After the ‘Refugee Crisis’: Host state policies, socio-economic class, and a new Syrian diaspora in Turkey and Germany

In the past years, headlines on the Syrian “refugee crisis” have understandably focused on the horrific violence that individuals are escaping, their perilous journeys across land and sea, and the sheer scope of need generated by mass forced migration. Yet alongside these developments of humanitarian urgency, quieter developments are also remaking the lives of Syrians in exile. One such development relates to transformations in socio-economic class and in class differentiation among the displaced. Illustrative are brief profiles of three Syrian refugees I met in Turkey and Germany.

Ahmed is twenty-something engineer from a middle-class neighborhood in Damascus. As economic and security conditions worsened in the capital, he followed his brother to Turkey. There he considered himself lucky to land a rare office job in a company that allowed him to use some of his English skills. Still, he worked 10-hour days for a salary that barely covered his living expenses and offered no chances of promotion or higher education. “There was no future in Turkey,” he told me. He decided to risk the journey to Germany, taking his wife with him after friends in Germany warned that, should he go alone, he would face a lengthy bureaucratic hurdles if he later tried to apply for family reunification. The young couple made it to Berlin, where they were assigned to live in a shelter. Residing in the collective accommodations in a peripheral neighborhood, Ahmed was surprised to find himself living together with poorer, rural, and uneducated Syrians whom he never would have met back home. “They sleep until noon and wash their feet in the sink,” he said, with thinly veiled disdain.

Yusra never went to school in Syria and remained illiterate. She was married at age fifteen, widowed in her early twenties, and then remarried. In 2013, after bombing escalated near her home in the Damascus countryside, Yusra fled with her two young children to Jordan for what she believed would be temporary shelter. In poor health, her husband stayed behind. She remained in Jordan for two years. Unable to find work and ultimately spending all of her savings, she then decided that she needed to find a more

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1 I thank Coretta Lemaitre for German-language research assistance.
permanent solution. Traveling alone with her children and her nephew, she made a death-defying boat ride across the Mediterranean and gruelling trek through the Balkans by foot. Now living in Germany, she told me, “I don’t regret a thing ... Even if I’m still living in this refugee shelter ... I hope that my daughter will be an engineer or a doctor one day. I’m also going to school, and I started to learn the letters ... Little by little, I’m learning.”

Mustafa left northern Syria as a child in the 1980s when his family faced retribution for their political opposition to Hafez al-Assad. He was raised in Saudi Arabia where he eventually went on to establish a successful bread bakery. He put his business on hold to return to Syria in 2011 to join the revolution against Bashar al-Assad, bringing his wife and children to live in southern Turkey while he crossed back and forth over the border to participate in the rebellion in Aleppo. As conditions deteriorated in Syria, he traveled less frequently and spent more time in Turkey. He bought a dilapidated building in a village in Hatay province and transformed it into a bread oven. Within a few years, he built a company that produced and sold not only bread, but also machinery and equipment for bakeries. His company bore his last name and a seal indicating its operations “since 1989.” Though his business was thriving, Mustafa told me about one of his regrets. “When we first came to Turkey I enrolled my son in a Syrian school because I thought we would soon be returning to Syria,” he said. “If I’d enrolled him in a Turkish school, he’d be speaking Turkish by now.”

Academic and popular examinations of refugees often analyze them abstractly as victims of violence, legally as rights-holders under international statutes, demographically as a distinct population, or individually as agents carving paths of resilience or resistance despite severe constraints. These perspectives are useful for investigating an array of important questions, but obscure many factors that signal important heterogeneity among refugees and vitally shape their lived experience of exile. One such factor is refugees’ socioeconomic class, used here to refer to the combination of financial position, income, wealth, education, and occupational status. Individuals’ pre-flight class affects many dimensions of their post-flight lives, including where they go, how they get there, the connections they maintain to their countries of origin, and their prospects for economic, social, and political incorporation in their countries of settlement. At the same time, refugees’ prior class status does not have an unmediated

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2 On some of these issues, see Nicholas Van Hear, “‘I went as far as my money would take me’: conflict, forced migration and class,” Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Paper No. 6, University of Oxford, 2004, https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2004/wp-2004-006-vanhear_forced_migration_class/
impact on their subsequent socio-economic trajectories. As the above vignettes suggest, they are filtered through the particular circumstances that they encounter in their new lands of exile, and thus vary with those circumstances themselves.

This paper offers a preliminary exploration of how states’ contexts of reception and absorption interact with refugees’ socioeconomic class to shape varying patterns of refugee settlement and experience. It does so through examination of Syrian refugee communities in Turkey and Germany, two of the largest recipients of this refugee inflow. In Turkey, now home to 2.9 million registered Syrian refugees, the state does not offer avenues for asylum and has been slow in designing integration policies and enforcing regulations. At least during the first years of the Syrian conflict, it largely left Syrians to “go it alone.” I propose that this weak level of state intervention in the realms of refugee absorption and incorporation compounds the socio-economic differences that Syrians carry with them. Refugees with considerable entrepreneurial resources can carve pathways to comfort and success, while those with fewer resources meet with little protection from impoverishment or exploitation. A different situation has crystalized in Germany, which received some 1.1 million asylum applications in 2015, nearly 40 percent of them from Syrians. In Germany, the state and its bureaucracy impose a heavy presence upon the lives of refugees, as they do upon citizens themselves. This strong intervention in directing refugee affairs has a leveling effect on refugees’ pre-existing class differences. At least during the first years of the asylum process, asylum seekers’ housing, work prospects, and everyday experiences are heavily structured by law and integration programs, which affect the richer and poorer among them without distinction and thereby lessen the significance of those differences.

In probing these arguments, I pull upon approximately five months of field research in Turkey (2013, 2015, 2016) and two and a half months in Germany (2016), as part of a larger project during which I conducted interviews with more than 300 displaced Syrians across the Middle East and Europe. Though my open-ended interviews and ethnographic work did not concentrate on state policies and socio-economic class

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specifically, they yielded an array of observations related to these topics. Informed by this fieldwork, but grounded in published sources, this paper does not feature completed research as much as sketch some initial observations and hypotheses with the goal of gathering feedback on their value as a project for future data collection and analysis. It proceeds in five parts. I begin by briefly outlining some background on the Syrian refugee exodus and my approach for analyzing diverse experiences taking shape within it. I then discuss my choice to examine refugees in Turkey and Germany, as well as some complications of comparing them as cases. I then turn to those cases, considering the intersection of state policy and socio-economic class through a focus on four realms in which differing levels of state intervention crucially shape refugees’ early settlement and future prospects: legal status, housing and residence, education, and work. I conclude with some thoughts about the possible long-term implications of these observed patterns.

**Background and analytical approach**

In 2011, against the backdrop of the regional wave of demonstrations known as the Arab Spring, millions of Syrians took to the streets demanding reform and then overthrow of Bashar al-Assad’s authoritarian regime. Fierce government repression sparked the rebellion’s militarization and the intervention of external state and non-state parties with an array of agendas. As rebels gained control of large swaths of the country, the regime escalated its reprisals from tank shelling to missiles, rockets, aerial bombardment, chemical weapons, and “starve or surrender” sieges on entire communities. Brutal war produced one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes of the twenty-first century, including the deaths of an estimated half million men, women and children, tens of thousands arrested or disappeared, systematic use of torture in regime prisons, and billions of dollars of destruction. More than half of Syria’s population of 22 million has been forced from their homes, approximately 6.3 million of whom are internally displaced and 5 million of whom are registered refugees.\(^4\)

Investigation of the Syrian refugee exodus is imperative to deepen the understanding with which we address one of the gravest humanitarian catastrophes of our

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times. Moreover, it offers a scholarly opportunity to develop knowledge about dynamics of migration and forced migration generalizable Syria. From a social scientific perspective, the Syrian case holds important variables relatively constant. The timing of forced migration has been markedly compact, largely occurring from late 2011 until the present. Its causes are also fairly consistent. Whether fleeing the direct effects of violence, in terms of immediate threats to physical security, or its indirect ramifications on their wellbeing, Syrians have been driven from their homes by war.

This shared backdrop allows us to zero in on other aspects shaping heterogeneity among this population, such as the socio-economic profiles of refugees themselves. Analysis of this aspect can contribute to filling a gap in migration and forced migration studies, which Nicholas Van Hear argues has largely neglected issues of class in favor of a focus on other social categories such as identity, ethnicity, gender, generation, and religion.\(^5\) Alejandro Portes and József Böröcz offer a rare schema for putting class at the forefront, as well as examining its interaction with host or asylum state policy regimes. They identify three ideal-type contexts of reception that refugees and migrants find in countries of immigration: “handicapped” contexts characterized by low receptivity, generalized prejudice, and government suppression of inflows; “neutral” contexts that permit but do not encourage immigration, and thus leave migrants to pursue individualistic modes of personal advancement; and “advantaged” contexts where governments actively provide newcomers with legal and material assistance. The combination of the three contexts with three different kinds of migrant or refugee class backgrounds -- namely, manual labor, professional-technical, and entrepreneurial -- generate a typology of six different modes of incorporation of contemporary migrants in advanced countries.\(^6\)

This typology, presented as abstract theoretical expectations for others to investigate empirically, is a helpful launching pad for examination of initial patterns of settlement among Syrians refugees. More than many other contemporary refugee waves,

\(^5\) See Nicholas Van Hear, “I went as far”; Nicholas Van Hear, “Reconsidering Migration and Class,” *International Migration Review*, Volume 48 Number S1 (Fall 2014): S101

displaced Syrians cover a wide range of class backgrounds. Hailing from both rural and urban areas throughout the country, they are children and adults who range from holders of advanced degrees to those lacking basic literacy. They include workers in agricultural, employees in a historically inflated public sector, professionals with transferable technical training, and merchants who had small or large private enterprises. For most refugees, forced migration represents a severe economic loss as well as political and personal one, as they are forced to abandon jobs, property, and other assets, and often become plunged into a situation in which they live off savings until those run out. Yet while many escape with little but the clothes on their backs, some leave with sufficient capital or connections to build new businesses in exile. These diverse starting points suggest fruitful variation to explore.

As diverse as Syrian refugees’ own backgrounds is the wide-range of countries in which they currently settling. The following tables offer a sense of this dispersion:

**Table 1: Registered Syrian Refugees in the Middle East, as of February 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2,910,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1,011,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>656,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>233,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>117,591</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Syrian Asylum Applications in Europe, as of October 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>456,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>109,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>76,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>42,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>32,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>19,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>19,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>14,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>12,138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Syrian Refugees Resettled in North America and Australia, as of December 2016-February 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/asylum.php</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Figure on the United States are on admissions through December 31, 2016, see: Jeanne Batalova and Jie Zong, “Syrian Refugees in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, January 12,
Host countries vary in many respects. Comparing the two main centers of Syrian settlement, less-developed countries in the Middle East and advanced economies in Europe, one of the most important aspects of difference is the very extent of state involvement in offering asylum and regulating settlement and integration. While this element is subsumed in Portes and Böröcz’s ideal types, its salience as a point of contrast between states hosting Syrian refugees that it warrants focused attention in its own right. This state role is a product of both formal legislation and actual practices,\(^{10}\) and it can range from strongly interventionist to markedly “hands off.”

On one end of this spectrum, some states actively shape the context of reception and integration in their country, including by setting forth avenues for obtaining asylum and eventually citizenship. They actively generate and/or control refugees’ geographical mobility and offer a high level of sustained support in the realms of housing, education, job training, labor market access, family reunification, and other matters. A web of legislation seeks to protect and assist refugees, and a complex bureaucracy, strong social services, and vigilant security apparatus structure refugees’ experiences and prospects for meaningful incorporation in their new society.

On the other end of this idealized spectrum, states might adopt a laissez-faire stance or “ambivalent” stance, aware of refugee flows but “turning a blind eye” to them.\(^{11}\) Such states might cede responsibility for refugees’ well being to international


organizations or non-state charities, or leave refugees to fend for themselves. Treating refugees’ presence as a temporary humanitarian crisis, they offer very limited opportunities for asylum or citizenship and invest scarce resources in refugees’ integration. Refugees meet with weak legal protection and social support, but perhaps also a lack of constraints, should they have the means to pave their own ways in the host society and economy.

Scholars who investigate the extent of state intervention in shaping contexts of reception and integration have largely done so with the aim of evaluating effects on newcomers’ incorporation, or in explaining variation in state policies themselves. The ways that state policies affect or interact with refugees’ social class differences remain understudied. The nexus between these two factors merits scholarly attention because it affects where refugees go, whether they stay, and how their new lives take shape where they settle. To the extent that many refugees remain outside their home country, the role of state policy and class in shaping initial patterns of settlement can also be seen as laying the grounds for enduring developments in an exilic or ethnic minority community.

The focus on this intersection thus offers a perspective on Syrian refugees that goes beyond the current moment of “crisis” to consider forward-looking expectations for refugees and their descendants. Regardless of when and how the war in Syrian ends, some fraction of those who have fled will probably not return. While this is most clearly the case in countries that offer Syrians asylum, it is also likely to be the case, to different degrees, in the countries on Syria’s borders. What we are witnessing today, therefore, are the foundations of the creation of a new Syrian diaspora. Crafting recommendations for how fruitfully to study diasporas, Rogers Brubaker critiques conventional treatments of bounded entities that effectively take ancestry as a proxy for membership and essentializes a collectivity as a kind of “an ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact.” Instead, he calls for a shift from objects to processes, including communities’ diasporic projects, claims, and very “diasporization.”

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12 Irene Bloemraad, Become a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
13 Abdelaaty, “Explaining State Responses”; Norman, “Migration to MENA Host States.”
A focus on state policies and refugees’ class backgrounds serves as a valuable angle for scrutinizing not only Syrian refugees’ current lives but also this diasporization. These factors infuse the pushes and pulls that are redrawing the map of Syrian dispersion with short and long-term implications for Syria, Syrians, and the states hosting refugees. Now is an opportune time to document and analyze these processes from their beginning stages.

Case selection

Turkey and Germany offer useful cases for a study of this sort. They stand not only as the largest recipients of Syrian refugees in the Middle East and Europe respectively, but also as contexts of relatively weak and strong state intervention. The 2015 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) attests to this contrast in its use of 167 indicators in eight policy dimensions to evaluate and compare what governments are doing to promote migrants’ full participation in their societies. Analyzing 38 countries, MIPEX ranked Germany tenth and Turkey last. MIPEX notes that, “increasingly, other countries of immigration in Europe and abroad are looking to Germany for inspiration on integration policy.” By contrast, it judges its policies as “unfavourable.”

While Turkey and Germany can thus offer spaces in which to disentangle the implications of different state policies, other variables complicate the validity of comparing them as discreet cases. First, Syrians might regard the project of settlement and integration quite differently in each country. Informal polling by the International Crisis Group found that 70 percent of Syrians in Turkey eventually want to return to Syria. This stands in stark contrast to a 2016 survey that found that 76 percent of Syrian respondents who had received asylum wanted to stay in Germany permanently. These

15 “How Countries are Promoting Integration of Immigrants,” Migrant Policy Index 2016, http://www.mipex.eu/
numbers resonates with widespread impressions that Syrians are more likely to regard Turkey as only a short-term “weigh station” and Germany as a potentially long-term home.

Nevertheless, given their enormous numbers in Turkey, even if just a fraction of Syrians remain, that will be sufficient foundation for a sizable and enduring diaspora. Furthermore, the tremendous uncertainty about if, when, and on what terms violence will end in Syria increasingly fuels expectations that Syrians’ permanent settlement in Turkey might become the rule more than the exception. As Kemal Kirisci and Raj Salooja wrote in 2014, “Syrians in Turkey are no longer refugees waiting for the war to end but rather immigrants ready to write a new chapter in their lives.” A fall 2015 Brookings policy paper agreed, noting the “broad consensus … in Turkey among academics, officials, and civil society activists that the refugees are here to stay and that measures are urgently needed to help with their integration.” Indeed, an advisor to the former prime minister admitted as much when he coined the term “temporary permanence” to refer to refugee’s presence.

A second factor threatening to undermine comparison of the Turkish and German cases is selection effects. The characteristics of Syrian refugees in either country might be so divergent, that they might constitute truly different populations rather than a comparable population shaped by diverging contexts of reception. Official statistics from Turkey as of 2017 and from Germany for the peak refugee year of 2015 suggest different demographics In Turkey, 53.2 percent of Syrian refugees are male and 46.8 percent

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22 All data on Turkey from UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224; Gender data from Germany from Anna
female, whereas in Germany, 78.8 percent are male and 21.2 percent are female. Age ratios were more similar, yet not identical. Whereas 51.9 percent of Syrian refugees in Turkey were between the ages of 18-59, some 67.9 percent of all asylum applicants in Germany in 2015 (of which the plurality are Syrian) fell in that cohort.

Even more divergent than basic demographics might be socio-economic profiles. Van Hear argues that there is “hierarchy of destinations” that refugees and migrants are able to reach, pendant on the resources at their disposal.23 This general pattern finds confirmation in the Syrian case; at the very least, Syrians who moved from border countries on to Europe were those who possessed or able to borrow the money necessary for the trip, which typically at least $1,000 to cross the Mediterranean by boat,24 but could reach totals of more than $10,000 for those who instead purchased fake passports or visas to travel by airplane.25 Class status affects not only refugees’ to make the journey to Europe, but also their motivation to do so, insofar as many leave because they are unable to obtain work on par with their educational qualifications and professional aspirations.26 Indeed, a January 2016 survey of Syrians in Greece en route to elsewhere in Europe found that 34 percent had stayed for six months or more outside Syria (nearly three-fourths of them in Turkey) and, of them, 41 percent said that their main reason for leaving was their inability to find a job that was adequate to their skills and met their basic needs without exploitation.27

Yet this portrait of systematic class differentiation is complex. As I elaborate

23 Van Hear, “I went as far,” p. 3.
below, many displaced Syrians with means have chosen to stay in Turkey.\textsuperscript{28} There are also reports that the Turkish government has even attempted to keep them in the country, denying exit permits to more than 1,000 (and perhaps more than 5,000) university-educated Syrians and thereby blocking them from using their visas to resettle elsewhere.\textsuperscript{29} At the same time, data from the German Federal Office of Migration and Refugees (BAMF) shows that nearly equal percentages of male Syrian male asylum applicants had some higher education (27.8 percent) as had attended only grammar school (26.9 percent) or had some general secondary school (26 percent). Educational rates are lower among Syrian female asylum applicants, with 23.8 percent having had some higher education, 25.4 percent having reached only to grammar school, and 25.8 percent having some secondary school.\textsuperscript{30} If educational attainment provides a proxy measure of at least one component of social class, then Syrian communities in Turkey and Germany might be more internally varied, and less categorically different from each other, than some anticipate.

For this reason, Turkey and Germany can make for a good comparison as countries likely to host long-term Syrian displacement. More than many other countries around the globe, the Turkish and German states have been most explicit and vocal about their open door policies for people fleeing Syria, though both have retreated from that stance to different degrees over time. Likewise, public opinion in Turkey and Germany initially expressed positivity and pride in their countries’ humanitarian stance in accepting Syrians, and this support has declined with the protraction of the refugee crisis, the social, economic, and security problems that it is perceived to have generated, and its politicization as a major point of domestic political polarization.

At the same time, it is not appropriate to analyze Turkey and Germany as strictly discreet, independent cases. Many Syrians who have made it to Germany spent months or


13 years living in Turkey and then undertook tremendous risk to leave. Many who remain in Turkey are there because they are unable to leave, due in part because so many of their compatriots preceded them in that journey that Germany moved to close its borders. One result of these developments is Germany’s spearheading of the March 2016 agreement between the European Union and Turkey, which committed Turkey to halt illegal immigration from its shores in exchange for billions of Euros, as well as other promises of compensation. To the degree that these funds result in new benefits or services for refugees, the journey of tens of thousands who left Turkey might circle back to affect the lives of those who did not leave, and this effect will have filtered through state decision-making in both countries.

As I move forward with this research, I thus hope to analyze Turkey and Germany on their own terms and also to take a “relational comparative approach” that considers how they take shape in relation to one another. Exploration of these “interconnected trajectories” can illuminate each case and the larger whole of which they form a part, in this case: the broader realm of refugee circulation, inter-state relations in regulating migration, and the crystallization of a Syrian diaspora across multiple continents. These interconnections are made all the richer by the Turkey and Germany’s own shared migratory history, namely the successive waves since 1961 that have produced a population of three million people in Germany possessing some Turkish migration background. Germans’ understandings of this prior experience with inflows from a majority-Muslim Middle Eastern country hovers in the background of its debates on policies toward integrating Syrian refugees today.

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While all of these complications infuse the research that I sketch here, I hope to pursue ways that they can enrich a layered analysis, rather than confound it. In this spirit, the next sections turn to the intersection of policy and class in each case, in turn.

**Turkey**

When the first Syrians began fleeing violence in spring 2011, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan adopted an “open door” policy out of humanitarian and political solidarity, as well as in belief that they would not stay long. The Prime Ministry’s Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) took charge of coordinating other ministries and agencies to deliver the state’s emergency response. In 2013 the Syrian crisis pushed the government to restart previously stalled efforts to design a more comprehensive migration regime. It ratified a new “Law On Foreigners and International Protection” the following year and established the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), which replaced the AFAD as the state institution bearing responsibility for asylum and refugee matters.

Turkey has not officially ended its open door policy, the country is nearing completion of construction of a wall along its Syrian frontier\(^35\) and border crossings have been effectively closed since late 2015.\(^36\) In early 2016, the Deputy Prime Minister declared that the country had “reached the limit of its capacity to absorb the refugees.”\(^37\) Meanwhile, Turkey’s challenge is to meet the needs of the Syrians whom it already hosts. Ahmet İçduygu and Doğuş Şimşek note that the Turkish state has yet to recognize that it has become a country of immigration and, accordingly, has not formulated comprehensive integration policies.\(^38\) The International Crisis Group agrees that Turkey

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“still lacks a clear strategy for (refugees) permanent integration,” and instead manifests a “convoluted approach” resulting in “chaotic policymaking, a patchwork of small initiatives with micro effects, left refugees having to find their own way.”39 This weak and uneven state intervention, I propose, accentuates the socio-economic differentials that Syrians carry with them into Turkey. This is apparent in four main realms shaping refugee lives.

Legal status

Applying the geographical limit of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, Turkey reserves refugee status for only those coming from Europe. Others fleeing persecution instead traditionally received “international protection status,” which granted them the right to stay in Turkey legally and free from fear of deportation.

Turkey regarded the initial waves of Syrian refugees as “guests” who would return home shortly.40 In fall 2011, it established an ad hoc “temporary protection status” for refugees fleeing Syria, promising them no forcible returns and free access to basic services.41 The 2014 Law On Foreigners and International Protection strengthened the temporary protection regime. A subsequent regulation clarified Syrian refugees’ rights and entitlements and set forth procedures for them to register with the DGMM and receive identification cards.42 As of fall 2015, however, estimates suggested that up to a quarter of a million refugees remain unregistered.43 Those who register with the Turkish state are able to access basic services and protection; those who slip through the cracks and remain unregistered are especially susceptible to exploitation.44 The state’s laxity in basic bureaucratic oversight of refugees’ legal status is thus the setting in which different

40 On the evolution of this policy, see Kirişçi and Ferris, “Not Likely to Go Home,” pp. 8-9; Kirişçi and Salooja.
refugees meet with different opportunities, rights, or degrees of assistance, and thus find themselves with different foundations on which to build more or less secure futures.

Refugees in Turkey have not traditionally been eligible for Turkish citizenship.\(^{45}\) Recently, however, Erdoğan has declared his intention to grant citizenship to Syrian refugees, provided that they pass screening exams. Such a move might further accentuate class disparities within refugees’ ranks. Erdoğan has justified naturalization on the grounds that “there are highly qualified people among them. There are engineers, lawyers, doctors.”\(^{46}\) It remains uncertain if and how naturalization will occur, given that it is unpopular among Turks in general,\(^{47}\) and especially criticized by Erdoğan opponents as a ploy to create more voters for Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party.\(^{48}\) Should some refugees obtain citizenship, it will be of great personal benefit to them and their families. However, should it proceed in a way that rewards those middle or upper-class individuals perceived to be of greatest utility for the Turkish economy, it risks generating two tiers of Syrians: one that enjoys the security and opportunity of naturalized status, and another that remains marginal and vulnerable. The class differentiation between them will thus be not only social and economic, but also legal.

**Housing & Residence**

The Turkish state aided emergency shelter for the earliest Syrian refugees in schools, unused warehouses, and other such accommodations. As the inflow of refugees increased, the state initiated, in fall 2011, the building of state-run refugee camps, mostly in border provinces. Camp residents lived in tents or containers and enjoyed free access to schools and medical care in clinics on site. Camps won praise for being well serviced, well-equipped, orderly, and clean, and soon reached capacity and allowed no more


\(^47\) A March 2016 poll found 82.9 percent of Turks to oppose naturalizing Syrian refugees. See Kaymaz and Kadkoy, “Syrians in Turkey,” p. 1.

\(^48\) International Crisis Group, “Politics of Permanence” p. 11.
In addition, many refugees preferred the freedom of living outside guarded gates, including greater schooling options, more opportunities for integration into society, and the chance to look for work (which is not permitted for camp residents). The result has been the growth of an overwhelmingly urban refugee population. As of January 2017, about 10 percent of Syrians in Turkey resided in the 26 refugee camps run by the Turkish state. The remainder lives in towns and cities, where they pay their own rent and find their own way to basic services.

In the absence of state policies dictating where refugees must live, Syrian urban refugees find housing using their own financial independence and networks. Anecdotal evidence suggests that having family or friends already in Turkey is especially critical in helping new refugees find housing, including hosting them for some period of time. These social connections, like the very ability to pay rent, point to the role of class. Individuals often (though not always) have socio-economic class similar to that of the people closest to them. Middle class status increases one’s chances of having a middle class friends or relatives who, if already in Turkey, can be one’s key resource in finding accommodation, and thereby securing a safe and dignified base from which to navigate other life challenges such as education, work, and basic services. To the degree that refugees’ own social networks are more important than the state in mediating access to housing, therefore, the realm of housing both reveals and amplifies the significance of refugees’ pre-flight class background.

Given the limited resources that most have at their disposal, Syrian refugees often congregate in poor neighborhoods and sometimes with several families sharing a single

apartment. While most Syrians have concentrated in southeastern provinces near the border, economic opportunities -- not state directives -- generate variation in the geography of refugee settlement. Activists in relief, media, and civil society congregate among the 350,000-some Syrians in Gaziantep. Refugees in the border towns of Reyhanlı, Kilis, and Şanlıurfa are often those too poor to afford the cost of living elsewhere. The 500,000 displaced Syrians in Istanbul range from children begging on the street to an exiled intelligentsia of artists and writers.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Syrian high-income businessmen and their families have settled in the Mediterranean coastal city of Mersin. Home to Turkey’s largest commercial port and just 185 miles from the Syrian frontier, Mersin is a gateway hub that allows Syrian merchants both to maintain their established trade links to other Middle Eastern countries and to be drivers of a resurgence of exports from Turkey to Syria. Mersin also offers abundant summer vacation homes for rent, and boasts a pre-existing ethnically Arab community that is situating itself as intermediaries between Turks and Syrian newcomers. As a result of this new concentration of Syrian enterprise, observers find Mersin to be bustling with “luxury cars with Syrian plates,” Syrian private schools, and shops with signs written in Arabic. Many residents voice opinions akin to those of one merchant relocated from Aleppo: “Even if the war ends, Syria will not

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recover for 25 years. Both Turkey and Syria are my motherlands now … We want Turkish citizenship.”

Though the two cases are different in significant ways, developments in Mersin echo some patterns among Cubans in Miami. Like Turkey’s southern coast, Southern Florida’s geographical position helped Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs-in-exile to do business with Latin America and the Caribbean. It was this advantageous location, Alejandro Portes argues, that “gave Miami a differential advantage while simultaneously transforming what would otherwise have been minuscule enterprises into major firms.” Not all Cuban entrepreneurs began with private capital or formal business training. Under these circumstances, Portes argues that “potentially the most important factor” aiding their business success was class differences within the Cuban exile community. He cites as a general hypothesis the idea that minority entrepreneurs benefit from class differentiation within their own ethnic community because it enables privileged access to poorer members’ labor and can generate a captive market for goods and services built on shared cultural affinities. While I do not have sufficient evidence to evaluate if this is the case among Syrians in Turkey, the existence of class differentiation within their ranks suggests that these are important dynamics to trace now and in the years to come.

Education

Turkey’s state-run camps offer adult education courses, as do some NGOs and municipalities outside camps. Nevertheless, availability, especially for the overwhelming majority of adults who are urban refugees, falls far short of demand.

Insufficient access to education creates an even grave situation for children. Turkish law guarantees all children, national and foreign the right to free “basic

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59 Ibid.
61 Ibid, p. 347.
education” up to grade 12. Nevertheless, UNHCR reports that there are 1,238,496 Syrian refugees under the age of 18 in Turkey as of December 2016. Since 2014, Turkey has allowed these children to access two-tracks of formal education. Syrian children can enroll in the regular Turkish-language public school system, with only a foreigner identification document showing that they had registered for temporary protection status. Alternatively they can enroll in Syrian-run “temporary education centers” (TECs) located in camps and in provinces with dense refugee populations, which offer Arabic-language instruction and a modified Syrian curriculum.

In 2015, enrollment was estimated at 90 percent for the 13 percent of Syrian children living in camps and 25 percent for those outside camps. Of urban refugees children, only about six percent were enrolled in Turkish public schools. This low rate is attributable to language barriers, lack of space, lack of formal procedures for enrollment, parents’ lack of awareness about children’s rights to access, unfamiliarity with navigating the Turkish system, fear of harassment or bullying in a non-Syrian environment, or belief that education in Turkish would not serve their aim of eventually returning to Syria.

In this context, as of 2015, the remaining 94 percent of Syrian urban refugee children in school were attending TECs. Yet these schools face dire problems. They tend to be understaffed, overcrowded, and their teachers underpaid (if they are paid at all). Most seriously, TECs typically charge tuition that, compounded by the cost of transportation and supplies, make them unaffordable for many families. Field interviews find that such economic constraints are the largest obstacle impeding refugees’ access to education. This is due not only to the cost of education, but also to many

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64 İçduygu and Şimşek, “Towards Integration Policies,” p. 66.
67 Ibid, 22-23.
families’ dependence upon income from child labor. Though there are not official estimates, observers use terms like “rampant” and “epidemic” to describe what might be hundreds of thousands of Syrian boys and girls working in Turkey. Abundant reports describe how children work up to 12 hours a day in sweatshops, agriculture, trash collection or other jobs with often grueling and unhealthy conditions. Some investigations find children as young as eight earning as little as $3 a day.

School enrollment for Syrian children in Turkey increased 30 percent from 2015 to 2016, largely due to investments in building new schools, hiring new teachers, and subsidizing school transportation. In January 2017, UNICEF estimated that about 60 percent of the 950,000 school-age Syrian children were attending school. It noted that this represented a “huge achievement,” as it was the first time since the start of the conflict that more Syrian refugee children in Turkey were in school than out of it. In August 2016, Turkey announced a plan to phase out TECs and absorb all Syrian children into the public school system by 2019.

Whether or not the state achieves this ambitious goal, the relatively low level of state regulation of refugee education has meanwhile accentuated class differences among displaced Syrians. Those who can afford to send their kids to school access the single most powerful engine of socio-economic mobility. Those who cannot, do not. One Syrian

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teenager expressed those prospects in words so telling that Human Rights Watch took them as the title of their report on refugee education in Turkey: “When I picture my future, I see nothing.” Children’s rights advocates warn that refugee children denied access to education will produce “a frustrated, uneducated generation that has little means of playing a productive role in society, in Syria or elsewhere,” and instead risks turning to violence.  

Work

Before 2016, Turkey barred Syrians from its formal labor market. In consequence, those who were able to find work -- estimated at 26 percent of registered Syrian refugees -- did so in the country’s “considerably large and sprawling” informal economy. The extent of informality is a direct result of state policies, including insufficient inspection mechanisms and penal sanctions against informality, as well as the discouraging of formal employment due to high income taxes, tax amnesties for employers, and employers’ ability to entice workers with higher wages in exchange for foregoing social security payments, among other factors.  

For Syrian refugees, unregulated, untaxed work in construction, manufacturing, agriculture, and other typically manual sectors carries the advantage of requiring little Turkish language knowledge beyond that gained on the job. The disadvantages, however, include exploitation under unhealthy, unsafe, unsecure, and undercompensated conditions that locals did not accept. Indeed, a 2013 survey found that the average monthly income of Syrians working in Turkey amounted to half of Turkey’s minimum wage. Stories also abound of employers paying Syrian workers irregularly or not at all, taking

81 Kaymaz and Kadkoy, “Syrians in Turkey,” p. 4
advantage of Syrians’ fear to report such abuses to the police.\textsuperscript{82}

In January 2016, the government announced that it would begin granting work permits to Syrians. Six months later, only 5,500 permits had been issued, bringing the total number of Syrians granted work permits to 13,200.\textsuperscript{83} The low numbers were attributable to several restrictive stipulations. It does not apply to firms in which more than 10 percent of workers are Syrian and it requires those seeking permits to have possessed Turkish identification document for at least six months.\textsuperscript{84} Most importantly, application for a permit requires a contract from an employer demonstrating payment of minimum wage, which is something that most employers prefer to avoid. The upshot -- a situation in which less than one percent of Syrians in Turkey was working legally -- is predictable in a context in which the state was accustomed to turning a blind eye to the informal economy in general, and to informal labor among non-nationals in particular. In this setting of minimal level of state oversight and intervention, vulnerability and low wages remain the rule for refugee workers.

Yet the same state context that pushes most Syrian laborers to precariousness is also enabling a smaller stratum of displaced Syrians to build profitable businesses. Minimal state regulation of labor is matched by minimal obstacles to free enterprise. In this context, Syrians are forging the ranks of a new expatriate bourgeoisie. There were no Syrian-owned companies in Turkey before December 2010.\textsuperscript{85} Since then, the number of firms established in Turkey by Syrians, or with Syrian partners, has increased to 81 in 2011, 165 in 2012, 489 in 2013, 1257 in 2014, and 1,599 in 2015 to reach a total of established 4,000 tax-paying firms employing thousands of workers by March 2016.\textsuperscript{86}

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\textsuperscript{83} Kaymaz and Kadkoy, “Syrians in Turkey,” p. 3.
\textsuperscript{84} Patrick Kingsley, “Fewer than 0.1% of Syrians in Turkey in line for work permits,” \textit{The Guardian}, April 11, 2016, \url{https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/11/fewer-than-01-syrians-in-turkey-in-line-for-work-permits}
\textsuperscript{85} See Zülfikar Doğan, “Despite ongoing war, is trade between Turkey, Syria rebounding?” \textit{Al-Monitor}, November 11, 2015, \url{http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/turkey-syria-trade-level-increase-despite-civil-war.html}
\end{flushleft}

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2015, 34 percent all foreign companies in Turkey were Syrian-owned. By late 2015, Syrians held shares in one of every 40 companies in Turkey, one in six among newly established companies in Gaziantep, and one in three in Kilis. Unregistered companies or those with “secret” Syrian partners likely bring these numbers even higher. 

Syrian businesspeople have transferred an estimated $10 billion in capital to Turkey from 2011 through early 2015. Yet some creating enterprises begin with little beyond their capacity to take advantage of the open economic environment. Illustrative is the case of a Syrian man who, investing his sole $1,000 to start food deliveries from his basement in 2013, was running a company with seven locations, 330 employees, and $2 million in property by 2016. “Here in Turkey, it was so easy to set up a business,” he explained. “In three days, I had all the papers.” Another Syrian shop owner, surrounded by shelves of Syrian-made goods suiting Syrian tastes, reported a similar experience. “It is really easy to open businesses and factories here,” he said. “The authorities and everyone were really helpful and there were no problems at all.”

Assessing these developments, Timur Kaymaz and Omar Kadkoy observe, “The integration of Syrians into the Turkish economy has so far been through human interaction rather than policy design.” Güven Sak adds that, just like Turkey’s own rural-urban migrants, “Syrians pull themselves by their own bootstraps,” aware that it is their initiative, not government decisions, that determines their fate.

Between those Syrians working illegally in low-paid menial jobs and those who have managed to build high-income businesses, there appears to be little space for another socio-economic stratum that has historically represented a large swath of the Syrian workforce: educated middle-class professionals. Analysts find that professionals are particularly impeded by two obstacles that appear less relevant in the very low-paid or

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87 Ibid.
88 Güven Sak, “1 out of every 40 companies established in Turkey is now Syrian,” Tepav Blogs, October 26, 2015 http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/blog/s/5394
89 Doğan, “Despite ongoing war.”
90 Karasapan, “Syrian businesses in Turkey.”
94 Sak, “1 out of every 40 companies.”
very highly-lucrative poles of the labor market: language and discrimination. As one civil engineer expressed it, “The Turkish language is a prerequisite for finding jobs, especially for university graduates … In addition, many Turkish companies are simply not willing to hire Syrians.” Finding no opportunities in his field, this engineer worked in blacksmith shops, bakeries, groceries, and finally a motel. Many others with his socio-economic profile have chosen another option: the risky, costly trip to Europe. That result further accentuates class polarization among Syrians in Turkey, even as it drives new class dynamics within an incipient Syrian diaspora in Germany.

**Germany**

Germany’s place as the top destination for Syrian refugees outside the Middle East soared in August 2015 when, on the backdrop of unprecedented numbers refugees crossing the Mediterranean and trekking through Europe, the government decided to suspend for Syrian refugees the Dublin Protocol’s stipulation that asylum seekers remain in their EU country of entry. By the time 162,510 Syrians applied for asylum by the end of that year, many had already undergone a process of social class leveling, insofar as had spent all their saving (and/or gone into debt) simply to make it there. The journey itself thus brought many people of different backgrounds to a situation akin to starting over from an equalizing square one.

Then came the encounter with the German state. While the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees (BAMF) decides on asylum applications, other relevant decision-making and policy implementation is dispersed vertically across the federal state, 16 regional states, and local governments, as well as horizontally across government departments and civil society organizations. These institutions implement the state’s legal framework for refugee integration, which rests on the 2005 Immigration Act, the 2007 National Integration Plan, and the May 2016 Integration Act. Under the principle “support and challenge,” the newest legislation pledged to give refugees greater access to integration courses and job and training opportunities earlier than had been

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95 Faek, “Turkey Sends Mixed Signals.”
offered in the past, while reducing the benefits of those refugees “who do not meet their duties to cooperate” and “work on their own integration.”

These expectations, as well as the web of governmental bodies and regulations that enforce them, become some of the most defining elements in the lives of Syrian asylum seekers, regardless of their own class backgrounds. Newcomers have thus quickly come to understand what locals know well. As one German satirist writes, bureaucracy is not only “Germany’s pride and joy,” but also a powerfully equalizing force. “No one in this country gets to cut through red tape,” he elaborates. “When it comes to paperwork, the rules apply to everything and to everyone - equally.”

**Legal status**

The German Basic law guarantees the right to political asylum. To obtain it, however, asylum seekers must jump through a series of bureaucratic hoops. This was dramatically illustrated in fall 2015, when the huge and sudden flood of refugees inundated state agencies, yet bureaucratic procedures remained still strictly enforced. In Berlin, for example, hundreds of refugees waited outside for days outside the State Office for Health and Social Affairs (then nicknamed the LaGeSo and now renamed the State Office of Asylum Affairs, or LAF), in order to register their presence and file asylum applications. A young man from Aleppo recalled:

> Every day I would go to the LaGeSo and wait from seven o’clock to four o’clock. They did not assign people numbers, so people would sleep outside overnight to hold their spot in line. It took me forty days even to enter the building. I got a number, and then it took another thirty days for my number to show up on the screen. There was no organization. You have number 80 and I have number 90, but number 100 might get called before us. Every day I had to show up, just to see if my number was called. I kept asking them why it never was. Then they discovered that they’d lost my file.

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100 Pearlman, *We Crossed A Bridge*. 

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Upon submitting their application, asylum seekers receive a temporary residency identity card while the BAMF evaluates their applications. In 2016, Syrians waited an average of 10-12 months from arrival in Germany to receipt of their asylum decision.\textsuperscript{101} Of 295,040 decisions on Syrian asylum applications in 2016, the state granted 56 percent refugee status, which offered a three-year residence permit with rights to apply for family reunification. It granted 41 percent of Syrian applicants subsidiary protection, which entailed a one-year residence permit extendable for two years and no eligibility for family reunification during a two-year transitional period.\textsuperscript{102}

The paperwork, appointments, and waiting time entailed in obtaining legal residence leaves many Syrians feeling that they dedicate the bulk of their first months in Germany to paperwork. Whereas Syrians in Turkey sometimes live for years without formally registering with the state or obtaining formal residency permits or identity cards, such is scarcely possible in Germany. The maze of red tape can be so baffling that a team of young Syrians developed an app, dubbed “Bureaucrazy,” to navigate it.\textsuperscript{103} This overpowering state presence applies to all refugees, without regard to social class. To move ahead in the residency process, asylum seekers’ material resources matter less than their place in line and the sometimes-perplexing decisions of bureaucratic agencies. Tellingly, some Syrians sardonically refer to BAMF as \textit{al-mahkamah}, or “the Court,” because its letters calling applicants for their interviews feel like a summons and its judgments have the weight of verdicts determining one’s fate.

Syrians I met expressed tremendous anxiety as they waited for these life-defining decisions. This was especially the case for those who had travelled without their spouses.

\textsuperscript{101} ARD, “Warten - fast ein Jahr lang.” October 12, 2016, \url{http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/asy-213.html}

\textsuperscript{102} For numbers, see Bundesamt fuer Migration und Fluechtlinge, \textit{Asylgeschaeftsstatistik fuer den Monat Dezember 2016}, \url{http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/resources/201612-statistik-anlage-asy-geschaeftsbericht.pdf}; On the status distinctions, see Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, \textit{Issuing residence permits}, \url{http://www.bamf.de/EN/Fluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsyl/AusgangVerfahren/ErteilungVerlaengerungAT/erteilung-verlaengerung-at-node.html}; \textit{Family asylum and family reunification}, \url{http://www.bamf.de/EN/Fluechtlingsschutz/FamilienasylFamiliennachzug/familienasyl-familiennachzug-node.html}

\textsuperscript{103} Philip Oltermann, “Syrian refugees design app for navigating German bureaucracy,” \textit{The Guardian}, August 5, 2016, \url{https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/05/syrian-refugees-app-navigating-german-bureacracy-bureaucrazy}
or children, among them fathers who had never met children born after their departure for Europe. The reality of living apart from extended family ineligible for reunification rights could be no less agonizing. One interlocutor told me about a relative who made it from Daraa, Syria to Germany.104 Though he expected eventually be able to bring his wife and children, he was tormented by the realization that he would never be able to bring his mother and sister, with whom he was extremely close. After several months in Germany, he chose to return to Syria. Though family ties was the tipping factor, social class concerns had added to his distress. “He had a successful career in Syria as a pharmacist,” his relative explained to me. “He owned his own shop and was respected in his community. Then he came to Germany and was just waiting. He felt worthless.”

Housing & Residence

Germany’s 2007 Asylum Procedure Act specifies that asylum seekers be transferred to the nearest reception center in accord with a quota system distributing them across federal states. Asylum seekers must live in their initial reception center or living facility for their first three months.105 The 2016 Integration Law added a further restriction on refugees’ freedom to choose their residence: asylum seekers can only move from the county to which they were originally assigned if they find a job that meets some of their expenses.106

In the wake of the 2015 influx, German states and municipalities improvised hundreds of new temporary living facilities, making refugee shelters out of sports halls, municipality buildings, and even the hangers of the defunct Tempelhof airport. These shared accommodations bring together refugees of different nationalities and class backgrounds. For Syrians, this means that poor and well-to-do individuals who might never have spoken to each other in their homeland now share a bathroom, eat the same prepared meals, negotiate access to a limited number of electrical outlets, and cope with the same sounds and smells expectable when hundreds of people live together.

104 Conversation in Berlin, August 14, 2016.
While different regional states and municipalities have had different levels of success in relocating refugees, hundreds of thousands continue to live in temporary shelters. Berlin is currently planning to address this problem by erecting clusters of shed-like container homes and modular residential buildings around the city. In the interim, refugees compete with locals both for affordable social housing and commercial rentals. Competition is particularly stiff in major cities, which appeal to newcomers due to their dynamic labor markets and existing immigrant milieus, but whose housing markets are already squeezed by large numbers of young Germans moving there from provincial areas.

When searching for an apartment, refugees must navigate language barriers and master complex rental rules. As specified by law, they must pull together a considerable amount of paperwork to submit a rental application. If they then manage to obtain a rental agreement, they must submit it to the appropriate social services office for approval. A former bank employee from Latakia living in a shelter described his living situation and explained that even those who find a rental discover that this does not represent the end of the process as much as the beginning of a new one:

I live in a balloon. It’s a shelter that is a big inflated tent, shaped like a dome … Dividers make separate rooms like cubicles. They don't have a ceiling and we just hang a curtain for a door. They say it’s supposed to be just a temporary, emergency shelter. But I’ve been living there for nine months. In the balloon, I’m always waiting in line. I really can’t take it anymore. The standing in the line is killing me. You have to wait in line to get your mail, to get your meals from the cafeteria … Meals are served at set hours, so you’re always thinking of when you have to be back to eat. This is a big city, so if you want to go out somewhere and do something, it will be hard to get back at the mealtime. And if you don’t, you won’t eat.

They gave me the paper that says I have permission to look for a house. But it’s practically impossible. They give it to you with one hand,

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108 Stefan Wagstyl, “Young Germans and migrants compete for city housing,” *Financial Times*, May 29, 2016, [https://www.ft.com/content/9e0a0356-1128-11e6-839f-2922947098f0](https://www.ft.com/content/9e0a0356-1128-11e6-839f-2922947098f0)

but they’re using their other hand to cover their laughter. If a miracle happens and you’re able to find a room in a shared apartment, then you go to the Immigration Office to submit the paperwork. They’ll tell you to come back in two weeks. And then if a second miracle happens and the landlord agrees to wait for you, then you go back to the Immigration Office, and they study your application for another month.

And then if God really loves you, you’ll get approved. So the whole process takes one and a half to two months. But the problem is that no apartment is going to wait that long for you. There is a long list of other people who also want that room.110

The highly constrained and regulated housing landscape constrains the prospects for all Syrian asylum seekers, regardless of social class and educational level.

As long as refugees are receiving unemployment benefits, the responsible social services office in the state in which they reside (or the Jobcenter, the public institution overseeing social support for the unemployed) covers rent costs, adjusting the amount per number of people per household.111 Syrian refugees searching for housing are thus on relatively equal footing, financially speaking. Those with greater language skills, computer savvy, or other know-how might tackle the housing search better than others. Syrians whom I interviewed, however, seemed to regard finding an apartment to be largely a matter of luck, including the good luck of happening to befriend a local who could provide valuable help.

Education

German law requires refugees who spend at least three months in the country to send their children to school.112 Given the sheer scale of the refugee influx, some children are effectively receiving as little as only a few hours of class a day in their shelters.113

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110 Interview in Berlin, Germany, on August 1, 2016.
112 Katja Hanke, “German for Refugee Children: ‘Teachers Need to be Trained in German as a Second Language,’” Goethe Institut, November 2015, https://www.goethe.de/en/spr/mag/20650534.html
Nevertheless, by the end of 2015, the federal government had increased funding to state education systems, which had in turn hired 8,500 new teachers of German as a foreign language and created 8,264 “special classes” to prepare refugee children to integrate into regular classrooms. To the degree that the state continues to move forward in fulfilling its own commitments to provide education to all children, this will be stand as an opportunity made available to all Syrian refugee families, regardless of their prior social class or economic status.

Similarly, adult asylum seekers are expected to take an integration course consisting of 600 hours of German language (up to the B1 level) and 30 hours of orientation focused on Germany’s history, culture and legal system. Integration classes, like shelters, bring together refugees of different class backgrounds. They are requisite not only legally, but also practically. In contrast to Turkey, a minimum level of German is generally regarded as necessary for even low-level, unskilled positions. As one report notes, even jobs such as dishwashing “require applicants to be able to read and understand hygiene regulations.” Federal Employment Agency officials assert, “German language skills … are a main prerequisite for … integrating into the job market.”

Language learning is thus an equalizing gatekeeper to socio-economic mobility for all refugees. While those with higher levels of education coming into German classes might learn more quickly and comprehensively than those who do not, such prior background has no bearing on their ability to register for classes in the first place. The 2016 Integration Act increased the availability of classes, reduced waiting periods for

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116 Rietig, “Moving Beyond Crisis,” p. 5.

starting classes, and stipulated that classes give greater emphasis to German values.\textsuperscript{118} Nevertheless, language courses remain oversubscribed and undersupplied.\textsuperscript{119} In April 2016, \textit{Deutshe Welle} reported that there were only 300,000 openings in the country, while some 800,000 were in demand.\textsuperscript{120} Thus, although Syrian refugees are eligible for free classes while their asylum paperwork is being process, they sometimes find themselves waiting for months for a space in a class. Access appears contingent on their location and chance; neither class status nor ambition can buy privileges in getting the crucial process of language learning off the ground.

\textit{Work}

Until September 2013, asylum seekers had to wait for one year before they were allowed to access the labor market. That time limit was reduced to nine months and, in 2014, to three months.\textsuperscript{121} For 15 months thereafter they were allowed to work only if no German or European Union citizen could be hired instead.\textsuperscript{122} The 2016 legislation suspended this “priority check” for three years. It also allowed asylum seekers to apply for training courses after three months in the country and for money for job training programs after 15 months.\textsuperscript{123} To expedite refugees’ engagement in “meaningful work,” the 2016 Act also pledged to create 100,000 new “one-euro jobs,” for which asylum seekers are paid an 80 cents-per-hour supplement to do such tasks as laundry, cleaning, or food distribution in refugee shelters. Though they risked losing benefits should they refuse to participate, only 4,300 refugees had started one-euro jobs by December 2016. This was not due to lack of interest in employment in general, as some 406,000 refugees

\begin{footnotes}
\item[119] Rietig, “Moving Beyond Crisis,” p. 5.
\item[120] Jaa\text{"a}r Abdul Karim, “Refugees in Germany: ‘I want to integrate, but how?’” \textit{Deutshe Welle}, April 18, 2016, \url{http://www.dw.com/en/refugees-in-germany-i-want-to-integrate-but-how/a-19197142}
\item[121] Informationsverbund Asyl und Migration, “Access to the Labour Market: Germany,” \textit{AIDA: Asylum Information Database}, \url{http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany/reception-conditions/employment-education/access-labour-market}
\item[123] “Integration Act to support and challenge.”
\end{footnotes}
were registered at state agencies as searching for employment.\textsuperscript{124}

Though these policies show Germany’s desire to integrate refugees into the labor market more quickly than in the past, significant obstacles persist. Many of these obstacles also contribute to de-accentuating class differentiation among Syrian newcomers. First, refugees who might have ambition or aptitude to pursue private entrepreneurship as a path to independent wealth find that path relatively constrained. The World Bank ranks Germany 114 of 190 countries for ease of starting a business, on the bases of the minimum amount of required capital, the number of procedures, the time, and cost typically required. By comparison, it ranks Turkey 79.\textsuperscript{125} These constraints are especially marked for refugees, as German law explicitly prohibits asylum seekers from work on a self-employed basis “for the duration of their asylum procedure.”\textsuperscript{126}

Second, newcomers with university degrees face hurdles in making use of those qualifications. While the government is sponsoring various initiatives to facilitate recognition of foreign educational qualifications, the process remains long, complex, slow, and difficult.\textsuperscript{127} This has the effect, as in Turkey, of equalizing the job prospects of those who do and do not have university education. As a twenty-something who halted his university studies in Syrian after 2011 expressed it to me, “Return to college? … I don’t have the patience to start again. Besides, even people who have degrees find them worthless once they get here.”\textsuperscript{128}

Finally, as in the other realms previously discussed, the sheer amount of bureaucracy slows down labor market integration for all, sometimes bringing it to a disheartening crawl. Whereas Syrian refugees in Turkey sometime search for work immediately upon arrival, those in Germany find that search constrained by a grid of

\textsuperscript{124} Deutsche Welle, “‘One-euro job’ program for refugees off to a slow start in Germany,” December 2, 2016, \url{http://www.dw.com/en/one-euro-job-program-for-refugees-off-to-a-slow-start-in-germany/a-36618371}; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, \textit{Access to the labour market for refugees}, \url{http://www.bamf.de/EN/Infothek/FragenAntworten/ZugangArbeitFluechtlinge/zugang-arbeit-fluechtlinge-node.html}


\textsuperscript{126} Informationsverbund Asyl und Migration, “Access to the Labour Market.”

\textsuperscript{127} Rietig, “Moving Beyond Crisis,” pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{128} Interview in Berlin, Germany on August 2, 2016.
regulations. Some speak of an “endless spiral” in which government agencies say that an employer is needed in order to obtain formal permission to work, while employers insist that formal permission is required before a job offer can be made. A Syrian aspiring IT engineer described his woes:

I got an internship at a telecommunications company. I was there three months and I learned so much. They really liked me and they offered me a job. But I can’t work until I get my residency permit, and I’m still waiting for it. A sister company also offered me a job. They said I could do another internship from September until December. They’re willing to pay me, but the law allows you to have only one paid internship, and I already had one.

The heavy bureaucracy infusing labor market access in Germany stands in strong contrast to the unregulated environment in Turkey. Its effect on leveling class differences is similarly divergent. At least initially, high qualifications and professional ambitions are not necessarily sufficient for an asylum seeker to obtain even a small job in Germany, no less create an independent business. Labor market integration is a long haul, and there is no short cut to the official permits needed to start the process.

**Conclusion**

The contrast between Turkey’s light state footprint and Germany’s regime of heavy governmental regulation and bureaucratic formality is not absolute. Some Germans are increasingly worried that the refugee crisis has brought the German state to “lose control.” At the same time, the Turkish state is demonstrating “piecemeal” progress toward an integration policy. The role of these states vis-à-vis a historic refugee inflow is thus still a work in progress. Nevertheless, preliminary evidence from Turkey and

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129 Morgan Meaker, “No German, no English — no job for refugees” *Financial Times*, May 26, 2016, [https://www.ft.com/content/8a2a533c-182a-11e6-b197-a4af20d5575e](https://www.ft.com/content/8a2a533c-182a-11e6-b197-a4af20d5575e)


131 Interview in Berlin, Germany, on August 1, 2016.


133 Kirişci and Ferris, “Not Likely to Go Home,” p. 11.
Germany suggests that differences in their policies might be interacting with refugees’ own socio-economic backgrounds to create different patterns of settlement among Syrian refugees, at least in this early state of exile.

What might be the long-term consequences of these patterns in shaping Syrian diasporic communities? One hypothesis is that state effects in either minimizing or accentuating the significance of refugees’ class backgrounds become reinforced over time in a kind of path-dependent process. Alternatively, the opposite might be the case. Perhaps over the long term in Turkey, pre-flight economic differences among displaced Syrians will prove less salient than the legal vulnerability and cultural “otherness” that unite them as a population apart from the host society (granted there is no differential naturalization process). In contrast, in Germany, once asylees make it through this preliminary, equalizing phase of paperwork, language learning, and collective living in shelters, they might find that their own class orientations and aspirations land them in different positions in the socio-economic map of their new society. While these processes are uncertain under any circumstances, other variables -- from the course of war in Syria to domestic political upheavals in Turkey and the outcome of Germany’s September 2017 federal elections -- render them particularly contingent in this case.

Beyond future settlement patterns, use of the lens of socio-economic class through which to analyze of the transformation of the Syrian refugee crisis into a Syrian diaspora suggests a host of other important research questions. Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu, Van Hear proposes a broad definition of class as the product of multiple sources of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. He argues that refugees and migrants use these sources in fungible ways. The Syrian case invites us to investigate how and under what circumstances refugees pull upon different socio-economic resources, the opportunities and limits for transform one resource into another, and how host state policies shape these processes. Similarly taking up questions suggested by Van Hear, continued research can consider how Syrian refugees’ class backgrounds shape their eventual prospects for return, transfer of remittances, or expatriate involvement in Syria, and how the effect of class on these homeland connections is mediated by the policies and contexts that they find in their new countries of settlement.
In this context, my question for the seminar is: which of these or related topics appear most fruitful for continued research, and what are the most fruitful tools with which to do so?