some leisure activities and his Turkish language course.

While Mohammad anxiously waited for a job in a reputable firm, Milad was apprehensive as he encountered discriminatory attitudes of employers towards Syrian refugees in the job market:

> "I went to an interview in European side. It was a Gulf Company. So, I did my interview… But I was shocked because they told me they're not giving me a work permit. I said, 'Why?' They told me, 'Because we should pay for you.' For every foreigner worker, you should bring five Turkish. So, they said, "For your position, we do not need to get five Turkish [employees]. If you want to work, you need to work without permit. I said, 'No!' I don't accept that because actually they were a professional company. I thought because I am Syrian, maybe they get advantage of me. Why? I don't like this situation. There were other foreigner people [in this company], they get this workper mit. But why not me? After that, I felt I don't want to work this kind of work"

Although there might be other foreigners working without a work permit, Milad's word refers to the exploitation of Syrian refugees in the job market by lowering their salaries and forcing them to work in informal economies (Kaya and Kıraç 2016). Milad already felt anxious and dissatisfied with working as a freelancer, as he cannot be sure whether he would have a well-paid job the next time or not. That is why he applies these other jobs that he could receive monthly salary. However, the feeling of being taken

advantage of is a dishonoring situation that he would not accept. That is why he prefers to continue his freelance jobs and works on finding some alternatively-sourced funding to support his projects and livelihood while his savings from Syria and previous jobs in an international NGO in Urfa enable him to continue his daily life, even if in a stressful and uncertain mode.

4.3.3 Gaining further Credentials and Competencies

My interlocutors also highlight the value of language skills, higher education and some professional certificates and diplomas for increasing their opportunities in the job market. Even though I do not directly ask their education plans and thoughts about learning new languages, almost all of them mention the assets of learning English and/or Turkish while they are still living in Turkey. Some of them also talk about their aims as well as concerns in continuing their education in Turkey, usually in the form of an MA degree or several certificate programs. For this reason, they strategically use their economic resources in order to obtain further credentials and language competencies by calculating the values of paying for private programs. However, the costs of these programs coupled with not being certain about their payable value in the job market as well as the time and energy consuming nature of these programs puzzle my interlocutors in deciding whether to invest in these cultural credentials and competencies.

Almost all of my interlocutors are keen to learn Turkish and/or improve their English language abilities. Many of them see learning the Turkish language as a way to increase their job opportunities, to become involved in the Turkish community and an

asset that they can use anywhere. Two of my interview partners spend a year and half a year learning Turkish before their job search ends in finding a job in Turkish speaking work environments. My interlocutor Samer, who is working as a researcher, clearly lays out his three motivations in learning Turkish language, which are shared among my other interview partners:

> "So, my step learning Turkish has three aims by the way. The first one is just to live in this place, to understand its people, to talk with these people, to have friends. And the second thing is to build a future. … After two years, I can write, speak in Turkish. So, I can have three languages, you can say four; Arabic, English, Turkish and some German. So, this is kind of building a new life. Not a new life, new future. And the third thing is if I go outside of Turkey, I can write about this experience, I can write about the society."

Samer, like many others, strategically approached learning Turkish. Learning Turkish was not merely about integration into a host community, but also an asset that he can utilize even if he leaves the country. This economic value of learning Turkish, which is sometimes coupled with becoming involved in the Turkish speaking social world, is the chief reason that some of my interlocutors enroll in private Turkish courses and spend a significant amount of time and money to improve their language competencies.

On the other hand, some of my interlocutors cannot invest in learning Turkish because of time and energy consumption of learning a new language while being exhausted in their own works:

> "Walhalla I don't know, God knows… To learn Turkish, I need to be just at home. You can't go to work and then learn the language. If I leave the work to learn Turkish, how can I live, where can I earn money? So, this is the difficulty for me. All the day, I am working on writing, so at the end of the day, I don't have the energy to learn Turkish. Even when you are covering Syrian issues, you are, in a way or another, involved in a bad way; you're seeing your people, war and the

> blood and like these… When you finish your work, you just feel tired. Everyday, everyday you have bad news from inside."

Yasmeen highlights the limitations of learning the Turkish language, especially when she works in a stressful work environment in which she has to write about atrocities, war and constant suffering. She does not have the mental and physical free time to devote herself to learning another language. Even though she is more involved in the Syrian cause because of her job, the similar experiences and thoughts on the ongoing war in Syria prevent some of my interview partners who are politically more engaged in the Syrian revolution to expand some of their cultural capital to learning Turkish. The words of Jamal also explain his own regrets about not learning the language:

> "I am sorry I couldn't apply myself systematically to Turkish. I am sorry, it is my mistake and I know it. And I didn't like it when I first came to Turkey… I didn't like it some Syrians, at that time in Turkey for a year and they don't speak Turkish. And I am doing the same now."

Jamal expresses his criticism towards other Syrians, who do not make an effort to learn Turkish. In the case of Jamal, learning Turkish is also a way to learn the culture and adapt to a new socio-cultural environment. However, he stresses his lack of time and not being mentally free to start to learn a new language while being concerned with ongoing issues in Syria. In addition to these psychological limitations and lack of time, Yasmeen and Jamal both do not need to learn Turkish in order to economically and socially survive in Turkey. They do not need Turkish in their jobs, or jobs that they aspire to have. Also Jamal has more cosmopolitan social circles in which his friends speak English and/or Arabic and Yasmeen is happy with her Arabic speaking, mainly Syrian friends.

Some of them also try to improve their English skills by taking private courses, self-teaching and doing language exchanges. Two of them told me many of their classmates in their English courses are mainly Syrians. Although some of them consider continuing their post graduate studies in English-speaking countries, they mainly highlight the global value of the English language.

> "When I arrived to İstanbul, I took my decision to do English course… I took some private lessons… I think English language is a passport for anyone. You cannot do anything without English."

Jehaad wants to have this English language passport and that is why he took the IELTS four times. By holding this passport with higher scores, he aims to increase his chances in being accepted into graduate schools in Turkey and Europe. The last time when he could not find a free spot in İstanbul, he decided to go to Beirut to take the IELTS. Even though his diligence in learning English and taking the language certificate is more exceptional with the financial support of his father, a businessman in Aleppo, his ideas about the global value of English is shared among my other interview partners who also argue for the importance of English in finding jobs in international companies, reaching international grants for artists and freelancer journalists as well as for communicating with the English-speaking community in İstanbul.

In addition to strategizing learning a new language, most of my middle age and younger interlocutors also try to measure the value of enrolling in BA, MA and several certificate programs. They explain that valuable diplomas and certificates would open up their chances to get better-paid jobs, and these diplomas prove their cultural and knowledge competence in work and social life. However, these programs are expensive

and some of my interlocutors are willing to spend their savings in order to obtain these diplomas as their previous ones lose their value outside of Syria. Some of my other interlocutors are anxious and frustrated about enrolling in these programs because of their prices and their feelings of uncertainty.

Mohammad finds a job in an international real estate company, and within his busy schedule, he continues to complete his MA in one of the private universities in İstanbul. He sells his house in Syria below its market value in order to pay the fees of this MA program. He tells me:

> "My university was so bad, in the range of universities. It was so bad because of that I will [do my] Master. It was so bad, our range now 50 000 in the world. [xxx] university is 3 000 now."

Mohammad complains that the global ranking of his university is too low such that his diploma is not recognized even if it is from one of the best universities in Syria. His diploma had conferred him with a legally guaranteed and socially accepted value that shows he is an intelligent, hard-working and well-educated individual. Yet, the value of his university degree has become insignificant outside of Syria due to its detachment from cultural and institutionalized meaning. He wants to hold a diploma, which will open him up better job opportunities by demonstrating his intelligence and competence in his field. When he was deciding on his higher education in İstanbul, he checked ratings of universities in the global arena. Even though he acknowledges that there are a few other universities, whose ranking is higher than his current university, his best option was that university because of its rating and price balance.

Some of my interlocutors also seriously consider earning a Masters in order to increase their knowledge in their fields and have proof of their competence. However, the prices of these programs, coupled with my interlocutors' uncertainties about the future prevent them to make this investment:

> "I wanted to do masters… Ok, it would cost me at least 5000 dollars. It's a big money. I cannot risk that money right now. If I lose my job, how can I live? I wanted to register in one of the universities here for Masters degree. It costs around for 5000 dollars for full course. They will take the money each semester, so it would be gradual payment. But still like, I thought about it, maybe I will not be here. How can I pay, how can?"

Sama's words point out her vulnerable position limiting her ability to invest in an MA program that she believes would advance her position in the job market. Although she can manage to pay a 5000 dollar fee for each semester right now, she cannot be sure that she will be able to pay this money in the near future because her job contract can be terminated any time. For this reason, Sama and some of my other interlocutors decide to enroll in various free or cheap certificate programs and some online courses to increase their knowledge as well as prove their competence.

As explained above, my interlocutors, Syrian professionals in İstanbul, have not only certain skills and high levels of education, but also certain economic resources that they seek to transfer to İstanbul. After they carry money, they strategically try to use that money in order to advance their position and to make it as secure as possible within constant insecurity and uncertainty. The amount of the economic resources that they carry with them, as well as their concerns such as having a decent job and continuing their post graduate educations show the class nature of their dealings with refugee-ness, as many

other refugees try to survive and/or they depend on assistance. Almost all of them try to secure their legal status by applying for residence permits. Some of them try to invest in property, further their education, and complete language courses. Even though their position is comparably advantageous, this process is never easy and has certain limitations. They have to overcome certain bureaucratic and practical obstacles that often make them feel vulnerable and anxious.

4.4 The Struggle to Find a Job Position in the Context of Increasing Arab-Turkish Economic and Social Relation

One of the reasons some of my interlocutors' invest in furthering their education and language is to access particular communities and jobs, which are not exploitative or beneath their qualifications in İstanbul. This process of finding a "decent" job shows us an aspect of the class-based management of refugee-ness. This is a complex process, in which my interlocutors contrive to utilize their credentials, dispositions, and social networks. This section of the chapter explains how my interlocutors try to manage finding a job by taking advantage of the increasing Arab-Turkish economic and social relations. In order to explain, I will first describe some barriers to transferring certain education credentials and skills from Syria to Turkey, but some of these skills and credentials become valuable when firms and media outlets open their markets to Arab customers. Lastly, I will talk about the limitations of using these credentials and how social networks become crucial to overcoming these limitations.

Some of interlocutors could not practice their previous professionals because of the unrecognition of their diplomas or devaluation of these diplomas in the context of Turkey. This lack of opportunity leads some of my interlocutors to become unemployed. At this point, they want to find an option by utilizing economic and social relations between Turkey and Arab world through being entrepreneurs.

Youssef was a pharmacist working in Damascus, after he received his degree in Cairo. However, he cannot practice his profession in İstanbul, to where he fled to escape from his compulsory military service in Syria:

> "I am pharmacist but … I cannot do anything with my certificate [in Turkey]. I cannot work, I cannot benefit from being higher education. Now it's very difficult, especially for Syrians. Maybe for other nationalities, it's easier but for Syrians, it's very difficult. So, I have no benefit from being a pharmacist. I can work illegally in pharmacy. Yes, I can but I can work only 400 dollars per month. Not enough for higher education. I can work in other things with the same money."

The pharmacist diploma, which he obtained in Egypt provides him right to open a pharmacy in Damascus, in his home town. However, his diploma was not accredited in Turkey. Illegally working in a pharmacy is an underpaid option. That is why he plans to use his savings to open a small cafe with his friend, who graduated from a law department in Damascus in order to sustain their lives. Their target is mainly Arab tourists visiting İstanbul. Although they have concerns about their new business, which can be waste of their savings, they feel a little bit comfortable as they think they are familiar with consumption practices, language and expectations and run this business with a help of some consultancy firms in İstanbul.

Ahmad, a well known architecture in Halep, also decides to chance his professional in Turkey. By using his knowledge of Arabic, Syrian politics, history and his experiences and contacts in media sector in Turkey, he aims to open a media consultation firm in İstanbul:

> "There is a booming in the media here in İstanbul because there is no more offices inside of Syria. The staffs [of some media organizations] are kidnapped from IS and nobody knows what happened. BBC, Al Jazeera, France 24, [their] all Syrian office are now in Turkey. So, they need some Syrians to work with them and I wanted to play on this point."

Ahmad and Youssef have still contemplated on their future business, so it is early to interpret whether they become entrepreneurs in areas that they are not professionals. However, it should be highlighted that legal and practical limitations to practice their own professionals lead them to take a more risky path, in which they could lose their previous savings.

While the unrecognition or devaluation of diplomas push Ahmad and Youssef to try their chances to become entrepreneurs, some of my other interlocutors utilize their previous educational credentials to find jobs in İstanbul. I interviewed doctor, professor, computer engineer and customer service director, who draw on their previous credentials, education and work experiences for their current job positions in İstanbul. Except from Hassan, a computer engineer, others mobilize their professional identities and educations in the context of increasing Turkish-Arab economic and social relations, which Youssef and Ahmad also plan to "play on." In the context of increasing Turkish-Arab economic relations, real estate and construction (Asimovic Akyol 2014), medical tourism (Khan

2014), media, NGOs working with Syrian refugees provide some of job opportunities for Arabic speakers, mainly Syrian professionals, as in the case of many of my interlocutors. Khaled is a doctor in a hospital where Arab tourists have frequently visited; Sama is a customer service director in one of the NGOs working with Syrians in Turkey; Omar works as Arabic instructor and researcher for Turkish people in a large research institute. Reem is one of my interlocutors working in multi-national real estate company:

> "It's in the real estate and what helped me also to get this, in addition to my Arabic… They told me you have good skills in English too and we need to you in our section."

In addition to Reem's mastery in formal Arabic, her higher education in English-Arabic translation increases the chance of gaining admission to her current position. In this Turkish-Arab-American company, she is responsible for mainly Arab and a few other international customers, who plan to invest in Turkey by purchasing properties and partnering some real estate projects. As in the case of Reem's company, Syrian professionals, along with a few other Arab employees, provide consulting to mainly Arab and some other international customers and sell properties to foreigners by using Arabic and English languages while Turkish speaking employees in the same company mainly deal with the bureaucratic procedure.

4.4.1 Role of Social Networks and Online Websites

These companies, NGOs, institutes have limited numbers of positions and not all skilled and highly educated Syrians are able to find a position. How can some of them find jobs in these places, while others cannot? In this section, I will explain that some of

my interlocutors' difficulties that they have to overcome in order to access these jobs by utilizing online network sites, while some others mobilize their previous political, religious, business and familial networks during the same process. These social networks that many of my interlocutors try to mobilize also show another aspect of their way of class-based management of refugee-ness, as these networks are exclusionary and allow people coming from a similar economic and cultural background to hold these positions.

All of my interlocutors are highly educated, skilled people, some of them have professional experiences in Syrian and other countries. However, when they end up being in Turkey, some of them do not have their professional and social contacts, which, would enable them to reach particular jobs or make them take advantage of Arab-Turkish economic relations. Hassan, who works as computer engineer describes:

> "I didn't know where to start, where should I search for a job? Which people? I need[ed] to meet people [who would] open the gates of İstanbul for me. It was so hard… So, I just googled what I was looking for. I got a link from one of the websites that I have visited. It is totally not like a job advertisement. It's just [a] website talking about the framework, yaʿne, software framework… I sent an email… I attached my CV… They called me from the company, inviting me to interview."

Hassan was graduated from one of the best universities in Syria and had some professional experiences in Syria, Emirates and other Arab speaking countries. However, he does not have anyone who "open[s] the gates of İstanbul" for him, his contacts mainly locate in other Arabic speaking countries, if not in Syria. It is a frustrating situation for him. That is why he decides to use internet and send his CVs to some companies. When he is able to show his knowledge by diligently answering some of technical interview questions and doing important programming for the company during his test period, he is

able to get the job, which provides him a work permit later on. He is one of a few interlocutors, working in a company, which has no connection with Arab customers or Arabic speaking people.

While Hassan uses mainly Google and basic search tools, some of my interview partners use professional websites such as LinkedIn and kariyer.net. Through these websites, only one of my interview partners find his jobs by sending his CVs and having numerous job interviews. Yet, the process is not easy for none of them when they do not have a personal contact. Mohammad applies more than 300 job positions in this website, and Sama applies more than 150 and she explains:

> "Not all kind of jobs. I am very picky in work because I care so much about my career. So, I only chose customer service jobs… I applied for 150 jobs and no one called me. I started applying because I just wanted to go out. I left my CV in every place and no one called me for an interview. I felt very down in that period of time. I said, ok I am going to stay in Damascus and that's it… And then, I applied them [NGOs working in Turkey] directly and I got a call because I worked with [an international organization]. I did the interview and I got the job. The offer was good so I left my job, say goodbye to family and came in here." (Sama)

With the help of her previous experiences and professional skills and stressfully months of search in Damascus, she finds a job in her expertise, in which she invested a more than a decade. The NGO that she works in is one of the NGOs providing an assistance and aid to more destitute Syrians.

Sama, Mohammad and Hassan are skilled, educated professionals, who do not have social networks that they can use to find jobs. Although they are able to find jobs in their expertise, the process was stressful, full of uncertainties. On the other hand, some of my other interlocutors try to mobilize their previous networks. The stories of Omar and

Yasmeen will help us to understand how some of my interlocutors try to use exclusionary social networks to find jobs.

Omar is a religiously devoted person who works as Arabic instructor and researcher. When the uprising took place, he felt insecure to stay in Syria. He explains working with foreigners has never welcomed by the regime and it has become more restricted when the government tried to prevent demonstrations. After first moving to Lebanon, he started to get into touch with his friends and colleagues to find a job. One of his good friends, who shares the similar religious attitudes, has been working as a senior manager in a private Islamic oriented Arabic teaching institute. After his friend's offer to start teaching Arabic in the same institute, he moves to İstanbul. Through his previous professional as well as religious networks, he is able to find this job. Being a part of a mere religious network or network of Arabic instructors is not enough to find this job, Omar's current job position is rather related to knowing some people, who hold key positions, and having a shared lifestyle and similar concerns in the web of trust.

Although Yasmeen is not able to use her professional identity, she also shares a similar trajectory with Omar in a different way by mobilizing her socio-political network when she adjusts to her new live in İstanbul. She comes from a politically dissident background. Her political stands during the uprising coupled with being originally from Homs made her felt insecure in her previous job, teaching, in Syria. So, she had to leave her job and started to work for civic demonstrations and defence. When she took more active role during the revolution, she became a target and felt more insecure. Her insecurity could also be understood from her choice of transportation. She is one of my

three interview partners who came by lands because of her political dissident identity, she could be arrested on the airport. She had to bribe customs official that she could trust and crossed Turkish border. When she came to Turkey, she also experienced challenges to find a job. Finally she finds a work in a radio station as a journalist:

> "[The radio that I am working] is Syrian one. It was established with the coalition, with the same time of coalition at the end of 2012… 80 % of the work is about Syrians and Syrian revolution."

Yasmeen highlights the radio station that she starts to work is also a part of Syrian opposition institutions. As explained earlier, various NGOs and media organizations of Syrian opposition have operated in Turkey to provide humanitarian and communication service for Syrian people in Turkey or in Syria. Yasmeen is also covering the news taking place in Syria from pro-revolutionary stand. She finds this job through her friends who were also very active during the uprising. Their shared ideas, established trust in the difficult times provide an opportunity, for Yasmeen to find this job. However, working as a host in the radio program necessitates knowledge and ability to speak standard Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as program is broadcasting in this MSA, rather than in Syrian dialect. The "natural sounding," and proper accent of MSA, for Yasmeen, becomes an important asset. My other interlocutor Nadira also finds a position in one of these media groups with the help of her previous activist networks and she explains;

> "I know someone else. He studied English and he is journalist now. I know another girl, one of them studied media and she is journalist. The other one studied law and she is also journalist."

As in the case of Youssef and Ahmad, whose previous professionals unrecognized or devalued, the previous educations of Nadira and Yasmeen do not particularly help

them to navigate in İstanbul. Rather, their social networks, coupled with their knowledge and stand about Syrian politics and Arabic skills help them to hold positions in these media organizations, which are mainly funded by Gulf states and pay salaries in dollars.

4.5 Navigating Social Life and Finding a "Proper House" in İstanbul

These job positions that my interlocutors acquire with the help of their previous experiences, professional skills as well as social networks are important not only to provide livelihood, but also enable them to reach other people, with a similar economic positions and lifestyles and interests. In this section I will explain how my interlocutors try to utilize social and professional networks in the workplaces, coupled with their dispositions and manners in order to navigate in İstanbul, overcome various difficulties that they encounter.

As explained in the previous section, some of my interlocutors reach these jobs through their previous social networks. They also establish friendship with their colleagues in these workplaces. Many of them tell the reason of their friendship is not only about working together and having similar purchasing power to go out together, but, more importantly, their shared interests and lifestyles. Also, these friendships provide psychological and material support. Sama's close friends in Turkey are Turkish, Syrian and a few other international people from her first job. She hangs out and goes on weekend holidays with them. Omar tells he feels contented because his job in the private language institute provides him a chance to meet like-minded friends. His friend circle is consisted of several Arabs and Turkish working and/or studying in this institute, and

some of them have already been his friends back in Syria. They share, as states by Omar, similar interests and “modest” Islamic perspective and discuss about Islamic philosophy and religion while drinking coffee or dining together.

These friendships and social networks builded in the workplaces are not only help them to socialize, but also overcome various difficulties that they encounter in their social life as Syrians escaping from war. One of the problems that my interlocutors emphasize is the difficulty of finding a “proper house”. They complain about the attitudes of house owners towards Syrians and their unwillingness to sign a lease with Syrians. Their manners, dispositions, economic abilities, as well as their friendships in these workplaces ease this process.

A Syrian couple that I interviewed told me when they looked for a house in one of the housing complexes, the real estate agent took their photo and sent it a house-owner. After that, house-owner accepted to rent the apartment. However, he still took two month deposits rather than one month which, is a common practice for house renting. From Youssef’s words:

> “When we talk on the telephone [about renting the house]… They say directly yok [no]. But when we go and they see us, their reaction is different. Yes, they are actually very good and kind. They have very very bad ideas about Syrians and Arabs in their minds. But, when Turkish [person] deals with us, their reactions are different. They look [and see] they are dealing with civil people, not the one they are thinking about.”

Youssef explains the reason why house-owners do not want to rent the apartment is their lack of knowledge about Syrians. However, he is not talking about Syrians in general but Syrians like him and his friends who are urban, educated and ‘civilized,’ as he

previously accuses various Syrians, for not being “civilized" and not knowing “how to behave.” His embodiment, the way he talks, behaves, and dresses help him to rent a place because it shows he is a “modern”, better off person that can rent a place and not “disturb” the neighborhood, where he wants to stay in.

Despite their embodiment and economic resources, house-owners can also refuse to rent the apartment as in the case of Sama, who is a customer service director:

> “They [real estate agents] called the house-owner and then they were talking about my look. [House owner asked] ‘How does she look like? If she has a scarf, if she doesn't have a scarf, does she wear a make up?’ or sth like this. These were strange questions. He was talking on the phone. I didn't hear what he was asking but I heard the person replying… It seems like he asked about the quality of my clothes. It is like high quality or not, or sth like this. And then, he asked from where she is. After that, he said, ‘Ok’, for everything and he asked from where she is. And they said, ‘You said you are yabanci, [foreigner] from where are you?” I told him, ‘Yes’. I told I am Syrian right on from the beginning in the office.” I said them yaʿne. They said, ‘Oh, ok we don't rent for Syrians.’”

They scrutinized Sama’s appearance, when she wanted to rent a place in another luxury housing complex in Beylikdüzü. Although she already told them she was a Syrian, they asked where she was from at the end again and decided not to rent a place for a Syrian. It might possible that the reason why they still showed the place is related to her modest but fashionable dress, light make up and English skills, which do not correspond the general stigmatized understanding of Syrian refugees in Turkey. However, questions about make-up and dress could be also related to the issue of gender. They did not want to rent the apartment to a young single woman.

Some of my interview partners would not want to face similar problems related to being a Syrian refugee. With the help of their appearance and language abilities, they

introduce themselves as a person from Dubai, Lebanon or Poland when they deal with the landlords or locals. They argue people cannot understand them being from Syria from their English accent, dressing style or behaviors. So, they aim to drive from their cosmopolitan appearance coupled with financial means not to be dealt as prejudiced understanding of Syrian refugees when they rent houses. The experiences of Ahmad can be helpful to understand how Syrian professionals could try to develop some strategies to overcome the stigmas against Syrian refugees:

> "Listen, the first time I called him, I made my Turkish friend call him. I told her, 'Don't tell him, I am from Syria.' She told him, !He is from Dubai.'… I use this trick all the time. When you say Dubai, they think, 'Ohhh so much money… They ask me my passport when we sign the contract, but when they see the money, you know [Laughs]… When he saw my passport, 'Oh Syrian?' 'Yes, I am Syrian but I am living Dubai for 20 years, I am not a Syrian."

Ahmad, who works as a freelancer journalist and translator, has never lived in Dubai and in fact he hates the idea of living in "a superficial environment" such as Dubai. Yet, he thinks the fake identity of being from Dubai can open some door for him. He believes that he does not have to prove his financial means if he say he is from Dubai because it already prove his financial means as opposed to the poor image of Syrians in Turkey.

To overcome this burdensome process, some of my interlocutors take support of their colleagues, mostly Turkish citizens. As many others, Sama visits houses with her Turkish friend/colleague, and Ahmad makes his Turkish friend call landlords. In the case of Hassan, his colleagues becomes mediator between him and house-owner, and he

overcomes prejudices of the house-owner, who also does not want to rent his house to Syrian when his Turkish colleague becomes his guarantor.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has traced how Syrian professionals navigate in İstanbul and argued that they have a particular type of class-based management of refugee-ness. Along with other Syrians, they have encountered issues about housing, finding job and securing their legal, they are exposed to similar vulnerabilities and instability while war has continued in Syria and the legal and social context of Turkey does not provide a well-defined secure conditions. After trying to bringing their money to Turkey, they strategically try to use that money in order to solve these problems, advance their position and to make it as secure as possible within constant insecurity and uncertainty. In addition to their economic resources, they also try to manage their situation through strategizing their economic resources (economic capital), social contacts (social capital), skills, credentials and cultural competencies (cultural capital). These different forms of capital do not put them in a privileged position but, in comparison to other refugees, who try to survive, they have relatively fortunate situation. Their concerns become specified from unemployment to find “decent job”, from accommodation to “proper house” and from legal position providing certain assistance to legal position stabilizing their lives.

CHAPTER V

MICRO POLITICS OF INVISIBILITY

5.1 Introduction: Micro Politics of Invisibility

Building on the previous chapter that analyzes the class-based managing of refugee-ness by Syrian professionals in İstanbul, this chapter discusses how Syrian professionals in İstanbul situate themselves within a larger Syrian refugee community. I argue that Syrian professional refugees have tried not to be perceived as a part of this larger community by deploying a micro politics of invisibility.

Micro politics of invisibility is a way not to be categorized as a refugee on the practical and discursive level in order to escape from the precarious legal situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey as well as "the abject figure of the refugee" (Mason 2011, 355) in media and political discussions.

Rather than politicizing the category of refugee as a way to claim rights from the national and international community, their aim is not to be labeled as refugees and thus be able to create more stable lives. In order to explain their individualized politics of invisibility on the practical level, I first address Syrian professionals' choice of obtaining residence and work permits rather than applying for the ID for Syrian refugees in Turkey. Then, I identify cosmopolitan and local middle class neighborhoods of İstanbul where they have preferred to hang out and settle.

Micro politics of invisibility is not only a penetration into local and transnational communities in İstanbul, but also a reproduction of the idea of the needy and uneducated

refugee on the discursive level from which they seek to be distinguished. In the second part of this chapter, I explain this refusal of identification with underprivileged Syrian refugees on the discursive level. I analyze how they re-articulate previous cleavages related to educational and urban-rural differences. Next, I describe their refusal of the refugee label by addressing their restricted transnational identities based on flexibility, mobility, and self-sufficiency. Lastly, I analyze their negative depiction of Syrians who have tried to cross EU borders. It will show us that they want to be recognized as educated, productive, self-sufficient individuals, but not as refugees.

5.2 On the Practical Level

This section looks at how Syrian professionals have legally and spatially distanced themselves from the bulk of Syrian refugees in Turkey in order to minimize difficulties that Syrian refugees have encountered and create their own social space that is unattached to refugees.

5.2.1 Legal Categorization: Obtaining Residence and Work Permits

As explained in the third chapter, Syrians in Turkey are not legally recognized as refugees and they are not entitled to certain rights and assistance that refugees can access. Yet, their ambiguous legal status has become more explicit over the years. The implementation of temporary protection regulations in 2014 has provided a general legal basis for Syrians. However, they do not have internationally recognized legal

titles such as asylum seekers or refugees, which might enable them to reach more established assistance and protections and to obtain new citizenship.

Despite practical difficulties and challenges (Amnesty International 2014; Erdoğan 2015; Kaya and Kirac 2016), temporary protection IDs enable Syrian refugees to acquire primary education, healthcare, work permits and free translation services. However, all my interlocutors, except for one, have work permits and/or touristic residence permits for foreigners in Turkey. So, they are not subject to the Temporary Protection regulations that provide a general legal basis for Syrian refugees with the title of "people under temporary protection."

They prefer to obtain a residence and work permit in order to (1) escape from the precarious and uncertain legal position of Syrian refugees in Turkey, (2) have freedom of movement within Turkey and (3) the possibility of acquiring Turkish citizenship.

> "When I came here, I had this residency immediately. They told, "oh kimlik [ID] is enough, why do I have to bring the contract and bank account?" I told them, "No, I don't want to be a refugee here." I want to be like any foreigner because I don't know when they will change the law and [when] they will cancel this kimlik. But now this one protects me. I am not a Syrian here. I am like any foreigner, like any English or any French or any American with this one" (Samer)

Samer's statement reflects my interlocutors' suspicions and concerns related to temporary protection IDs. Temporary protection regulation does not specify until when and under which conditions the Turkish government will continue to provide assistance and rights. It only states "[t]emporary protection shall be terminated by a Council of Ministers decision." Although many of my interlocutors praise the Turkish

government for its support and considerably more welcoming policies towards Syrian refugees compared to neighboring countries, they think the issue of Syrian refugees is highly political and these considerably more generous policies can easily change depending on the political context in Turkey. This unknown future the temporary protection regime entails put Syrian refugees in a vulnerable and uncertain position, and thus my interlocutors obtain residence and working permits and reject the social rights and assistance that such protection would provide.

Another advantage that these work and residence permits provide is a freedom of mobility:

> "No, I didn't apply for Kimlik [she replied in an assertive and serious way]. Yani, a lot of Syrians have Kimlik and if you wanna go from the place to another, you should have the permission. My friend in Gaziantep, she wanted to come to İstanbul and they did not allow her because of the permission. So, it is better to have a normal ikame [residence permit]. It costs money but it is better" (Nadira)

As my other interlocutors do, Nadira highlights the restrictions on mobility under the temporary protection regime. As stated on the website of the Directorate General of Migration Management under the "frequently asked questions" heading, people under the temporary protection regime are required to obtain permission to leave their city of residence if they are leaving for more than 15 days.

After implementation of visa regulations for Syrians coming from third countries, the issue of mobility becomes more acute for Syrian professionals. A few of my interlocutors visit Lebanon for business and family unifications. Their work and residence permits allows them to leave and return to Turkey. Such movement would

be a reason for termination of temporary protection status.

Work permits for foreigners are more comprehensive, but harder to obtain. Only three of my interlocutors were able to receive this work permit. While the future of the temporary protection regime is unclear, my interlocutors having work permits highlight their relatively stable positions.

These are three advantages that my interlocutors emphasize while explaining the reasons they do not prefer to be under the temporary protection regime. With a residency permit and a work permit, Syrians are subjected to "the general requirements for residency of foreigners under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection" (UNHCR FAQs), rather than a temporary protection regime. In Samer's words, they are like French, English or Americans here, but not Syrian.

On the other hand, the process of acquiring work and residence permits is not an easy and straightforward process. They have to overcome bureaucratic hurdles as well as discrimination against Syrians in Turkey. They need a valid passport and a Turkish bank account in order to apply for these permits. To do that, many of my interview partners have to renew their passports through the Syrian Consulate in İstanbul. Even though they have been willing to pay 200 US dollars for renewals and 400 US dollars for a new passport (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2015), they have to wait for months to get an appointment. For example, Omar has to obtain a Syrian passport for his newly born child. He pays 400 dollars for a new passport and waits nine months to get an appointment in the Syrian Consulate. Within this process, the Turkish government has started a visa requirement for Syrians

coming from third countries. Even though Omar's baby is born in İstanbul, she needs to get a Turkish visa and a valid stamp on her passport, proving her legal entrance into Turkey from a third country. He does not know how to get a visa for his child who was born in Turkey, so Omar and his wife decide to wait until new visa regulations for Syrians become more established.

With the recent changes in Laws on Foreigners and International Protection, another requirement for obtaining a residence permit is to open a Turkish bank account, in which applicants should deposit at least 500 dollars per month in order to prove their self-sufficiency. While early comers could easily open a bank account with their passports, many of my interlocutors—along with other foreigners moving to Turkey after 2013— have been required to provide proof of their residence permits. Within this vicious circle, they have visited several banks and their different branches to find one which will open a bank account without requesting a residence permit.

In addition to dealing with these bureaucratic difficulties, they have to overcome various discriminations, especially when trying to obtain a work permit for foreigners. While applying for a residence permit is an individualized process, it is the employer, according to Turkish labor law, who should apply for a work permit in the name of foreigners residing in Turkey. Several documents including a permit application, "a balance sheet and a profit & loss statement [of the company] for the past year certified by tax authorities" (Turkey Labor Laws and Regulations Handbook 2015, 61) should be submitted to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. In order to get a work permit, some of my interlocutors have to endure

several discriminations and make various sacrifices. The case of Mohammad is illuminating in this respect:

> "He [my boss] didn't want to give me something like this, work permit. He didn't want at the first time. … I didn't *imza atmadım* [sign to contract]… He did meet with the employers and called the genel merkezi [the central office], told them about me. [After that] he said to me, "Come, what do you want? I will do. But I will decrease your percent." I said, ok… My company is very professional and I am very happy but not [for] much money… My percent is cok az. [very little] 20%, other employees get 50%… But I wanted to do the work [permit[because after 5 years, I can have a Turkish passport. After 5 years, maybe I will be Turk" (Mohammad)

In order to get a work permit, Mohammad has to negotiate with his boss. Even though he is a valuable employee in a real estate company working with Arab customers, managers of this 'very professional' company accept to start a work permit process only after decreasing his share. Mohammad obtains a work permit in exchange for accepting not receiving a monthly salary and a significantly lower percentage for his sales. Still, the possibility of acquiring a Turkish passport, for Mohammad, was worth all these sacrifices.

As mentioned above, obtaining residence and work permits help my interview partners to escape from precarious and uncertain situations of being a Syrian refugee in İstanbul. Yet, their economic resources are not enough to get these permits; they in addition have to deal with many bureaucratic and discriminative barriers.

Some of work in refugee studies highlights the importance of refugee legal status as it confers certain rights including eligibility for material relief, international protection and asylum and permanent settlement (Shacknove 1985; Wettergren and Wikström 2014). In the context of the temporary protection regime which provides

material assistance and national protection and do not permanent settlement, Syrian professionals have preferred to pay for obtaining residence in order to secure their future rather than be concerned with immediate assistance such as free healthcare and social assistance. As a result, with their different legal status, they are statistically invisible in the numbers of Syrian refugees in Turkey, as these numbers of UNHCR and AFAD consist only of Syrians under the temporary protection regime. The statistical information about Syrians with work and residence permits are available under Migration Reports of Turkey and Ministry of Labor and Social Security Work Permits for Foreigners Statistics, as they are shared in third chapter.

5.2.2 Neighborhood Choice (Drawing Spatial Boundaries)

Syrian professional refugees do not only want to legally distance themselves from the majority of Syrians, they also draw spatial boundaries by residing in local and/or cosmopolitan middle-class neighborhoods in İstanbul, rather than Syrian-populated neighborhoods of İstanbul.

Syrian professionals choose their residence based on their different lifestyles and religious and political identifications as Savage et. al. (2005) point out, “residence plays an increasingly important role vis-a-vis other fields in defining one’s own sense of social location” (207). While some of my conservative interlocutors have preferred to live in Üsküdar or gated communities outside of the city center, more secular, leftists people that I interviewed have preferred to live in Şişli, Kadıköy, some parts of

Üsküdar, and Levent which are also secular middle class neighborhoods. Even though they prefer to live in different neighborhoods of İstanbul depending on their lifestyle, their main objective is not to live in Aksaray, the most visibly Syrian-populated district of İstanbul.

Aksaray is called little Damascus (Jones 2016) or little Syria (Gilbert 2016). It is home to various Syrian restaurants, coffee shops and business places where Syrian refugees work, socialize, study, and eat. Arabic language, mostly Syrian dialect, is often heard and some signboards are also written in Arabic. Many Syrian products or products that are consumed in Syria such as labneh and mate tea can be easily found. Yet, my interlocutors merely stop by this neighborhood to buy some Syrian products or dine out in some Syrian restaurants. Many of them told me they do not feel they belong to Aksaray by highlighting their different lifestyle and attitudes compared to people in Aksaray. Some of my other interlocutors directly refer to the absence of Syrian and Arab population as an important element in considering where to live and spend time.

Even though I have not deliberately chosen my interlocutors based on their neighborhoods, only three of them live in Syrian-populated neighborhoods, which they explain is because it is easier and cheaper to find an apartment there. Two of them address their wish to move out of these neighborhoods. Reem is one of them, who is living in another neighborhood, Fatih, in which the Syrian refugee community is also very visible. Even though she shares the same neighborhood with many other

Syrians, she clearly points out her social world is different than the Syrian and Arab communities in Aksaray:

> "Actually, to be honest with you, yaʿne, two places that I really didn't like are Aksaray and Fatih. Aksaray [is] more than Fatih. I don't know why because... I cannot consider myself in İstanbul when I am there. Yaʿne, actually that happened in every country, some places you like and some places you don't like. Besiktaş, Kabatas, Kadıköy, Üsküdar when I am in there, I just feel like, 'Oh my God, this is İstanbul'… Maybe [I don't like] Aksaray because of a lot of Arabic people... They are broke of course... When they are in Aksaray now in İstanbul, you feel like they might harass you or sth... I don't know... I prefer something else yaʿne, rather than Aksaray"

İstanbul, as many other global cities around the world, consists of various neighborhoods, in which many immigrants and refugees have also lived. Yet, Aksaray, for Reem and many others, is perceived as a closed community of mainly conservative Arab people, in contrast to Beşiktaş, Kadıköy, which are vibrant middle class populated neighborhoods with several restaurants, bars and galleries. These are the places where she prefers to spend her time, as it seems more vibrant, local and safer, where she can feel that she is living in İstanbul, not in Syria or any other Arab country. That is why she would like to move to one of these other neighborhoods. Several times, Reem and my other interlocutors, explain to me their will to be "a part of the Turkish community" and "have Turkish friends," rather than just sticking to the Syrian community. Yet, when they were talking about the Turkish community and culture that they wanted to be a part of, they were talking about a particular group of people with whom they have shared similar lifestyles, interests and thoughts that are inseparable from their class resources and dispositions.

My other interlocutors, who are secular and cosmopolitan live in and hang out

in particular parts of city center, Kadıköy, Şişli, Levent and some distinct of Üsküdar. While some of them directly referred to lack of Syrian and Arab communities to explain their reason for choosing these neighborhoods; others mention their lifestyle, sharing the neighborhood with people of similar mindsets, and feeling the soul of the city as reasons for choosing these neighborhoods. Ahmad is one of them:

> "I like the Asian side, European side is a little bit touristic. I feel the soul of the city is here. I like Kadıköy because there is no more Syrians here, no more Arab people at all. I don't hate Arabs but yaʿne, I had enough [laughs]. I spent 40 years of my life between Arabs. Maybe because I am also secular, I like the people here in Kadıköy"

When Ahmad explains why he prefers to live in Kadıköy, the first thing that he mentions is the absence of Syrian and Arab communities in Kadıköy. Yet, when I visit Kadıköy to conduct interviews, I find there is a cosmopolitan, secular, multi-linguistic Syrian community where some of them have lived with their partners and some of them have produced artworks by painting, taking photos and shooting short movies. Yet, Ahmad's "no more Syrians and Arabs" is taken to mean more conservative and religious people, who mainly live in places such as Aksaray, Fatih and Bayrampaşa. Hassan, who is coming from one of the religious minorities in Syria also prefers to live in the center of Üsküdar and compares it to Aksaray without me asking:

> "First I prefer this place [Üsküdar]… I don't like Aksaray for example. I can go there for just a few minutes to get something. It's very crowded and I don't know maybe it's hard to communicate or find people that think as you, or yaʿne… I don't share... I don't want to say most people sure it is not true. But yaʿne, I don't know, yaʿne.... As I told you, some points you cannot avoid the politics. Maybe this is a little bit related to political issue, not political but the crises become deeper and deeper for our society. It's degrading the society. It is not the only reason. I don't like to stay there because it's not a trusted place for me. There are many thieves there. There are people from all over the

> world. Most of them don't share anything with me, like my ideas, way of life, everything. Maybe I don't share anything with people living there. Not all of them for sure, yaʿne... Maybe some people, their houses are there and they have normal live, they are like me. But I don't like and it is not easy to meet these people."

As many others, Hassan also brought up the subject of Syrian-populated Aksaray without my asking when he was describing why he preferred to live in Üsküdar. For him, the issue of not living in Aksaray is not only about a different lifestyle, but also about feeling insecure and as a minority because of his religious identity. Even though religiously, he is also a minority in his current location in Üsküdar, he understands his religious identity as not mattering in places that are not Syrian-populated.

My other interlocutors, who come from more conservative and religious backgrounds also do not prefer to live in Aksaray. Omar, who identifies himself as a devoted Muslim, lives in a more conservative neighborhood in Üsküdar. He is one of a few who does not compare his neighborhood with Aksaray. Rather, he feels secure and happy to live in a place, which is populated by educated, religious local Turkish families.

My other religious and conservative interlocutors would prefer to live in gated communities outside of the city center by highlighting their search for security and comfortable life standards with considerably cheaper rents. Maha tells me:

> "Because I heard Taksim or Beşiktaş, it's expensive than here [Beylikdüzü]. You cannot rent the home like this. And they are old buildings and they don't have facilities like gym, swimming pool, Turkish hamam so it's new and secure with facilities and low cost."

The building complex, in which Maha and her husband live, provides a high level of security. When I visited their apartment, which is mainly furnished with IKEA furniture, security guards at the entrance did not allow me to enter into the complex and called Maha. However, they were not able to communicate because of the language barrier; Maha and her husband do not speak Turkish and the security guards do not speak English or Arabic. At the end, one of the guards accompanied me to their apartment and asked whether or not I was their guest. After their approval, the guard let me go into their apartment. This high level of security is one of the most significant reasons some of my other interlocutors prefer to live in these building complexes, outside of the city center:

> "I started searching for apartment. I knew Beylikdüzü. [My friend] lived there before, in the *site* [building complex], not the same *site*. So, I loved this place when I came and visited her last time. I told her, 'Look I really want a secure place because I am living alone. I don't want to live in inside the city where like there are a lot of insecure situation is happening. İstanbul is a very big city and I am living alone. So if anyone followed me home or something, I will not notice. Maybe they can do something bad, maybe they steal sth from the house. I don't know, I don't want to take this risk, I want a secure place.' I wanted to live in a *site*, just to live comfortable. I just don't want to live insecure places. So, I searched for sites, near to work. I couldn't find a cheap one. All of them are very expensive. I saw some rents are in dollar. 2500 dollars and it's 1+1, ok, fine. For sure, I can make it! [in a ironic way] So, I decided to get, it's not cheap [either]" (Sama)

Along with the case of Reem who discussed her sense of insecurity particularly in Syrian/Arab-populated Aksaray, Sama and Maha also complain about İstanbul as an insecure city when they talk about their preference to live in these residential places. While Hassan and my some other male interlocutors also mention security issues, Maha, Sama and Reem's emphasis on feeling insecure highlight the

particular experiences of women as Reem is worried about getting harassed and Sama constantly worries about her being a woman who lives alone.

While gender-related security concerns unite these Syrian professional women from different worldviews, preference to live in the apartment complexes outside of city center shows us something else. According to Glasze and Alkhayyal's (2002) interpretation of social meaning of gated communities in the Arab world, closed residential complexes provide a secure and private sense of identity for wealthy conservative families. The articulations and practices of Syrian professionals that I interviewed resonate with this interpretation. Rather than mingling with urban life, Syrian poor, and people of different lifestyles inside İstanbul, they prefer to live in more homogenous, guarded residential areas reserved for wealthy people. Moreover, they do not consider to live in any Syrian-populated areas inside of the city since the city itself is perceived as an insecure place to live.

As described above, Syrian professional refugees that I have met are trying to legally and physically distance themselves from the majority of Syrian refugees in İstanbul, regardless of their religious identities and lifestyles. Even though they have to leave Syria because of the ongoing war, their legal status and neighborhood choices are two main practical ways that these refugees can stand outside of the general Syrian refugee community in İstanbul. In this way, they are physically and legally invisible to general discussions related to Syrian refugees in Turkey. Additionally, their self-definitions and descriptions of other Syrian refugees are also crucial to understanding their boundary-making process. In the next section, I analyze in detail

how they draw these boundaries against other Syrian refugees based on their narratives, which I have touched upon in this section.

5.3 On the Discursive Level: Drawing Distance through Identity Talks

Spatial and legal boundary-making processes are the first part of the micro politics of invisibility, in which Syrian professionals in İstanbul physically and legally distance themselves from other Syrian refugees. This section analyzes how Syrian professionals discursively distance themselves from the larger refugee community through identity talk—the second part of a micro politics of invisibility—even though they acknowledge the shared difficulties and anxieties because of forced mobility and the ongoing war in Syria. In order to explain this, first, I will discuss how they draw boundaries within the larger Syrian refugee community by highlighting their previous distinctions based on urban-rural cleavages, education levels and their transnational identities. Second, I will explain their refusal of refugee identity by highlighting their self-sufficiency and (restricted) mobility. Lastly, I will lay out their negative depictions of Syrians who regularly and/or irregularly try to cross EU borders. These three parts of relational self-identification of Syrian professionals in İstanbul show us that the effort of erasure of themselves as part of the larger refugee community can also be an unintentional process of reproduction of the figure of the burdensome and irrational refugee.

5.3.1 Re-articulation of Previous Differences

Many of my interlocutors acknowledge the impoverishing, psychologically damaging impact of war, forced mobility and the corrupt economic and social system in Syria on people from Syria. They are self-reflective about their relatively better-off situation compared to many other refugees as well as some other Syrians who cannot leave the country:

> "Those people really suffered from the war. Comparing myself to them, I was living in heaven. So these people saw a lot of bad things because of the war. You can see that all Syrians are not happy and they cannot be happy because they are out the country, home. They are working very hard, have small amount of money. They have these challenges in another country for the legal situation first. Things like they don't have, maybe, enough money to rent a house… You cannot feel stable in any place if you're Syrian, believe me. Not even in your home in Syria, you cannot be stable because you don't know what's happening. Everyday, or not everyday in one hour there will be any kind of decision, political decision. They just go and talk and it will affect people. So, this is the main issue for all Syrians. You don't feel stable." (Sama)

> "I am middle class person. I live with my works. I have good friends from the very beginning in Turkey. So, I didn't face the problems that… So I didn't suffer the problems that other refugees suffer. It was easy, relatively easy to find a house than another... I am living in the second house now in İstanbul. I have good friends… I came with my work. I need only PC and now I have books." (Jamal)

The thoughts of Sama and Jamal are shared among my other interlocutors at different levels. Many of them are aware that their economic, social and cultural resources put them in a more privileged position, as discussed in the previous chapter. Still, they share, in Sama's words, feelings of instability, uncertainty and unhappiness among others.

Despite these shared feelings, some of my interlocutors distinguish themselves

by making references to ‘immoral’ stances of various Syrian refugees and their ‘uneducated’ and ‘uncivil’ background in comparison to their own urban, educated, ‘highly moral,’ national and transnational identities. Some of them are very concerned and frustrated with the visibility of Syrian beggars on the streets. For example, when Khaled and I were walking on İstiklal Street, he started to talk about Syrian beggars on the street. He was frustrated with their visibility and representation of Syrians in Turkey. He told me they even did not like ‘these people’ in Syria and that they maintained their lives with the money of others. In a way, Khaled’s words show that he has not only preferred to stay away from stigmatized and impoverished Syrian refugees, but also preserves the (class) lines between him and others back in Syria.

While some of them accuse other Syrians of ‘morally degraded’ attitudes, they also lay the burden on themselves to represent “good Syrians” who are productive, self-sufficient, educated and civilized individuals. While Hussein is talking about prejudices and difficulties that he and his wife have to overcome in order to find a house, he tells:

> “Lazem Syrians do their best to keep our image clean. They give bad image about Syrians. That's why some of Turkish people don't like us… Yaʿne, for example, houses. Some people rent the house and ruin something in it. They took it clean and gave it back dirty. That's why Turkish people don't want Syrians to take their home. Because of what they did, we have to make a better image. We took this house clean and we have to give it back clean. Maybe this will change their minds about Syrians.” (Hussein)

For Hussein, the reason why they cannot find an apartment is mainly because of Syrian refugees, who do not “use their minds,” who are “uneducated” and “morally degraded,” more than racist house-owners. According to him, “Syrians in general are

not well educated and decent people who know how to behave." As described in the second chapter, this idea resonates with how Syrian middle and upper middle class distinguish themselves from the masses by bringing the issue of being modern, civil and educated people who behave according to socially acceptable norms.

Zeina, who is a university student in one of the private universities in İstanbul, highlights the importance of education for her, while explaining how she feels responsible for representing the "beauty of Syrians":

> "I try to show beauty of Syrians when I am talking about myself. Syrians are asking money on the streets. -In fact, not all of them are Syrians.- So, Turkish people have a terrible image of Syrians. I would like to change this image. I love reading, I love studying. If I can study, I can do it. I don't ask money from other people." (Zeina)

While Zeina's explanation also hinges upon the stereotypical images of Syrians in Turkey, she, in a way, contrasts "asking money on the streets" with her love of study. Accordingly, she confers respectability through being a hardworking and educated person who should not ask money from others.

While some of my interlocutors differentiate between themselves and other Syrian refugees through claims of who has a right to represent Syrian national identity, some others refer to their transnational identification, which goes beyond the discussion on nation-state defined terms of citizen, refugee and Syrian refugees:

> "I can't define myself as a Syrian because even in Syria, I didn't believe that nationality is your identity. So, I always define myself as a kind of person who is just trying to have more knowledge he can about human beings and societies… I see myself as a productive person, trying to understand as much as he can and trying to be a part of the society he lives in. I don't see myself as a Syrian in Turkish country" (Samer)

> "What it means that I am Syrian, you are Turkish? Why you are Turkish? Because of your ID? No, I don't believe in identity. When you go to new culture, and you get used to be this culture. There is something effects you and becomes a part of your identity; some behavior, some thoughts." (Milad)

Samer and Milad are frustrated because of hierarchies based on citizenship. For them, there are other identities that should matter more than their passport that is why Samer highlights himself as a "productive person." He is a productive person across nation-states.

Their refusal of national identities and emphasis on fluid identities and self-productivity reminds us of the 'global middle class' discussions in the literature. While the nation-state formation creates the modern middle class who are the key actors in the domestic economy of the country, globalization and the global market economy creates a global middle class who are alienated from their fellow citizens (Cohen 2004). So, with the decline of national political authority and rise of global market capitalism, the subjectivity formation of young, urban and educated people shifted. Rather than embracing their national identities, they highlight being flexible, mobile, self-sufficient and productive, and open to new cultural experiences. (De Koning 2009; Birkholz 2014; Cohen 2004).

This literature does not address members of the global middle class who were forced to leave their locality because of war and political reasons. Still, it can be said that Samer and Milad are also part of this global middle class through their self-descriptions. They are part of a global middle class, who were forced to leave their

locality, even though their aspirations, thoughts are beyond borders, with their Syrian passports their physical mobility is highly restricted. Their refusal of national identities also means their refusal of nation-state based refugee identities, and identification with other Syrians based on their shared nationality.

5.3.2 Who is a Refugee?

While some of my interlocutors stress that they are "good Syrians," some others emphasize their transnational identities. Still, among the 20 Syrian professionals who shared their stories with me, only one of them partially identified himself as a refugee, and important to note, he is a politically active writer

> "I am an exile person but at the same time I am one of around 5 millions who are displaced outside of the country... Maybe the word exile is not the right word to describe this massive exodus. I am a refugee, not in a legal sense of the word ... but in a way, I am a refugee…[But] I live with my works. I have good friends from the very beginning in Turkey. So, I didn't face the problems that other refugees suffer."

Jamal is the only one, who takes up the refugee identity as a way to assert his political identity and the illegitimate authority of the Assad regime in Syria. His self-definition of being in exile resonates with the way Malkki's (1992) Hutu refugees in camps politicize the category of the refugee in order to define themselves as "a nation in exile" (p. 35). While popular public and media discourses tend to focus on the current of refugees outside of Syria, being a refugee forced to leave his homeland, for Jamal, cannot be separated from the historical context and the political and military brutality in Syria that produces refugees in the first place. Claiming the refugee

identity shows his emotional and political ties to his homeland, Syria. For this reason, the symbolic importance of being a refugee is a "righteous self-assertation as a political subject" of Syrians in exile (Wettergren and Wikström 2014) while decrying the illegitimate authority of the Assad regime in Syria to the international community.

Aside from Jamal, others called themselves "regular tourists," "foreigners," 'Syrians," "persons in exile," but never a refugee. The reason behind this is complicated, including escaping from the precarious legal position of being a refugee, avoiding stigmatization, as well as trying to draw boundaries between themselves and other Syrians. This shows us an aspect of the micro-politics of invisibility that I will explore. However, their refusal of a refugee identity also unintentionally reproduces the discourse of burdensome and irrational refugees:

> "And I didn't apply for Kimlik. [00:38:39.22] I didn't want, because Kimlik means, and this is what UNHCR interpreted to us. Kimlik means that you are a refugee in Turkey. You need some help. I don't need a help, just give to another person and that's it. I am working here. I am paying rent. I am paying taxes, I am paying everything. So why should I have? (Yasmeen)
>
> "Syrians here are living like, they are seen from other countries, maybe from some Turkish people [as well] as refugees but most of them are not refugees. They are paying taxes." (Nadeer)

Yasmeen and Nader highlight the issue of paying taxes rather than receiving assistance as proof that they and some other Syrians are not refugees. They refuse to be called "refugee" even though refugee, in human rights discourse and international law refers to "people fleeing conflict or persecution," which can be reclaimed in different ways to assert certain rights beyond only financial and immediate assistance. But, in order to escape from stigmatized understandings of the refugee as a burden

within the nation-state framework, which is reproduced in media and political discussions, they are reluctant to call themselves refugees. They capitalize their self-sufficiency and their economic contributions to society by paying taxes.

However, they still acknowledge the existence of the refugee figure. Except for Jamal, they do not want to politicize the refugee identity to highlight issues related to the ongoing war in Syria, or claim rights from international community. To them, the refugee is a burden, and they have enough economic, social and cultural resources to be self-sufficient and productive. So, the refugee is an identity for others, but not for themselves.

Their refusal is not exceptional. Scholars also highlight that a negative representation of the abject refugee figure, who is "pathologised and criminalized—and in the process im-mobilised" (Mason, p. 355) in a local and global context. Rather than capitalizing on the refugee identity, some refugees, such as Hutu town refugees "tended to pragmatically manage a series of different identities in preference to a primary self-definition as refugees" (Malkki, p. 153) in order to escape from the stigma and danger associated with being a refugee such as poverty and a lack of freedom. Iraqis in Jordan define themselves with "various Arabic terms, such as *muhajirin* (emigrants), *manfiyin* or *mughtaribin*, the latter two carrying the same sense of alienation as the English 'exiles'" (Chatelard, p. 5). However, this is not only a way to escape from prejudices against refugees, but also a historical connotation of being a refugee in the Arab world. As Chatelard argues, the notion of refugee and the Palestinian experience are inseparable from each other. For this reason, "between

Arabs, refugeeness can only signify the experience of individuals who have denied national existence" (p. 16).

5.3.3 Articulations on Syrians Trying to Cross EU Borders

One of the most salient topics related to Syrian refugees throughout my fieldwork is Syrians trying to cross EU borders, as this issue draws attention in the international media and human rights activist groups. However, it is one of the issues that many of my interlocutors are highly critical of even though all of them acknowledge difficulties that refugees endure in order to reach Europe irregularly for "some hope," "stability," and a "better life."

> "The war will not be end soon. I think we will stay here. Also, this reason is why most of Syrians prefer Europe over Turkey. Europe, there will be a nationality, there will be an economic help, they can work, they can... more safe." (Youssef)

> "[Y]ou are living in a place and something happens, shells, barrels…You couldn't live there no longer. You have to search another place, you see another people going by sea to Europe… [she starts to use *they* instead of *you* now] Because they saw that in Europe, they have more privileges as far as I know. They got salaries, language courses and then they start to learn the language and continue to work or study something. So, they find it easier life. Why not in Turkey? There is nothing to do with those stuffs. [she shifts to use *you* again] You have to do it by yourself learn the language, searching for the jobs. If the job accepts you as a Syrian or not, that place you live will accept you as a Syrian or not. These are the difficulties that they are suffering." (Sama)

Youssef and Sama show empathy with other Syrians, who are trying to establish their new life in Europe, consider more established refugee aid programs in

Europe and a chance to acquire citizenship to secure their futures. Despite that, they argue that many of Syrians going to Europe do not “try hard enough” to establish their life and to “be a part of this community.”

> “It's easy to go there [Europe] and being a refugee than fighting to have a normal life [here]…. It's easy to go somewhere and asking them for a help, it’s easy! That's why all Syrian are going there” (Yasmeen)

> “Some people go, just because of salary. In Europe, they will give him salary… They don't want to work. They just want comfort and don't [want to] work, stay comfortable and take money. Maybe, some people don't have money to pay, maybe... But there are a lot of people, who like what I say. They don't want to work. Turkish government don't give them money because of that... And they look to Europe *cennet gibi* [as it was heaven]… They do not want to learn. German language is more difficult. I think they will give up. And after the war finish, if it will finish... German government will send almost all of them.” (Mohammad)

Following a similar line of thought, some of my interlocutors portray negative images of Syrians who tried to cross EU borders irregularly as “lazy people,” “fashion followers,” and “stupid people” who did not try hard enough to live in Turkey and chose the easy way to be refugees in Europe, as stated by Jamal “to get money and lay down.” While they criticize Syrians who go to Europe, they highlight that they are trying very hard to be part of this society, they do not give up, and their aim is to be self-sufficient in Turkey rather than take aid and assistance in Europe.

The last sentence of Mohammad, “[G]erman government will send almost all of them,” hinges upon my interlocutors’ suspicions related to moving to Europe. They will not have the opportunity to mobilize their previous resources and experience downward class mobility, deprofessionalization and deskilling, which are documented by various studies on skilled refugees who go to prosperous countries in Europe, the

US and Canada (Holm Pedersen 2012; Van Hear 1998; Creese and Wiebe 2012; Smyth and Kum 2010).

Even though I did not ask the reasons that Samer did not seek to be a refugee in Europe, he told me:

> "So, if you ask me why you don't go to Europe, I say I don't feel myself as primitive. I don't want anyone to come and say, 'Oh Arab don't know anything, you're from the Middle East. You don't know anything from the life and we need to teach you a life and you are coming here just to take money.' They don't believe in your education, they don't believe you as a productive person."

He prefers trying harder to find a job and learning the culture and language by himself, rather than going to Europe where he could receive financial and social assistance as a refugee. He refers to "ethnically stigmatized biases" (Holm Pedersen 2012) in Europe that prevent him from having a chance to mobilize his cultural resources such as education, knowledge and other previous resources.

Yet, when they describe other Syrians, particularly highly educated ones, who try their chances in Europe as "stupid," or "fashion followers" they also project these structural problems in Europe on Syrian people;

> "I have a lot of friends, sorry to say that they are stupid to go there. Lots of them are so highly educated; they are now working as a waitress in a Turkish restaurant, not even in German restaurant! Really I have a friend, he's speaking four languages.... And he is working now in lahmabajin restaurant, that's so stupid! He gave 7000 Euros to smugglers... [One day] they [social workers] told him, 'We found him a job in your specialty,in a medicine factory. Ok, what about packaging?' [Laughs]"

In a way, many of my interlocutors refuse to work in these survival jobs that refugees and migrants often have to take even though they are "well below their

qualifications—and their dignity—in order to ensure basic economic survival" (Creese and Wiebe 2012, p. 61) in Europe. However, they do not only refuse these jobs, but also criticize other Syrians, from their perspective, who try too hard to go there and accept these undignified jobs. They do not want to be one of these Syrian refugees who try to cross EU borders.

Their refusal to go to Europe as well as their criticism of others complicates Van Hear's (2006; 2014) idea of a "hierarchy of destination," in which Europe, the US and Australia are at the top as prosperous and desirable countries. He argues, although refugees want to reach these countries, only the ones who have certain social and economic capital can reach there. From the case of my interlocutors, desirability is not only related to better socio-economic conditions, but also includes issues about respectability and recognition that they would receive in these locations. Even though my interlocutors are part of this group of refugees that are able to reach these destinations, they prefer to utilize their capital in order to establish their lives in İstanbul. They prefer to stay in Turkey, rather than move to affluent Western countries where they believe they would not be adequately "respected" or "recognized" (Chatterjii, 2013).

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the micro-politics of invisibility, which entailed my interlocutors' refusal to be identified through refugee discourses. In a way, the deployment of the micro-politics of invisibility on a practical and discursive level is

related to their refusal of “the refugee figure.” Even though the refugee in juridical and human right discourse highlights the forced mobility and responsibilities of the international community, the refugee for many of my interlocutors, as mainstream nationalists, is a burden, a label of second-class status, which disregards their accumulated social and cultural capital. Still, their refusal of the refugee category is not to be taken to mean a refusal of being Syrian; sometimes, it is a refusal of a particularly salient perception of being Syrian that includes being “uneducated,” “lazy” and “uncivilized.”

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By the second half of 2016 that I conducted this research, Syrian refugees had already become part of the political tensions in Turkey, with the image of Syrians trying to cross EU borders taking international public attention. In this highly politicized context, stories of Syrian professional refugees are important to listen to in order to understand the different needs, vulnerabilities, and resilience strategies among Syrians. These stories are also important to listen to in order to rethink basic assumptions about being a refugee while acknowledging the shared difficulties and anxieties because of forced mobility and the ongoing war.

At the start of this project, I chose to focus on stories of Syrian professionals as a challenge to the simplified and homogenized representations of Syrian refugees in media and political discussion. These representations make different experiences among Syrian refugees invisible as well as ignore how a Syrian refugee holds fragmented and —often— contradictory identities and positions at the same time. Critically analyzing experiences and self-perceptions of a relatively invisible refugee group, Syrian professionals with their own vulnerabilities and comparably advantageous positions would complicate these homogenized accounts of Syrian refugees as a group and as an individual being in Turkey. I also sought to contribute to larger theoretical discussions about differential refugee experiences and subjectivities in refugee studies. In critical refugee studies that highlight the heterogeneity of experiences based on several factors such as age, disability, gender, the ways in which class and socio-economic inequalities have an impact on

refugee experiences is surprisingly understudied, let alone the experiences of considerably “better off” refugees such as professionals. The case of Syrian professionals in İstanbul would contribute to this understudied area by focusing on the uneven and differential experiences of being a refugee as they intersect with the changing socio-economic positions held by refugees.

With these aims, I asked (1) how Syrian professional refugees navigated the difficulties of forced mobility and refugee-ness, -the state of being a refugee-, in İstanbul and (2) how they perceived themselves in the larger Syrian refugee community. Before explicating answers to these questions based on qualitative research that I conducted between January and June 2016, in the second chapter, I laid out theoretical discussions about differential refugee experiences and subjectivities by aiming to critically engage with some analytical tools and frameworks to analyze my fieldwork. I paid particularly attention to how social class is deployed as socio-economic position and identity in refugee studies. I also explained Bourdieu’s conceptualization of forms of capital as it has been used to understand class-based differentiation of refugee experiences in the literature and I also drew on Bourdieu’s concepts in order to understand Syrian professionals’ experiences in İstanbul.

In the third chapter, I first laid out the historical formation of middle and upper middle classes in Syria in related to larger socio-historical changes as Syrian professionals in İstanbul with their higher education, cultural competencies and economic resources were—most likely—members of the middle and upper strata of Syrian society.

Understanding their experiences of refugee-ness and tracing their self-perceptions about forced mobility necessitated familiarity with their trajectories back in Syria. Second, I explained socio-legal framework in Turkey by emphasizing two significant legal changes related to Syrian refugees in Turkey, namely, legal status and visa regulations as Syrian professionals have tried to strategically position themselves in relation to these changes in the legal framework.

Building on these two chapters, I presented my argument in the fourth and fifth chapters. A class-based management of refugee-ness that involves mobilizing, transposing and accumulating different forms of capital was my first part of the argument. To explain that, in the fourth chapter, I described the difficult process of carrying a significant amount of their economic resources from Syria to Turkey. Then, I explained how some of them tried to transfer their financial capital into cultural capital by enrolling in MA and certificate programs, as well as language courses in Turkish and English. Social capital was also crucial for them to find "decent" jobs and enter into particular communities of people with whom they shared similar lifestyles. Speaking English, formal Arabic, and their manners and dispositions that were cultivated through upper and upper-middle class upbringings were some other assets that they sought to mobilize in order to deal with the various problems that they encountered as Syrians living in İstanbul. Although they were in possibly better situations compared to many other Syrian refugees in Turkey who had to depend on financial assistance for their livelihood, their struggle to successfully navigate İstanbul through complex transfers and transmutations

of their different forms of capital is steeped in anxieties and vulnerabilities due to experiences of ongoing war and forced mobility.

In the fifth chapter, I explained the second part of my argument: the politics of invisibility. I stated that, by strategically deploying these capitals that they had, my interlocutors' aim was to be invisible to the larger image of the Syrian refugee on the practical and discursive level. This was so that they could minimize contact with problems that Syrian refugees faced and created their own invisible social space that was unattached to the larger Syrian refugee community. To explain the micro politics of invisibility, I first described their preference of obtaining residence permits, rather than temporary protection IDs. This strategy, with no doubt, must be read alongside the Turkish government's policies. The governments' changing policies towards Syrians under the temporary protection regime and citizenship discussions created a precarious situation and unknowable future for Syrians. In this sense, their refusal to have temporary protection ID cards for Syrians in Turkey was the refusal of this precarity and uncertainty of policies towards Syrian refugees in Turkey. Then, I explained that even though they prefer to live in different neighborhoods of İstanbul depending on their lifestyles, their main preference and commonality was not to live in Aksaray, the most visibly Syrian-populated district of İstanbul. On the discursive level, I addressed their rejection of the refugee identity and their negative portrayals of Syrians trying to cross EU borders.

After I finished my fieldwork, the series of events that have been unfolding after the coup attempt in June, including the large crackdown against opposition groups and the

rising of anti-refugee sentiments have created an ambivalence in the discourses and practices of some of my interlocutors. Yasmeen and Hassan are among the few of my interlocutors that I have kept in touch with, whose stories unfold to show how the experiences of Syrian professionals have changed throughout this tumultuous process. Even though Hassan was not as highly critical about Syrians going to Europe as others, he also rejected being called a refugee and his plan was to stay in İstanbul, maybe change his job and hopefully acquire Turkish citizenship since people who have work permits, for him, can secure their futures by obtaining citizenship after five years. However, increasing instability in Turkey and difficulties in renewing his work permit in this environment motivated him to emigrate to the Netherlands. Now he is one of the "officially" Syrian asylum seekers awaiting his refugee status.

Yasmeen, on the other hand, had been eager to be part of the local Turkish community and to have a Turkish boyfriend and to make other Turkish friends. But, this January when I returned to İstanbul, she told me she no longer felt like making an effort to have Turkish friends because of the increasing anti-refugee and anti-Syrian sentiment as well as her long working hours. Yasmeen said, for now, she was happy to hang out with her mostly Syrian friends.

These changing practices and discourses of my interlocutors both support my arguments and show its limitations. Their dealings with the situation have still been based on their mobilization of different forms of capital and they have still been reluctant to call themselves refugees. Hassan went to the Netherlands by using his savings and finding a job through his friends when he decided that he could not deal with the constant

instability and insecurity in Turkey. In the case of Yasmeen, she, for now, gave up her willingness and attempts to be part of the local Turkish community in İstanbul. However, she has not changed her ideas about the connotations of being a refugee. Her friend circle still consists of other professionals, journalists and artists.

These two cases remind us of how their dealings with refugee-ness do not consist of fixed strategies. They rather show that people constantly reconfigure their strategies and mobilize their capital in different ways in order to advance their position in relation to the changing political and economic context. In this sense, it is important to highlight the temporality of fieldwork and the necessity of understanding this study within its own temporal conditions. Various strategies that are described from obtaining the residence permit and to refusing to migrate to Europe were decided in their current conditions in İstanbul, Turkey while also considering their past experiences as well as the changing political and economic conditions in other places such as Syria, Europe, the United States, Egypt and so on in which their family members have lived or they could possibly live.

Not just their maneuvers and strategies, but also their memories are constantly constructed and reconstructed, their articulations of their experiences have been reshaped during these changing dynamics of politics and economy. In this sense, the memories and articulations of displaced Syrians whose maneuvers and strategies based on capitals derived from class belongings are far from being objective and stable. For this reason, this study has its limitations of observing and analyzing the ever-changing process of making sense of Syrian professionals' struggles to manage their refugee-ness.

Still, this limitation might also be interpreted as a contribution for further study. One of my aims in starting this project was to rethink the representation of refugees as subaltern people who are destitute and passive individuals at the margins of their new society and thus I sought to understand refugee experiences among those more "fortunate" refugees. At the beginning, I thought it was from class prejudices that people have associated the category of the refugee with especially impoverished people, but as my research progressed, it became apparent that this was also related to the ways in which Syrian professionals sought to invisiblize themselves within a larger refugee discourse in the context of İstanbul between January and June 2016. They refused to be identified as refugees. The refugee, for many of them, as mainstream nationalists, was a burden, a label of second class status, and disregarded their accumulated social and cultural capital.

However, it is hard to discern whether this refusal is a temporal tactic, or it is more related to a class based identification struggle transcending time and context. Therefore, this study invites further detailed studies dealing with entangled relation between refugee experiences, social class and refugee subjectivities. At this point, how do people experiencing forced mobility perceive the refugee category in other context and temporal conditions? When and how do people embrace or reject this category? To what extend does this refusal of refugee identity about social class? How do other Syrians holding different class positions in other contexts approach the refugee identity? Building on this study, I plan to engage with these questions in future research.

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