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A NEW CHALLENGE FOR URBAN PLANNING IN TURKEY: SOCIO-SPATIAL IMPACTS OF FORCED MIGRATION

Abstract. In recent decades, forced migration has become a globally salient issue for both developed and developing countries. As a developing country, Turkey is a significant destination for forced migration, with more than 3.6 million Syrian immigrants. This study concentrates on the socio-spatial impacts of forced migration in Turkish cities where Syrian immigrants have been concentrated and aims to answer the question: “Does forced migration produce an urban crisis in such cities?” The study leads to a prescription about new qualities of urban planning for coping with the urban crisis through a resilience strategy.

Key words: cities, forced migration, socio-spatial impacts, urban planning, resilience.

1. INTRODUCTION

A very simple definition of forced migration is displacement under coercion. Although the boundary between migration and forced migration is not clear, the distinctive aspect of forced migration is the fact that forced migrants do not have the power or the freedom of choice to decide whether or not to leave (Petersen, 1958, p. 261).

History provides a myriad of examples of forced migration. One of the best-known examples was the slave trade from Africa to the Caribbean, North and South America and Europe. Between the first half of the 15th century and the second half of the 19th century, millions of Africans were displaced forcefully (Bertocchi, 2015). In the 20th century, the main causes of forced migration were the First and Second World Wars. They resulted in large-scale displacements of populations, especially in Europe (Gatrell, 2008; Redondo, 2018). However, it has become one of the most significant and globally salient issues of the period after

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the end of the Cold War, which started with the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Castles, 2003). In today's world, due to various political, economic, social and environmental reasons, more and more people have to experience coerced displacement from their homelands in Africa, in the Middle East, North Africa and in South-East Asia (Kenyon Lisher, 2009; O'Neill and Spybey, 2003).

It could normally be expected that the main destinations for forced migration are developed countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and certain European countries, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, where the total international migrant stocks are relatively high (Migration Data Portal, 2019). In these countries, the risk to be undertaken by migrants might be limited, which in turn might increase their prospect of better lives. However, the actual circumstances are different. Developing countries have become the main destinations for forced migration in recent years and Turkey is one of them just because of the massive wave of Syrian forced migration in the last eight years, which is an unusual and rapidly evolving phenomenon.

Actually, Turkey is not the only destination for Syrian immigrants. Some Syrians choose to reside in Lebanon (924,161 immigrants), Jordan (657,445 immigrants), Iraq (228,573 immigrants), and Egypt (130,371 immigrants) (Operational Portal, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d). This is normal to some extent since there have been significant historical links between Syria and these countries. They use the same Arabic language (with small differences in accent) and similar traditional codes that help Syrians develop social and economic activities relatively easily (Dorai, 2018). Both the level of adaptation of Syrians and the acceptance of Syrians by local communities are considerably high.

The case of Turkey is, however, different. In the first years of migration, Turkey seemed quite attractive for Syrians, not only considering its everyday life but also with its critical location enabling the continuation of the migration movement. Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in the year 2011, more than 3.6 million Syrians have started living in Turkey (DGMM, 2019a), mostly in cities. Mersin, a city on the southern coast of Turkey, is one of those cities. According to the official records, in October 2019 there were 204,255 Syrians registered in Mersin (DGMM, 2019a). This amount means a significant addition to the urban population of Mersin. However, there are also unregistered Syrians in the city. The local authorities estimate that there were approximately 300,000 Syrian immigrants in Mersin in 2018, a third of the official urban population (Mersin Portal, 2018). Regardless of the exact number, it is obvious that Syrians have been increasingly visible with their traditional clothes and audible with their Arabic language in public spaces. What has been visible is not only their spatial existence in urban public spaces but also their growing problems, mainly produced by the gap between the home and the immigrant culture (İnce Yenilmez, 2017) and these are waiting to be solved.

Central and local authorities use, more or less, different types of management strategies and structural policies to prevent all those economic, social and cultural problems. Different public institutions of central authorities have made several declarations supporting the permanent existence of Syrian immigrants in Turkey. These declarations generally include promotions of Syrians and presentations of their actual problems in their everyday lives. Local authorities, on the other hand, have other ways of approaching the problems of these people. Some of them have been relatively active and used their economic/financial abilities to solve all the everyday problems of Syrians. Others, however, focus only on the urgent problems of immigrants in a passive manner. Whether they are active or passive, almost all local authorities display an attitude towards the problems of immigrants, especially if there are spatial concentrations of Syrians in their administrative territories. What is interesting in the Turkish case is the lack of foresight in planning agencies, both at central and local levels. For eight years, they have been inactive, like rabbits caught in the headlights, although Syrians trigger certain significant changes in specific cities such as concentrating in specific locations, which changes urban social topography: forming new density surfaces and land-use patterns; increasing housing prices indirectly; degrading and deteriorating urban environments indirectly; and creating inadequacies in public services and quality of life problems in their urban territories.

This study starts from the inactivity of planning agencies and aims to describe the actual and potential socio-spatial impacts of Syrian immigrants in Turkish cities where they have been concentrated and to prescribe new qualities of urban planning to handle these impacts. These descriptions and prescriptions are important for Turkey since the existing trends present the fact that forced migration will increase in the near future due to socio-political or climatic reasons and Turkey will be one of the main destinations for future migration waves due to its strategic location.

This study has four parts. After the introduction, a brief historical evaluation of massive migration movements in the Republic of Turkey is presented in the second part, as the previous migration waves are significant to understand not only the scale and significance of Syrian forced migration, but also its socio-spatial impacts on cities.

Two-phase quantitative and qualitative analysis of Syrian immigration in Turkish cities is presented in the third part. The first phase is mainly quantitative, considering the whole of Turkey as a spatial unit for the analysis. By using official records of Syrian immigrants in cities and in temporary protection centres, the patterns of the spatial concentrations of Syrians will be determined. Those concentrations could be used for categorising the cities which is the starting point for analysing the socio-spatial impacts of forced migration since those impacts and their visibilities differ in cities where there are high or low levels of spatial concentrations of Syrians. The second phase will include mainly qualitative descrip-

tions and be concentrated on socio-spatial processes in cities triggered by Syrians, namely locational preferences of Syrians, their impact on residential densities and land-use patterns. Due to the difficulties of gathering data and information about Syrian immigrants in cities, the qualitative descriptions will mainly use observations in the city of Mersin and limited local studies in other similar cities such as Gaziantep, Antakya, Adana, and Kilis. With reference to these descriptions, it might be possible to understand the actual and potential socio-spatial impacts of forced migrants on cities and the urban problems resulting from forced migration. This part will end in an answer to the question: “Do the impacts of Syrians on cities foster an urban crisis in Turkey (at least in certain cities)?”

The fourth part will be the conclusion. It will have two main dimensions: the policy dimension and the planning dimension. In the former, there will be a general discussion on the ways of approaching forced migration by local and central authorities. The emphasis will be on the planning dimension in the end. There will be a definition of the qualities of urban planning in the face of this new urban crisis within the context of uncertainty and unpredictability. The main motive of this part will be resilience planning, a planning approach providing opportunities to overcome urban crises.

2. HISTORICAL EVALUATION OF IMMIGRATION TO TURKEY

It is almost impossible to isolate the urbanisation history of Turkey from migration movements. Most of the studies about urban history and urban development focus, however, on migration from rural areas to urban settlements, accelerated after the Second World War (Özdemir, 2012; Keleş, 2002).

These migration processes could be analysed with reference to two waves within the Republican period. Although they were almost the same according to the origin/destination relations, their reasons and motivations were slightly different. Mechanisation in agriculture after the Marshall Plan was one of the main reasons for the first wave between 1950 and 1970. The rapidly increasing numbers of agricultural tractors and other agricultural vehicles started to change traditional labour-intensive agriculture to capital-intensive methods¹ (Özdemir, 2012). In addition to mechanisation, structural changes in traditional property ownership in agriculture was another reason. Agricultural plots became smaller due to inheritance through generations, which changed the overall organisation of agricultural activities. Moreover, agricultural fertility decreased mainly because of climatic conditions and problems. All these cumulative and intertwined factors reduced

¹ The number of tractors first increased from 1,800 (in 1948) to 44,000 (in 1956). Between 1956 and 1963, their number increased from 44,000 to 100,000 (Özdemir, 2012).

agricultural incomes and influenced the survival strategies of agricultural households negatively. Chronic unemployment and declining conditions in rural areas forced small-scale producers (villagers) to sell their agricultural lands and produced a push effect from rural areas to metropolitan cities in Turkey, especially after the 1950s (İçduygu and Ünalın, 1997; Akşit, 1998; Keleş, 2002) and produced a wave of emigration to European cities, especially in Germany, France, and the Netherlands in the 1960s (İçduygu, 2014).

The second wave of rural migration was between the years 1980 and 1990. This wave was, however, related to the pull effect of cities. The relative advancements in industrial capacities and the more secure condition of cities in western Anatolia compared to eastern and south-eastern Anatolia were the main reasons for it. Due to the developments of communication possibilities, the rural population became more aware of these increasing employment demands in the industry; however, the increases were not at a specific level which might absorb all the rural migrants (Özdemir, 2012).

The theoretical studies are not only related to the reasons for migration but also their outcomes. Since the number of host cities was limited, migration created significant socio-spatial impacts on cities such as İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana, and Bursa. They did not have the capacity to cope with that amount of people in those days; therefore, there emerged lots of (urban) problems such as squatter areas, economic informality, unemployment, and social and cultural disintegration. Those problems were quite visible since approximately one third of the urban population lived in squats in these cities (Sağlam, 2006), which emerged due to the limitations of formal provision of housing supplies for rural migrants. Although those problems transformed in time, they have mostly remained unsolved in the Turkish urban context. The former squatter areas are now potential sites for brutal urban regeneration projects displacing people from their residential areas; economic informality and unemployment in these areas still pose problems, and there is evidence for social and cultural disintegration due to ethnic and religious enclaves.

Then, regarding immigration, there is a limited number of theoretical studies, although Turkey has been one of the main destinations for immigration waves. These waves have mostly originated from the countries located in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. The main immigration waves of the Republican period are listed in Table 1 (DGMM, 2019b).

Immigration to Turkey could be analysed in four different periods. The first period was between the years 1923 and 1944. The immigration waves of this period originated mainly from newly established Balkan countries, including Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece, which was a party to the Population Exchange Agreement. Although there were immigrants heading for cities, the main destinations for those waves were rural settlements in the north-western regions of Turkey. In the first years of that period, immigrants had used farmhouses and cottages left by emigrants who evacuated to Greece. In subsequent years, there emerged

Table 1. The chronological list of immigration to Turkey

Period	Source area	Number of immigrants	Major destination of immigrations in Turkey	Other significant aspects
1924 Population Exchange Agreement	Greece	500,000	Mainly rural areas in north-western Turkey	1,000,000 people left Turkey within this period
1924–1950	Yugoslavia and Macedonia	305,158	The cities in western Thrace of Turkey	14,494 immigrant houses were constructed
1925–1989	Bulgaria	Four immigration waves: 1925-1949: 218,998 1949-1951: 156,063 1968-1979: 116,521 1989 : 800,000	Except for the immigrants of the last wave, mostly rural areas	–
1923–1949	Romania	79,287 (19,865 households)	Cities (with their relatives and former immigrants)	–
1979	Iran	1,000,000	Metropolitan cities and the relatively developed cities in eastern and south-eastern Turkey	–
	Afghanistan	unknown	Metropolitan cities and the relatively developed cities in eastern and south-eastern Turkey	Uzbeks, Uyghur, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhstani people, along with Afghans
1988–1991	Iraq	519,031	Metropolitan cities and the relatively developed cities in eastern and south-eastern Turkey	The Gulf War in 1991 was the main reason for this wave
1992–1998	Bosnia	20,000	unknown	–
1999	Kosovo	17,746	unknown	–
2001	Macedonia	10,500	unknown	–
1945–2019	Syria	3,666,059 (just after the year 2011)	Syrians have generally preferred to reside in cities close to the Syrian border, along with the metropolitan cities of Turkey	The number of Syrian immigrants from former waves is unknown

Source: The data and information in this table were compiled from DGMM (2019c), RASAS (2019), Arı (1995), Geray (1970), and Doğanay (1996).

immigrant houses in rural areas. Directing immigrants to rural areas was a conscious strategy of the early Republican administration, aiming to increase the gross domestic agricultural production and the efficient use of agricultural lands (Ari, 1995). And it was also logical since most of the immigrants had rural origins.

The second period began just after the end of the Second World War and lasted until the end of the 1970s. That period included immigration waves similar to the ones in the first period. Again, the immigration waves originated in the Balkan countries, due to the changes in the local political inclinations. Those waves, however, targeted the urban settlements in north-western regions of Turkey. They either sought quarters with their relatives temporarily or resided in immigrant neighbourhoods in urban fringes. In both cases, the impacts of immigrants on cities were limited or, more accurately, indefinable (Doğanay, 1996).

With the third period between the years 1980 and 2011, there also emerged immigration waves from Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq. The political instabilities and the conditions of international conflicts related to those countries routed millions of people out of their homelands. Turkey became one of the main destinations for those immigrants. Except for metropolitan cities such as Istanbul, İzmir, and Ankara, they preferred to settle in the relatively developed cities of the eastern and south-eastern regions of Turkey such as Van and Gaziantep (Deniz, 2011; Emek İnan, 2016).

All the immigration waves in these three periods were very visible. Immigrants from Balkan countries preferred to settle in north-western regions of Turkey, where they felt psychologically safe and where they found lots of cultural similarities in their daily practices. For the same reasons, immigrants from Central Asia and the Middle East chose to reside in cities in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. In the first period, rural areas were the destinations of immigration waves. Yet, immigrants had lots of socio-economic problems there. Since the language and the cultural codes of immigrants were slightly different, they were subjected to offensive attitudes by the members of close rural communities. They sometimes had economic problems due to the lack of knowledge about local agricultural production. Even the climatic differences made agricultural work difficult for them. Although the idea of distributing agricultural land to immigrants (either private properties left by emigrants or public lands) seems in principle a just and lawful decision, yet during the implementation, there were lots of problems such as the distribution of insufficient amounts of agricultural land and occupation of such lands by the members of local communities (Geray, 1970; Ari, 1995). Then in cities in the remaining periods, there were relatively fewer such socio-economic problems of immigrants. The main reason was not only the limited number of immigrants in cities but also the presence of relatives and former immigrants in those cities guiding the newcomers. The lack of immigrant houses, as a failure of public administration, ironically created a situation which increased the interaction among those groups. For immigrants, that was the key to experiencing limited problems in cities (İçduygu, Erder, and Gençkaya,

2014; Ari, 1995). Although one could make broad statements about the spatial presence of immigrants in different periods, the socio-spatial impacts of immigrants in cities are invisible since there are no proper records of their interurban and intraurban distributions and studies analysing their socio-spatial impacts on cities are rare.

The fourth and final period was relatively short. It started in the year 2012 with the massive forced migration of Syrians. It was radically different from the previous ones, mainly in terms of the tremendous scale of migration and the visibility of its socio-spatial impacts. The percentages of immigrants in certain cities were close to the ones of rural migrants in the metropolitan cities in the second half of the 20th century; however, the duration of the concentration of immigrants in cities was considerably short. All those elements make the ongoing forced migration worth studying, especially its socio-spatial impacts on cities.

3. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SYRIAN IMMIGRATION

Approximately 90 years later than the first immigration waves, Turkish cities faced another wave of immigration. In 2011, the Civil War in Syria started, as a result of successive Arab Spring Protests in North African and Middle Eastern countries. Due to worsening living conditions, Syrian people thought that neighbouring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey would be good destinations for immigration. Turkey, however, became the first country for immigration mainly because of its location enabling continued immigration (to the European Union), its legislation and open-door policy (İçduygu, 2015; Koca *et al.*, 2017).

3.1. Spatial distribution of Syrians in Turkish cities

In the last eight years, more than 3,600,000 Syrians entered Turkey (Fig.1). Less than two percent of them (63,204 people, October 2019) have stayed in temporary protection centres. Since initially there was not a national policy for controlling the distribution of Syrian immigrants in Turkey, the rest (3,608,349 people, October 2019) started living freely in cities or moved to other cities they preferred (DGMM, 2019a). This amount of people might be demographically insignificant if they were distributed evenly throughout the Turkish provinces. However, they presented significant spatial concentrations in certain cities (Fig. 2) due to the lack of control mechanisms on their spatial distribution² (Table 2).

² The first regulation that limited both the right to travel and the right to move into another city for Syrian immigrants was declared on 5 January 2016. Its aim was not to change the existing spatial distribution of Syrians in cities, but to locally fix it in cities in which they lived.

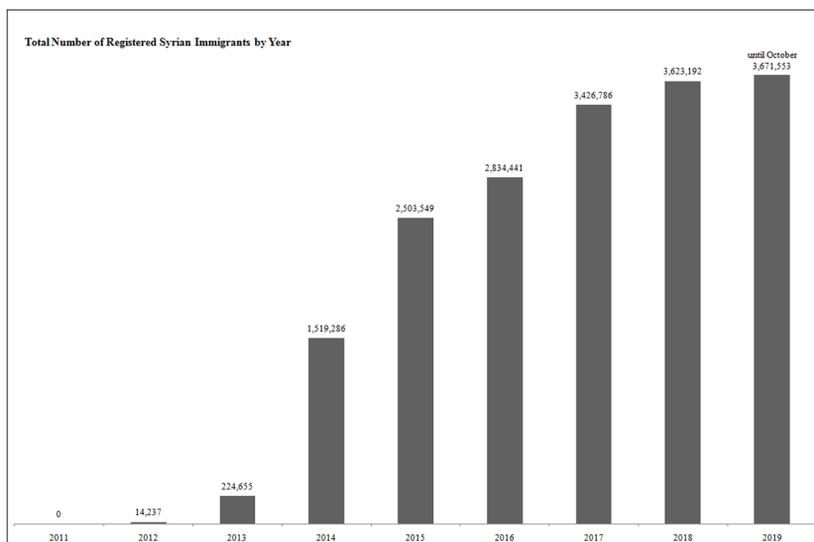


Fig. 1. Total number of registered Syrian immigrants by year

Source: own work based on *Temporary Protection*, [Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management], <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27> (accessed on: 8.10.2019)

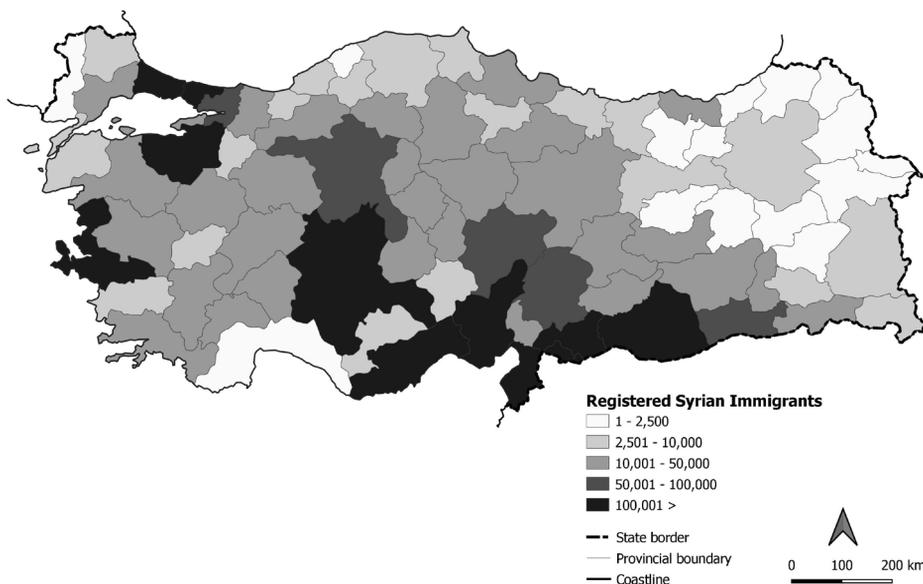


Fig. 2. Provincial Distribution of Syrian Immigrants in Turkey (as of 5 September 2019)

Source: own work based on *Provincial Breakdown Syrian Refugees in Turkey - September 2019*, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71505> (accessed on: 8.10.2019).

Table 2. First ten host Turkish provinces for Syrian immigrants (October 2019)

Provinces ³	Total number of Syrian immigrants*	Number of Syrian immigrants in Temporary Protection Centres**	Percentage of Syrian immigrants in provincial population [%]
İstanbul	549,216	–	3.64
Gaziantep	451,183		22.24
Hatay*	439,869	11,161	27.32
Şanlıurfa	428,299		21.04
Adana*	239,033	19,151	10.77
Mersin	204,255	–	11.26
Bursa	177,087	–	5.91
İzmir	146,891	–	3.40
Kilis*	116,289	8,533	81.58
Konya	109,304	–	4.96

* Cities with Temporary Protection Centres (TPC). Kahramanmaraş and Osmaniye, not included in this table, are the other cities in which there are also Temporary Protection Centres.

Source: The data and information in this table were compiled from DGMM (2019a).

Considering Table 2, it could be easily stated that there are two groups of cities with reference to absolute numbers and percentages of Syrian immigrants. The first group includes İstanbul, Bursa, İzmir, and Konya which are important Turkish metropolitan cities. Immigrants generally have a tendency towards these open cities since they always feature relatively high levels of economic activity, cultural diversity, and fewer problems related to social acceptance (Alterman, 2002). The absolute numbers of Syrian immigrants are high in these cities, but their percentages in the urban population are relatively low (3.40 up to 5.91 percent). This means that Syrians and the problems related to Syrians are almost invisible for most of the local inhabitants in these cities whether they are concentrated in certain neighbourhoods or they are distributed among all neighbourhoods. However, the second group containing such cities as Kilis, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Mersin, and Adana are quite interesting. They are close to the Syrian border and have a high number of Syrians, the percentages of whom are close to the ones

³ In Turkey, the registration of (Syrian) immigrants is the task of provincial administration. Their administrative territory covers the whole province, including both urban and rural areas. However, urban centres of Turkish provinces, or namely cities, provide immigrants with greater opportunities for employment and a better economic life than rural areas, as is stated in the migration literature (Alterman, 2002), which makes them the main destinations for immigration. For this reason, the numbers of immigrants in provinces could be interpreted as those in cities.

represented by squatters in the 1960s and 1970s (between 10.77 and 81.58 per cent). Although the ranking of Turkish cities is changing sometimes, there is no evidence for a change of the overall picture of the spatial distribution of Syrian immigrants in time (Fig. 3). What makes the second group of cities more interesting is the time factor. These high percentages appear in very short periods of time compared with the rural migrations of the last century. In that sense, it can be assumed that these immigration processes should have certain socio-spatial impacts and produce urban problems in these cities as rural migration did in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir in the past. All these impacts and problems might pose new challenges for Turkish planning practices, especially for those cities where there are high levels of spatial concentrations of Syrian immigrants.

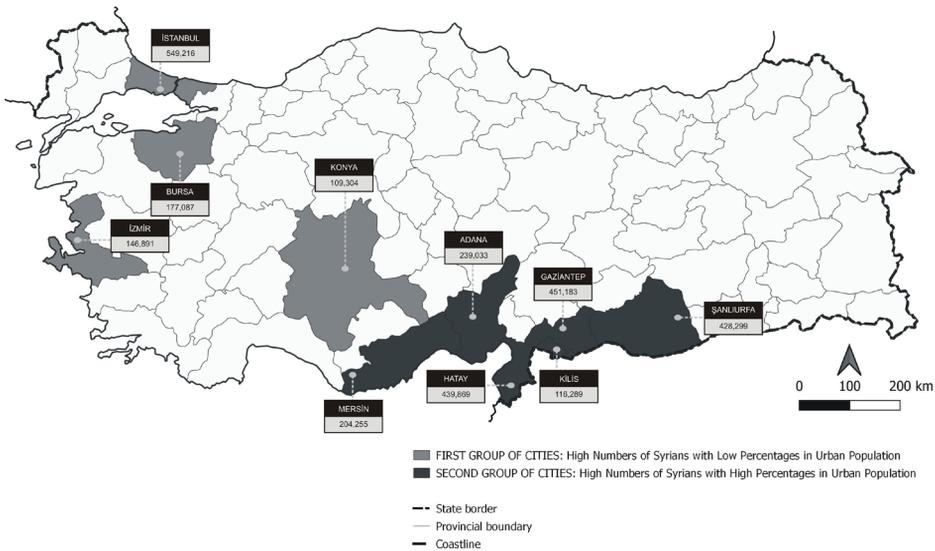


Fig. 3. Spatial distribution of Syrian immigrants in the first ten host Turkish provinces in October 2019

Source: own work based on *Temporary Protection*, [Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management], <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27> (accessed on: 8.10.2019)

3.2. Socio-spatial impacts of Syrian immigrants in Turkish cities and urban problems

In most cases, immigration entails vulnerability. It becomes chronic when immigrants have limited access to essential resources and opportunities due to socio-economic, cultural and political barriers (Lee, Guadango and Murillo, 2017). There are six different barriers within this context:

- **Linguistic barriers:** These barriers produce certain disadvantages to immigrants in terms of accessing the local labour market, health care, education, and even information including disaster preparedness warnings;
- **Legal and administrative barriers:** Laws and regulations might prevent immigrants (or specific groups of immigrants) from having formal access to housing, employment, healthcare, education, and similar services;
- **Reduced access to social networks:** In host settlements, immigrants usually do not have any family and community ties, which makes them more vulnerable;
- **Reduced knowledge of the local environmental and social context:** Immigrants do not have site-specific knowledge, and therefore, their awareness of local resources and opportunities is insufficient. Both facts might produce specific patterns of exclusion;
- **Inadequacy of skills for the urban labour market:** Immigrants might be obviously disadvantageous if the urban labour market demands completely different skills. Such kinds of facts might result in unemployment and deskilling;
- **Lack of representation, and discrimination and xenophobia:** The lack of political representation might result in a lack of recognition within the decision-making process. In such conditions, immigrants might not have many opportunities for fulfilling their needs.

Most of these barriers and inadequacies are also valid for Syrian immigrants, like other immigrants in other countries. However, in the Turkish case, linguistic barriers and inadequacy of skills for the urban labour market are the most important ones, as they are the main sources of problems for fulfilling daily needs (Koca *et al.*, 2017).

Due to the existing conditions and capacities of public services, there have emerged certain problems for Syrian immigrants in terms of accessing public services, especially health and educational services. Linguistic barriers are the main reasons for these access problems. Moreover, cultural differences are not tolerated solely due to the problems of communication. Inadequacies of skills for the urban labour market are other sources of problems. Syrians generally work in simple jobs necessitating physical effort. Men work as construction workers and dishwashers, which are jobs that do not require qualifications; women are generally beggars, and finally children work as informal recycling workers collecting waste in cities in extremely poor conditions (Uluslararası Af Örgütü, 2014). Unemployed low-income members of local communities, however, are convinced that Syrians have taken jobs away from them. According to them, Syrians are the reasons for the decrease in the values of labour markets (Koca *et al.*, 2017).

In those conditions, social tensions and conflicts with local communities have increased considerably. Then the members of local communities consider Syrians as the sources of diseases decreasing public hygiene, as originators of crime, as factors increasing the risk of terrorism and carrying the war effect into Turkey, and as lazy and parasitic people using public (financial) resources without doing

anything. They think that there should be limits to hospitality in terms of this never-ending reception of Syrians, which are the initial motives for discrimination and prejudice (Koca *et al.*, 2017).

All those problems are important in everyday urban life. However, the problems related to Syrian immigrants cannot be reduced solely to these. They have created unexpected and large-scale changes in certain cities in a very short period of time, especially where they are concentrated. There are four intertwined socio-spatial impacts of Syrian immigrants in those cities which pose challenges for urban planning. These socio-spatial impacts are:

- concentration in specific locations within a city,
- increase in residential densities,
- formation of new patterns of land-use,
- production of symbolic boundaries difficult to permeate.

3.2.1. Concentration in specific locations within the city

Syrian immigrants are not distributed evenly throughout urban space. Since they are personally and socially vulnerable, they tend to concentrate in specific locations in order to achieve their self-protection. Their locational preferences are mainly motivated by their levels of financial resources.

Syrian immigrants with an excessive amount of financial resources prefer either to buy or rent houses where high-income members of local communities are concentrated. But since their numbers are very limited, they could not form any urban patterns in cities.

The ones with a moderate amount of financial resources, or middle-income Syrian immigrants, tend to gather in residential areas where there are clusters of social, educational and medical services provided by Syrians, either formally or informally. They want to continue their previous life standards from when they were in Syria by accessing these services. These clusters are like neighbourhood centres, but those services are mostly informal. Yet, the number of middle-income Syrians is limited just as the number of high-income Syrians.

Syrian immigrants with a limited amount of financial resources constitute the largest immigrant group. They prefer residential areas with the lowest rents. These areas mostly contain informal housing. They have pushed the original residents of these areas elsewhere. And since it is easy to reach from these residential areas the workplaces where they can find informal and daily jobs, there appear obvious tendencies for densification in those areas. These spatial preferences are not only observable in Mersin. Similar patterns emerge also in other cities such as Gaziantep (Sönmez, 2014), Kilis (Harunoğulları, 2016), and Antakya (Harunoğulları and Cengiz, 2014).

Additionally, there are many homeless Syrian immigrants without any financial resources. This group is generally excluded from the studies about immigrants

since it is very difficult to collect data about them. In the Mersin case, however, they are distributed among all neighbourhoods of the city trying to live in poor conditions with the support of local communities.

Since these newcomers have created an important demand for housing in those cities, they have increased average housing prices and rents, at least in certain locations. In Kilis, for instance, average monthly housing rents have increased from 200–300 TL to 700–1,000 TL; in İstanbul, from 700–800 TL to 1,400–1,500 TL (Koca *et al.*, 2017; Harunoğulları, 2016). This is not only a problem for residents, but also for urban planners who aim to manage the spatial distribution of urban rents in a just way.

3.2.2. Increase in residential densities

Syrian immigrants have increased residential densities in certain parts of cities. The densification is quite unusual and unexpected since it has come about through the use of single residential units by multiple households. In other words, there are generally more than two households in one residential unit. What is observed in Mersin is also valid for other cities where Syrian immigrants have become concentrated (Harunoğulları and Cengiz, 2014). The actual densities produced by Syrian immigrants, therefore, are more than the ones catered for in urban development plans. Sharing rents is their survival strategy; however, the result of increasing densities is the inadequacy of social and technical services, insufficiency of green areas and playgrounds, and, consequently, the emergence of a “quality of life” problem in those residential areas of immigrant concentration.

Since their living conditions within the public domain are not good, they present a tendency to diffuse around public spaces (parks, beaches, playgrounds, etc.) in different parts of cities. They generally dominate those public spaces with their traditional behaviours. In such a context, it can be stated that the residential areas of Syrian immigrants might be limited in size, but their lifestyle is dispersed all over the cities.

3.2.3. Formation of new patterns of land-use

The changes in residential densities generate new patterns of land-use, mainly in the form of commercial uses. The commercial units in these patterns are informal but they are quite popular among Syrians since they provide products and services demanded by them. Like residential densities, these patterns are not proposed for in urban development plans. In residential areas where Syrian immigrants are concentrated, residential units are transformed to commercial units. It can be easily

said that, in these residential areas, there might emerge new elements of a system of urban centres influencing the urban structure and a system of daily commuting relations in cities.

3.2.4. Production of symbolic boundaries difficult to permeate

In those cities where Syrian immigrants are concentrated there eventually emerge informal neighbourhoods where high levels of ethnical concentrations are observable. The concentrations of Syrian immigrants in those neighbourhoods are pushing (or displacing) existing social groups to other parts of cities. In such conditions, it is not possible to talk about multiculturalism since Syrians have very limited relations with other social groups, but it is possible to observe symbolic boundaries which are difficult to permeate. All these processes determine a kind of a ghettoisation process.

There is evidence of degradation and deterioration in these ethnically closed neighbourhoods. This is actually normal since property owners have no intention of investing in their residential units and immigrants do not have the opportunities to invest in residential areas.

Invasion-succession processes in ecological terms have been observed to occur in a very short period of time in Mersin and in other similar cities. Those processes produce ethnic enclaves within cities, similar to the formation of Little Italy or Chinatown enclaves in American cities (Terzano, 2014). It is difficult to say that these cities are inclusive cities, at least within their formation processes. They are gradually becoming technical patchworks in which there are high levels of socio-spatial segregation. And those patchworks are difficult to manage through formal planning procedures.

The massive wave of Syrian immigration to Turkish cities creates a kind of urban crisis in those cities due to the “situation of high change and low understanding” (Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963). According to Bryson (1981), “a crisis occurs when a system is required or expected to handle a situation for which existing resources, procedures, laws, structures, and/or mechanisms, and so forth, are inadequate.” This definition can be easily translated to the Turkish urban context under the pressure of the ongoing massive immigration wave.

It is an urban crisis since it displays almost all attributes of a crisis defined by Alterman (2002), namely, a high degree of uncertainty and surprise, a high degree of change and turbulence, high risks and threats, system-wide and complex effects of anticipated impacts, a low degree of knowledge about solutions, a challenge to the symbolic level and to the social consensus, and urgency because of high costs of delay.

Although there are a considerable number of political declarations and a limited number of studies as conducted by Koyuncu (2016) indicated the fact that Syrian immigration produces opportunities, especially in economic terms, the struc-

tural changes mean a kind of acute shock with a possibility of increasing chronic stresses within specific cities in the Turkish case.⁴ This is not a fact discussed only in academic circles, but also a reality of regular people in local communities who think that Syrian immigrants have been increasing housing rents, the rate of unemployment, crime, causing public health problems and consequently decreasing the quality of life for them (Koca *et al.*, 2017).

4. CONCLUSION

After defining the socio-spatial impacts of Syrian immigration as an urban crisis, there should be a discussion about the ways to overcome it. There are two main dimensions to it: the policy dimension and the planning dimension.

In the former, there are strategies of central and local authorities towards Syrian immigrants. The main strategy of the ruling party is to offer citizenship to Syrian immigrants without enforcing any social adaptation policies. Without those policies, however, citizenship cannot be the correct way of solving the real everyday life problems of Syrian immigrants, but it burdens them with responsibility. It might become a kind of responsibility transfer from the authorities to immigrants. The strategy of the opposition parties is to send Syrian immigrants back to Syria. This is another kind of responsibility transfer, this time from the Turkish government to the Syrian government. Due to the massive damage and destruction of the urban and rural settlements of Syria, the restoration of acceptable everyday life conditions will take considerable time during which Syrians, again, might not have their humanitarian needs easily satisfied. Then again, most of the local authorities are under pressure from the additional population. Due to financial limitations, they cannot fully take responsibility for Syrian immigrants and concentrate on what they can do in terms of humanitarian assistance, especially in terms of food and shelter. They also try to provide public services for immigrants, such as language courses and urgent health services (Koca *et al.*, 2017). The big picture in the policy dimension is the proof that there is an apparent need for a new policy structure considering all humanitarian needs of Syrians.

The planning dimension, however, is difficult to comprehend. The basic reasons for this difficulty are uncertainty and unpredictability. These are the basic aspects inseparable from the overall process of forced migration. The reasons for

⁴ Chronic stresses weaken the fabric of a city on a daily and periodic basis, including through high employment, overtaxed or inefficient public transportation systems, endemic violence, and chronic food and water shortages. Acute shocks are different to chronic stresses. They are sudden, sharp events that threaten a city such as earthquakes, floods, disease outbreaks, terrorist attacks (International Organization for Migration, 2017).

uncertainties are the problems in registration during legal entry, the rate of influx, and also illegal entries and uncontrolled movements within the country. The uncertainties create a context in which predictability is almost impossible.

Urban planning should deal with uncertainty and unpredictability and focus on ways for handling them at the urban scale. Within the urban context, these uncertainties are related to not only immigrant absorption and immigrant intake rates, but also the impacts of accelerated growth on housing availability and prices, social services, education facilities, infrastructure, and the environment. Obviously, approving mass immigration in cities means accelerated urban growth. This decision given by the central government should also consider local impacts, which means controlling the extent, type, and timing of urban growth in relation to the carrying capacities of cities during the growth (Alterman, 2002). It is clear what should be done; however, it is not so easy to achieve these controls within the existing urban planning systems, at least in the Turkish system.

From the very first days of forced migration, the urban planning institution has been inactive with regard to Syrian immigration in certain Turkish cities. Although Syrian populations are apparently high in specific cities and they produce significant socio-spatial impacts and urban problems, there have been no spatial plans or planning decisions which consider Syrian immigrants. Moreover, it seems that most Syrians are not willing to return to their country because they are convinced that the country, they once lived in is not there anymore and Turkey's conditions are relatively better especially for their children. With the possible immigration waves in the future, this fact gives a permanent character to these impacts and urban problems. The planning institution should produce plans for solving housing problems, infrastructure, and service supply problems, considering their short-term and long-term expectations. But it should not be forgotten that the task of proposing planning solutions in a relatively stable system may differ significantly from the task of developing solutions to problems in a major crisis where uncertainty is high, the needs are urgent, the necessary change is a large-scale one, the risks are high, the planned system is in turbulence, and the usual modes of communication and coordination are strained or non-existent (Alterman, 2002).

Under the pressure of mass migration, increasing urban resilience might be the main target of urban planning. "Urban resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience" (International Organization for Migration, 2017, p. 6). It is not a new concept for the Turkish case. For at least two decades, there have been theoretical discussions about urban resilience. However, they have mainly focused on the managerial dimensions of resilience, while the spatial dimensions have been neglected. But in the case of massive migration waves, managerial strategies for resilience might not be sufficient and the answer to the question "How can urban planning create more resilient cities?" has to be investigated honestly (Cruz *et al.*, 2013, p. 55).

The resilience literature is promising as it proposes the attributes of resilience such as diversity, strength, interdependence, collaboration, redundancy, efficiency, connectivity, capital building, robustness, and autonomy (Cruz *et al.*, 2013; Godschalk, 2003; Eraydın and Taşan Kok, 2013, p. 10). Urban planning should evaluate its strategies and decisions with reference to these attributes in search of urban resilience. However, there are two other concepts, i.e. flexibility and adaptability, which could be considered as key attributes while translating resilience into urban space. This translation may include a flexible urban structure enabling polycentric formation, with which the socio-spatial impacts of migrants might be distributed around the urban space. This polycentricity could not be considered as a physical/spatial issue only, but it should be referred to territorial cooperation, urban networking, and territorial cohesion (Cruz *et al.*, 2013), which could enrich the survival strategies of migrants. Within these flexible structures, the existence of self-sufficient small urban areas with a predetermined level of empty housing stock might also provide suitable living conditions for migrants. These parts might help not only to absorb a certain number of migrants but also to control urban rents. The number of such spatial suggestions for resilience could be, of course, increased within a contextual framework. But it should not be forgotten, whether they are limited in number or not, that all these suggestions strengthening resilience for better futures should be reflected in urban development plans since these plans are the basic outputs of urban planning.

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