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Integration through Exploitation: Syrians in Turkey

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-95710-260-7

Labor and globalization: ISSN 2196-5382

First published 2019

Cover photo: Muhammed Ahmed (14) works at a textile mill. He works 11 hours a day and monthly earns 550 TRY. Istanbul, April 2014

Credit : Eren Aytuğ / NARPHOTOS

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Vorderer Lech 35 86150 Augsburg, Germany

www.Hampp-Verlag.de

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List of Abbreviations:

3D:	Dirty, Dangerous, Demeaning
3RP:	The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
ACT:	Action, Collaboration, Transformation
AFAD:	Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı (Disaster and Emergency Management Authority)
AfD:	Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany)
AKP:	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
B.A.:	Bachelor of Arts
BBC:	British Broadcasting Company
BEPAM:	Boğaziçi Eğitim Politika ve Araştırma Merkezi (Centre for Educational Policy Studies)
Bianet:	Bağımsız İletişim Ağı (Independent Communication Network)
ÇGSB:	Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı (Ministry of Labour and Social Security)
CHP:	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican Peoples' Party)
CSR:	Corporate Social Responsibility
DERİTEKS:	Deri ve Tekstil İşçileri Sendikası (Leather and Textile Workers Union)
DGB:	Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (German Trade Union Confederation)
DİSK:	Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Progressive Workers Union)
DİSK-AR:	DİSK Araştırma Enstitüsü (Research Institute of DİSK)
ETI:	Ethical Trading Initiative
EU:	European Union
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GENEL- İŞ:	Türkiye Genel Hizmetler İşçileri Sendikası (General Services Workers' Union of Turkey)
GLU:	Global Labor University
HAK İŞ:	HAK İŞ Konfederasyonu (HAK İŞ Confederation)
ICDD:	International Center for Development and Decent Work
ICG:	International Crisis Group
IFAs:	International Framework Agreements
IHKIB:	İstanbul Hazır Giyim İhracatçıları Birliği (İstanbul Apparel Exporters' Association)
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
IMPR:	Uluslararası Ortadoğu Barış Araştırmaları Merkezi Derneği (International Middle East Peace Research Center)
INGEV:	İnsani Gelişme Vakfı (Human Development Foundation)
IOM:	The International Organization for Migration
IS	Islamic State
ISIL:	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISO:	İstanbul Sanayi Odası (İstanbul Chamber of Industry)
İŞKUR:	Türkiye İş Kurumu (Turkish Employment Agency)
ITKIB:	İstanbul Tekstil ve Hazır Giyim İhracatçıları Birliği (Association of Textile and Apparel Exporters)
LFP:	Labour Force Participation
LPG:	Labour Policies and Globalization
M.A.:	Master of Arts

MHP:	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Movement Party)
MMD:	Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü (Migration Management Directorate)
M.Sc.:	Master of Science
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ORSAM:	Orta Doğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi (Center for Middle Eastern Studies)
ÖZ İPLİK İŞ:	Tüm Dokuma, İplik, Trikotaj, Hazır Giyim, Konfeksiyon ve Deri İşçileri Sendikası (All Woven, Yarn, Knitting, Apparel, Garment and Leather Workers' Union)
PhD:	Doctor of Philosophy
PICUM:	Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
PKK:	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PM:	Prime Minister
SGK:	Sosyal Güvenlik Kurumu (Social Security Institution)
SİG:	Suriye'den İstanbul'a Gelen Sığınmacıları İzleme Grubu (Monitoring Group for Syrian Refugees in Turkey)
SOAS:	School of Oriental and African Studies
TBMM:	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey)
TEKSİF:	Türkiye Tekstil, Örne, Giyim ve Deri Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası (Textile, Knitting, Clothing and Leather Workers' Union)
TGSD:	Türkiye Giyim Sanayicileri Derneği (Turkish Clothing Manufacturers' Association)
TRY:	Turkish Lira
TTB:	Türk Tabipler Birliği (Turkish Medical Association)
TTSİS:	Türkiye Tekstil Sanayi İşverenleri Sendikası (Turkish Textile Industry Employers' Union)
TÜBİTAK:	Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey)
TÜİK:	Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (Turkish Statistical Department)
TÜRK-İŞ:	Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions)
UCL/UK:	University College London/United Kingdom
UIDDER:	Uluslararası İşçi Dayanışması Derneği (Association of International Workers' Solidarity)
UK:	United Kingdom
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA:	United States of America
USD:	American Dollar
WLFP:	Women Labour Force Participation
WTO:	World Trade Organization
WW2:	Second World War

Asylum Seeker Identity and the Labor Market: Syrian Asylum Seeker in Turkey

Polat Alpman

Introduction

In the relevant literature, special attention is often confined to different identities and cultural differences. It is generally argued that the problems between immigrants and the host society arise from these differences. Accordingly, integration is discussed as an agreement of differences, with class at the forefront of the issues. The identities of immigrants employed in the labor market are reproduced within class relations. This chapter suggests that inequality and discrimination towards immigrants is a consequence of the accumulation regime, focusing on class exploitation relations and mechanisms in the reproduction of the immigrant identity.

Immigrant identity is influential in the shaping of inequality and flexibility in the labor market. The breakdown of the workforce through identities generates a sort of control, which sustains the oppression on the labor force and the continuity of the capital accumulation.

Immigrant identities and the “immigrant identity” are two different constructions of identity. Immigrant identities are predicated on the relationship between the cultural, ethnic, and religious identities belonging to the person who immigrates, and the cultural and social infrastructure of the new country where they resettle. This concept, generally used in analysis related to the integration process between the immigrants and the host country, has a culturalist paradigm (Monsivais, 2004; Eckert, 2006, pp. 21–25). The immigrant’s legal recognition can also have an effect on this (Tinto, 2017).

The concept of “immigrant identity” that I will discuss in this article is a different identity that immigrants have to construct within the boundaries of the existing social, political, economic, legal, and cultural relationships in the country to which they have immigrated. Therefore, it is a term to be used to explain the identities of those immigrants who will not (or cannot) return to their country of birth and cannot truly integrate into their new country.

As a basic concept, “immigration” includes any kind of horizontal movement. Today, however, this word is frequently used to refer to international immigration⁴⁷ (Rouse, 1995;

⁴⁷ In Turkish, the word for *migrant* and *immigrant* are the same. This chapter points to the fact that in Turkish, this word, meaning both migrant and immigrant has come to refer almost exclusively to “immigrant”.

Rogers, 1986). For this reason, asylum seekers and refugees are two concepts accepted alongside “immigrants”.

This chapter will focus on the term “asylum seeker”. Interestingly, although Syrian asylum seekers have sought refuge in Turkey, they have not been given the status of “refugee”. Why this has happened and its effect on the construction of identity as well as in the labor market will be discussed in this chapter. One of the fundamental reasons why those who come to Turkey seek refuge but cannot find it, why millions cannot take advantage of refugee status, and why they find themselves in the labor market as asylum seekers, can be found in the specific conditions in which the “immigrant identity” is constructed in Turkey.

By defining “immigrant identity” and its derivative “asylum seeker” as an informal identity in the labor market, this chapter will explain the factors that lead to the construction of these terms. With reference to continuing spatial differentiation and the actions of the host workforce towards asylum seekers, the function of asylum seeker identity in the labor market will be explored.

Recognising the Immigrant Identity

La Barbera convincingly discusses that “identity has increasingly become an important keyword in contemporary human and social sciences. However, little attention has been devoted to the influence of migration on identity formation and transformation” (La Barbera, 2015, p. 1). There are various levels to the relationship between immigration and identity, the first being cultural differences; the greater the distance between the immigrant and host culture, the more immigrants—generally speaking—can be perceived as a threat to the host country’s identity and culture. Especially among populist right-wing movements, this cultural difference is one of the reasons why immigrant identity can be presented as a threat to social cohesion (Brunner & Kuhn, 2018, pp. 28–34; Davis & Deole, 2015; Lucassen, 2005, p. 106).

Immigrant identity is shaped by the distance between cultural references in their new location. Every process of immigration changes immigrants’ identity references. The asylum seeker identity exists in the space between belonging and being an immigrant. This is the experience of the immigrant, who embodies the contradictions of both societies.

Who is an asylum seeker? According to the International Organisation for Migration’s definition (2011, p. 12), they are

(...) Persons seeking to be admitted into a country as refugees and awaiting decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In case of a negative decision, they must leave the country and may be

expelled, as may any alien in an irregular situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grounds.

A refugee, in comparison, is classified as a person who “owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (IOM, 2011, pp. 79–80).

The identity of an asylum seeker is shaped by the country to which they migrate, inside the established relationships of that society’s social, political, economic, legal, cultural, and similar social spheres. As a result, the asylum seeker identity is an identity constructed by those social spheres’ relational dynamics. These relationships are arranged according to class oppression and domination mechanisms. Therefore, the asylum seeker identity is one of the results of inter- and intra-class tensions (Lee & Brotman, 2011; Vecchio & Beatson, 2014; Leung, 2014).

The issue of asylum seeker identity is complex because of the very nature of the migration process. There are, in a sense, multiple identities which are occasionally compliant and non-compliant with each other. International or transnational migration continues to transform individuals and the societies surrounding them, particularly the relations between migrants and their homelands or host countries (Orozco & Garcia-Zanello, 2009). For this reason, the identity displacement and resettlement periods are the processes of actualisation.

The immigration process alone does not play a role in the emergence of the immigrant identity because of the basic approach to the nature of immigration. Accordingly, every immigration process becomes labor migration, whatever the reason for immigration. After the immigration process begins, immigrants are included as part of the active or reserve labor force in the labor market. Ergo, this transformation applies to the immigrant as much as it applies to the host country. The primary condition determining the nature, content, function, and identity of the immigrant or asylum seeker identity is the labor market and its organisation.

Compared with previous migrations, the differentiating factor of the Syrian mass migration has been that it took place in a relatively short span of time; millions of Syrians entered Turkey within few years.⁴⁸ Because Turkey did not make adequate preparations,

⁴⁸ Mass migration to Turkey did not start with Syrians. Known recent mass migrations include around 120,000 Kurds escaping the massacre in Halabja in 1988; 400,000 Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria; 460,000 Iraqis fleeing the Gulf War in 1991; and between 1992 and 2001, approximately 25,000 Bosnians (1992), 20,000 Kosovars (1999), and 20,000 Albanians (2001) from former Yugoslavia (Corliss, 2003).

Syrian asylum seekers have encountered many problems. In signing the Geneva Convention on the Legal Status of Refugees in 1961 and ratifying the Protocol on the Status of Refugees in 1967, Turkey agreed to provide international protection of refugees. However, non-European immigrants were not accepted as refugees, but rather they were given a transitory status until they can be settled in a third country. Legally, those coming to Turkey from outside Europe are considered asylum seekers. Anyone who leaves their country for any reason and seeks refuge in Turkey is entitled to receive the status of “applicant for international protection”. Today, of the over four million Syrians who have come to Turkey, only three of them have obtained refugee status (Karabağlı, 2018).

The reasons behind this serious crisis are twofold. First, Turkey asserted regional conditions on an international agreement with its allies and, as a result, did not take responsibility for refugee rights. Second, Syrians came to Turkey as asylum seekers. One of the plans to overcome this crisis was the Temporary Protection Regulation issued on October 22, 2014; without giving refugee status, this regulation granted Syrians with some benefits. However, this support was designed according to the host country’s limited resources, and not as per asylum seekers’ rights, legal obligation, or responsibility (Erdoğan, 2014, p. 15). Although this regulation is entirely open to interpretation and poses uncertainty about the nature of the state’s responsibility, this issuance was important in terms of giving the presence of Syrians some kind of legal recognition.

According to the regulation in question, “Persons benefiting from temporary protection shall not be deemed as having been directly acquired one of the international protection statuses as defined in the Law”. In this way, on the one hand, Turkey is giving Syrians a legal status, while on the other they are stating that this status will not to have an effect. As a result, in this system, those who come to Turkey from countries outside Europe are not entitled to any status under international protection.

The relevant regulations present uncertainty about the concepts of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. One of the products of this continued uncertainty is the emergence of millions of people unable to find refuge or non-citizens’ status, who enjoy certain rights with certain restrictions.

The fact that Syrian asylum seekers do not have a legally realistic and effective status makes them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The first reason for this is that legal regulations for asylum seekers provide them no protection or way to integrate themselves within the host community. Another reason for this exploitation is the extreme flexibility and informal nature of the Turkish labor market. As Gramsci (2014, pp. 142–43) said “migration

has its own economic laws. In other words, the migration waves occur in various countries in line with the different labor and technical needs of those countries”. The fact that Syrians came to Turkey in large groups reinforced Turkish employment regime’s informal and precarious structural nature.

There are two conditions that have compelled Syrians to construct a new identity: the uncertainty of asylum seekers’ legal identity and the flexible, informal employment regime of the economic sector. Identity is an experience, it is not created by itself or in an empty space. The determining processes behind the creation, emergence, significance, and place within social relations of identity are defined by class, social, political, legal, and cultural relations. For immigrants, there is always a difference between the identity before and after immigration. This difference is a product of the direction of immigration, the location of the place immigrated to, and the relations between the immigrant and the host society. It is not coincidental, but conjunctural and not structurally related. The network of cultural relations in which the identity of the asylum seeker is built is shaped by the politics of their recognition. In the construction of the identity of the asylum seeker, there are four effective factors that play a role and address this dynamic. The first of these is the subalternization of the immigration process. Second is a coercive dependency (Wolf, 1994) that forces the asylum seeker to be included as an asylum seeker in sovereign market relations. Third is anomic identity (Côté, 2000, p. 122) transition, and fourth is loss of generation. The influence of class, social, political, legal, economic, and cultural relations on the identity of the asylum seeker are realised through these four factors and dynamics, which leads to the development of the identity.

Asylum Seeker Identity and the Labor Market: Informal Identities

In the capitalist social formation, identities are bodies in which domination is materialized. The domination that exists in economic, legal, political, and related spaces operates on identities and aims to internalize inequality–discrimination. In capitalist societies, where inequality and discrimination occur in a layered fashion, the entry of the asylum seeker into the labor force is dependent on the employment regime formed by the overlapping categories of class, ethnicity, religion, law, politics, and culture. In other words, multiple dominations are often shaped as processes with objective class positions that clearly overlap and reproduce each other.

As often emphasized in class and stratification studies, identities are intrinsic to the economic struggle in cities (Siniša, 2004, pp. 24–8). According to these approaches, groups who find themselves in competition in the economic sphere include their identities in that

competition. One of the groups in competition tends to put the other groups down with regard to language, race, ethnic origin, gender, religion, physical condition etc. When one of the groups in the economic competition is able to trump any quality of the other group, the disadvantaged group tends to exhibit more of the group or cultural qualities that caused it to be excluded. This situation becomes the norm when the dominant identity or group manages to devise legal arrangements in their favour or even relying on nepotism. The economic relations are thus organised according to the needs of the dominant class and the workforce is then fragmented within itself through identities. In some cases, this situation determines who can and cannot enter the competition, and thus can create new socio-economic and socio-cultural boundaries (Hechter, 1976, p. 1164; Siniša, 2004, pp. 127–42).

Among those pushed to the bottom of the labor hierarchy and economic relations, there emerges an inter-class and inter-labor “... conflict [that] might be between, say, the regularly employed and a largely unemployed underclass, that may also be a racial or ethnic minority” (Harvey, 1985, p. 116). The same may be seen between the immigrant labor force and the domestic one. Inside the sovereign accumulation regime, because asylum seekers—just like the domestic labor force—are employed as insecure, unstable, and cheap labor, the class conflict inherent to the working class is reproduced through identity. Class inequality and discrimination practices are considered ordinary for asylum seekers, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, religious identity, because they are accepted as outsiders and people that eventually will have to go.

Inter-class conflict facilitates the realisation of competition through the domination of legal, social, and political spheres. The fact that the workforce describes itself somehow with non-labor qualifications and thus constructs racist, sexist, discriminatory, and incomprehensible sets between the other members of the same class is one of the ways that the domestic laborer makes himself advantageous in the economic sphere (Nilsson & Wrench, 2009, pp. 23–42; Omi & Winant, 1994).

Turkey is no exception: the competition of the labor market has been formed through a variety of group identities. This conflict became more intense following the Syrian civil war and the entry of asylum seekers into the labor market. In order to find a job, informal and precariously situated laborers try to maximise or minimise the impact of their identity according to the identity hierarchy. As Harvey (1985, p. 116) pointed out, the labor–capital conflict “poses a threat to the capitalist order, whereas the latter kind of conflict does not”. The conflict between identities is supported by the capitalist class, as it causes class struggle to weaken and overshadow class contradictions. Thus, conflicts between identities that do not

constitute “a threat to the capitalist order” or even strengthen the resistance of the sovereign accumulation regime become the objective appearance of class-based conflict through different working ratios on each identity.

Cheap and precarious labor, which is central to neoliberal capital accumulation, is sustained by the organisation of class exploitation relations in all social spheres. Here, identities (for example, asylum seekers, or Kurds, or women, or Alevis) demanding their rights is presented as a threat to democracy by the dominant ideology. In reality, democratisation can solve these problems, but they are presented as problems which must be saved “for later”. In this way, from the point of view of the dominant identity (Sunni-Turkish), class inequalities are a reality which must be “tacitly” accepted by those who do not share this identity but live alongside it. Thus, social inequality and discrimination are defined by identity; the violence of class exploitation continues to include all segments of society, not just oppressed identities but also the dominant one.

Subaltern Labor

Mass migration, in particular, has a high potential for subalternization. The subaltern concept is used “in any social/cultural/economic/political subdivision/subdivision, for those who occupy the lower position” (Somay, 2008, p. 155). It is used to describe those who do not have the opportunity to express helplessness experienced in everyday life; those who experience economic, ethnic, religious-sectarian, or sexual inequality due to group identity; feel discriminated against; have different gestures and facial expressions to the language; have physical differences or accents or outsider opinions; and suffer from physical and emotional humiliation; all of this is in relation to the bearers of the dominant identity. Subaltern studies conceptualise a person inside a societal structure defined by relations between people and the conditions of the alterities. Therefore, the subaltern is portrayed as a language-less, non-subject. The moment a subaltern can express his subalternity in words, he ceases to be a subaltern (Spivak, 1990, p. 158). The position of communities that cannot speak, who are predestined to subalternity because they cannot speak, but who can save themselves from subalternity by speaking (Spivak, 1988), is directly related to exclusionary or discriminatory mechanisms and, opposite to social, political, and economic rights.

Coercive dependence

The asylum seeker identity is one that often fluctuates between tolerance and disdain for the host country’s workers. In overpopulated cities like İstanbul, this identity, on the one hand, is

valued as cheap labor and new consumers; on the other hand, it represents an object of hate and a scapegoat for the social, political, and economic problems of the host community. In other words, asylum seekers are desired to be part of the labor market, but they are constantly reminded of their place in the social hierarchy. In order to maintain the pressure towards cheap labor on asylum seekers, the practices of discrimination and inequality must be carried on. Asylum seekers must deal with this ambivalent attitude as part of their daily life experiences, and through their identity they create tactics to situate themselves within this daily life.

The other factor that enables asylum seekers' labor force exploitation is that they are stuck in a web of relationships that one could call "coercive dependence". Coercive dependence describes the conditions under which a precarious labor force must be connected to and be forced to work as members of the proletariat, putting asylum seekers in an even more difficult section of the labor market. The most important factor that solidifies this dependence is the removal of social rights, which is posed as a benefit to citizens. Every immigrant at the end of the day is a labor migrant, and every migrant becomes part of the production relations in the country where they settle. But those who possess the asylum seeker identity and who display coercive dependence particularities tend to work long hours without breaks. They are unable to receive their wages and unable to obtain permanent employment. They do not have any legal or personal assurance that they can claim against any abuse. It is important to recall here that it is provocatively, yet incorrectly talked over that Syrians receive access to free medical care and international telephone packages, monthly allowances, and other public benefits that keep them free from poverty.

People with the asylum seeker identity are pushed to an unequal and disadvantaged position against public institutions, the labor market, social welfare associations, judicial authorities, and law enforcement agencies, unlike holders of the dominant identity who have citizenship or citizenship rights. These conditions enforce employment at the lowest level, working conditions with all possible negative qualities, thus causing millions of Syrians unable to work outside unregistered fields. This asylum seeker work regime, with its dependence on such conditions and workers forced under arbitrary control, sometimes resembles the conditions prevailing in an enslaved system (Erdoğan, 2014; Girit, 2015).

One of the problems that created this employment regime was the rising waves of racism coming from local workers that pushed asylum seekers to work illegally and cheaply. For example, "the existence of a Syrian woman who will work in a bakery for 300 TRY a month instead of a Turkish woman at 1,000 TRY a month" (Erdoğan, 2014) creates racial and

social stigmas directed at Syrians, stigmas that continue to increase. Asylum seekers, however, cannot claim equality and cannot express any claim against the inequalities they face, because this inequality is directly regulated by law.

Identity Transition

Another factor influencing the identity of the asylum seeker, which is constructed through subalternity and forced dependence, is the transition of anomic identity. After immigrating, when joining the labor market on its lowest level, the Syrian asylum seeker experiences a period of anomy. Their identity, tied to subalternity and dependency relationships, is anonymized, and because of class decline and status loss, this identity transitions into a downward spiral. This new identity, in a sense, is constructed to cope with the ontological pain that is caused by the loss of identity. The resistance displayed against the anomic identity and losing prior identity is constructed “now” between the moment the immigrant enters the unequal and discriminatory modes of production and an individual’s aggrandised past/hopes of a better future. Anomic identity transition is related to anomie emerging with class decline and loss of status, and the loss of an individual’s previously known criteria. The asylum seeker’s new, anomic identity construction begins in the place where his understanding of himself and the group he felt he belonged to before immigrating does not find a compliment or a value in his host society. This identity, created by adding new content to the original informal identity, rather than acquiring a new identity, is one of the attempts to transcend the anomie, which is paradoxically caused by the loss of the previous identity. Damaged dignity is used by the dominant identity to create a place in the market for the asylum seeker when the latter cannot regain one’s previous identity. For asylum seekers, the transition to an anomic identity on the one hand gives him/her a way to move through daily life, while on the other hand, it burdens the body and the soul with felt inequality and discrimination (Erdoğan, 2007). This burdened meaning also leads to the development of internal resistance to the conditions in which they are located.

Generation Loss

The final result of the construction of the asylum seeker identity is the loss of generation. Not knowing *why* they cannot attain refugee or citizen status is not just a condition for asylum seekers, it also applies to those who are born in Turkey. The phenomenon of generation loss, seen frequently around the world in refugee camps, is seen in Turkey even though Syrians have spread across many cities; it is as though Turkey's cities have been transformed into giant refugee camps. As a result of Turkish society's exclusionary and discriminatory practices, as well as the normalisation of nationalist sentiments, class exploitation, and abuse that make Syrians look like the enemy, Syrians who were born and raised in Turkey have more of an asylum seeker identity than that of a member of Turkish society.

The Asylum Seeker Labor Market

Not every asylum seeker is identical to the other. Class, economic, social, and cultural differences create different levels among asylum seekers. The Bourdieuan approach argues that this is a result of the differences between groups with variant capital possession⁴⁹. For example, a Syrian Turkmen and a Syrian Kurd do not live under the same conditions in Turkey as asylum seekers. Similarly, a Syrian employer and a Syrian farm worker do not live under the same conditions. An asylum seeker identity can be viewed as an identity that is constructed by those who are the lowest in economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Thus, just as not every asylum seeker lives under the same conditions, every asylum seeker is not affected the same in the immigration process. There are also differences in their access to national and international aid organizations.

The asylum seeker identity draws from the fact that Syrian asylum seekers, apart from their own labor, do not own any other form of capital, although this does not apply to all Syrian asylum seekers; many Syrian employers can be found in İstanbul now and all of them employ Syrians. In terms of working conditions for these workers, it can be argued that there is no significant difference between the Turkish and Syrian employers. In fact, it can even be argued that Syrian employers have more effective control over Syrian workers, owing to the cultural domination they possess.

In addition, some Syrian asylum seekers in İstanbul, due to the varied networks that they can access, based on the social capital they possess, are working as intermediaries to

⁴⁹ Bourdieu extended the notion of capital. According to Bourdieu, capital, defined as sums of money, property or wealth, could take many forms. For Bourdieu the forms of capital are economic, symbolic, cultural, and social. See for details, (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–58).

provide informal employment. For example, “Call for a Syrian Worker” (posters containing a phone number) are plastered on walls and electric posts in various İstanbul neighborhoods. The people who call these numbers are mostly in the textile and construction industries, looking for people to work illegally for a short period of time. This shows that among asylum seekers there are ruptures to the typical path, and not all conditions are the same for all asylum seekers.

These differences among asylum seekers facilitate the exploitation and abuse of Syrians holding the asylum seeker identity, not only by Turkish capital owners, but also Syrian capital owners. The fact that the state denies labor market regulation and leaves the labor market to its “invisible hand” rules causes asylum seekers at the bottom of the labor hierarchy to be isolated in urban areas, deprived of security facilities, and not entitled to work.

The Space of Asylum Seekers

One of the hallmarks of the relationship between city and identity is market relations. The fact that the languages, cultures, and lifestyles of the asylum seekers are different, and often considered not “acceptable”, makes it easier to isolate them in the city. Generally speaking, spatial differentiation cannot be interpreted as a consequence of the asylum seekers’ or the immigrant workers’ housing preferences because it is a consequence of the dominant mode of production (Harvey, 1985). Intra-urban boundaries that arise due to spatial differentiation are not a result of the preferences of the people. The “intra-urban border” that arises for this reason also includes class stratification of the workforce. Depending on the fragmentation of the workforce in itself, internal boundaries such as outer borders of the city also emerge and these boundaries deepen the spatial differentiation. According to Herzfeld (2012, pp. 177–98), the placement of different social groups and immigrant masses in cities causes everyone to transform. However, this does not remove the intra-city boundaries, because these boundaries are based on class rather than cultural and similar differences.

Asylum seekers in Turkey, because of the nature of the urban areas where they live, are also stigmatised. This spatial stigma is the spatial dimension of making asylum seekers into marginal identities (Wacquant 2014, p. 124). The physical attributes, behaviors, and beliefs, as well as race, ethnicity, and religion of the asylum seekers are easily stigmatized, leading to the marginalization of those seeking asylum. Asylum seekers are inclined to internalise their inequalities and discriminations in order to protect themselves from violence. Thereby, in a sense, asylum seekers are ghettoised and become stigmatised by space. This stigma opens the door again to spatial differentiation (Goffman, 2014, pp. 33–6).

The realisation of spatial differentiation through ethnic, racial, or religious differences—either mandatory or voluntary—pushes immigrants into their own ghettos. Thus, outsiders stigmatise the “insiders” further and immigrant living quarters become places of social deprivation. The immigrants’ location is an isolated place where the “outsiders” do not prefer to live, do not value the homes, where the inhabitants “are not included in society” but “are not excluded from society” (Wacquant, 2013, p. 126). For this reason, the ideal success for asylum seekers is to rid themselves of the ghetto which is highlighted by the mass media as an image of constant fear and filth (Wacquant, 2003, p. 50). The dominant discourse surrounding the asylum seeker ghettos is of restlessness, theft, drugs, murder, and terrorism; in short, a place where criminal events are actualised (Wacquant, 2011, pp. 227–28).

The Privilege Hierarchy

As mentioned before, immigrants seek ways to be included in the labor market of their new country. For this reason, there is a strong relationship between the labor market, immigration, immigrant labor, and immigrant identity. Technical terms like “labor migration” found in immigration literature have an analytic value but does not sufficiently explain how quickly the immigrant—no matter his reasons for migration—becomes part of the labor force (Balch and Scott, 2011, pp. 146–65). The reason why immigrants are transformed into the active or reserve labor force is that the dominant labor force puts pressure on the wages of the immigrants, specifically the suppression of labor costs. This argument, especially debated in literature on informal labor, demonstrates that the workforce is being precariously secured on a global scale and that it is sustained by the state-capital coexistence (Castles, 2011, pp. 311–24). When immigrant laborers are employed formally or informally, and tied to the accumulation regime’s labor market’s technical arrangements, the government cannot turn a blind eye to immigrant, asylum seeker, and refugee policies. Therefore, the government is an influential actor on both the immigrant and domestic labor force and is one of the partners that regulates accumulation strategies (Haas, 2008; Engbersen & Broeders, 2011, pp. 170–86).

This phrase, “causing the Syrians to be criminalised” is heard particularly in Turkey’s media (Erdoğan et al., 2017). These stigmas are a form of racism, viewing asylum seekers outside the boundaries of society and therefore alienating them. These patterns of racism lead to a discourse about representation and differentiating ideology that ties immigrants to the cultural qualities of their home (Balibar, 2007, p. 27; Berger & Mohr, 2011, p. 107). Ethnic and religious identities conceal economic inequalities and discrimination, as well as cover up any superiority related to ethnicity and religion. Although they seem to be identifiers in the

labormarket, economic relations are in fact the cause of inequality and discrimination of identities. Therefore, the norms of the superstructure, such as law, education, and religion, which determine group behaviour, are determined within economic relations and regulations. For this reason, the inequality and discrimination practices built by "democratic" political systems in developed countries through identities are in harmony with colonial political systems (Burawoy, 1974, pp. 521–50).

As a result of these developments, the labor market is being rearranged by race, ethnicity, religious belief, and gender, and asylum seekers and immigrants are being employed with low wages and precariousness. The spatial ghettoisation is also apparent in the labor market (Piore & Safford, 2007). For example, the benefits of being white within the dominant labor market in the US and the advantages that it provides in labor employment, specifically in the production–consumption process, reinforce that whites distinguish themselves from other "colours". Similarly, in Turkey, being Turkish Sunni (and male) facilitates jobs for a significant portion of those in the private and public sectors.

Inequality and discrimination practices against immigrants and minorities within the labor market become a vehicle for maintaining the privileges of the dominant identity. The domestic worker, who is a member of the dominant culture, is legitimised through a sort of “moral panic” (Wacquant, 2003, p. 48) whose discourse legitimises the racist behaviour and unequal and discriminating political engagements directed towards asylum seekers. By masking racist practices in this way, practices that include inequality and discrimination continue to prevail while at the same time, the domestic workforce removes potential competition areas ahead of their economic and social gains. For this reason, "discrimination in terms of the working class" belonging to the sovereign identity is considered a way of maintaining an advantageous position within the labor market (Gramsci, 1996, p. 104). Owing to the informalisation of the labor market, actions included in these unequal and discriminatory practices are concealed. These actions can take many forms, such as meritocracy and the discourse of equal opportunity in the United States, while in Turkey it is being “native and national”. In the continuation of the equality assumption of the free market, one of the main concepts, the discourse of opportunity of equality, enables the reproduction of relations which causes the dominant identity-working class to be arranged upwards and the rest to be arranged downwards according to the identity hierarchy. Thus, the labor force belonging to the sovereign identity obtains a hegemonic position within the rest of the working class. This inequality in the labor market can be sustained by separating social, cultural, political, and economic practices from racial, ethnic, religious, and similar identities

to thrust self-interest into identities, and imposing inequality and discrimination as a natural practice (Omi & Winant, 1994, pp. 9–51).

Conclusion

When regional conflicts trigger domestic and international migration, it not only causes the horizontal movement of people in the established state, but also involves a process of expropriation, deprivation of social security, and exclusion from political development. When people and groups begin to seek a new life as a result of developments outside out their control, they move with the traces of these problems within them. Everywhere they go, they bring a piece of this brutal process as well. This is because wars, especially for the impoverished, only bring destruction. Those who cannot bring anything other than their own labor, lose everything that belongs to them in this process; they cannot escape encountering new forms of discrimination in their new place of settlement.

One of the reasons why identities turn into a cause for discrimination is related to the nature of the economic sphere in the host society. As the fragility of the capital and relationships inside the economic sphere becomes greater, unequal and discriminatory behaviours towards immigrants become more intense. Especially in countries like Turkey, where poverty and inequality are at higher levels, immigrants settle in the wide class level inhabited by the poor. In this way, the wage pressure on active and reserve labor increases. “The immigrants took our jobs,” is a phrase heard all over the world; directing criticism of capitalism, capitalist production, and distribution scheme at immigrants is easy and requires no cost.

The immigrants’ religion, ethnicity, and cultural identity do not need to be starkly different from that of the host society, but as the differences increase, it becomes easier to hate and shun them. This process of turning all kinds of differences into reasons for otherisation is built up by the mechanisms of domination that want to confine immigrants to their identities. The dominations present in legal, social, political, economic, and other such spheres do not allow immigrants to move away from the concept of immigration. Unrealistic integration practices with ambiguities in recognition policies continue to be carried out, producing little benefit for immigrants and not integrating them genuinely in a social life (Göksel, 2018).

When we speak of refugees or asylum seekers, the destructive face of war is revealed in its bare form. Asylum seekers are people with an uncertain future. In a model of political domination where the nation-state regime prevails, asylum seekers—whether they are open or

hidden—are people who are considered less than human beings, as the first condition for being human is often being a citizen. This is why the concept of citizenship becomes inverted for both “universal human rights” and the modern nation-state regime. Those who go to live in countries where they were not born are disturbing the narrative of the nation-state. For this reason, although they did not intend to, immigrant populations are the key to deciphering the crisis of the modern nation-state model and socio-political crisis.

Wars are processes that destroy, blur, and reconstruct identities. The asylum seeker identity is a consequence of the informal labor market, where legal arrangements to protect asylum seekers are inadequate and leave them at the mercy of the market. The practices that deepen the domination over them through inequality and discrimination, imprisoning them into this identity, also supervise and control the host society in a similar way. Hence, the struggle for asylum seeker rights should not be confined to just asylum seekers, it is part of the democratic struggle of the oppressed, because a place that is hell for some, will never be heaven for others.

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