



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**Naturalization and Syrian Refugee Integration in Türkiye: A Critical Case Study on
recent Turkish Citizenship Practices**

Master's Thesis

JULIE GAMZE AYDOĞAN

Master of Arts in Migration Studies

October 2023



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*Julie Gamze Ystebø Aydoğan,
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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the question of extraordinary citizenship and naturalization practices and their relationship with integration and social cohesion in the case of Syrian refugees in Türkiye. The Syrians have since 2016 been granted the opportunity to become citizens through an amendment of the citizenship law. Yet, the naturalization option is still only available to a minority of Syrians who usually have a strong human capital in which they can enforce to combat discrimination and stereotyping in society. For the remaining majority, who find themselves in highly precarious life situations, they need to facilitate their immediate and critical needs and rights, and follow an integration path. Drawing on citizenship and migration literature, this thesis will explore the actual integration experiences amongst Syrians who obtained citizenship based on 16 interviews with naturalized Syrians in Türkiye. This thesis also aims to include the Syrians themselves in the discussion, as the voices of Syrians are nearly absent in public and academic discussion concerning themselves. The contribution of this thesis is to critically analyse the new citizenship practices which include an exclusive and unfair distribution of rights based on arbitrary qualifications. The thesis also draws necessary parallels to rising nationalism in Turkish society which, through anti-immigration rhetoric, has been reinforced in the public discourse. It also addresses the lack of credibility of top-down distribution of citizenship as an integration strategy to ensure socioeconomic and political integration of the Syrian populations in Türkiye. The findings suggest that naturalization only offers a limited integration to the small minority who are given the Turkish citizenship. Finally, the thesis suggests further action to proactively counteract and prevent the formation of a migrant underclass, which might have serious consequences in terms of social cohesion. A more inclusive integration plan is necessary for Syrians' access to equal opportunities and instrumental means to create dignified lives for themselves. Since Türkiye is located in a strategic but volatile region, this is needed for future refugees that are yet to come.

Key Words: Refugees, Integration, Syrian Refugees, Critical Theory, Citizenship, Türkiye

ÖZ

Bu tez, Türkiye’deki Suriyeli mülteciler örneğinde istisnai vatandaşlık ve vatandaşlığa kabul uygulamaları ile bunların entegrasyon ve sosyal uyumla ilişkisi sorununu ele almaktadır. 2016 yılından bu yana vatandaşlık kanununda yapılan değişiklikle Suriyelilere vatandaş olma fırsatı tanınmaktadır. Ancak, vatandaşlığa kabul seçeneği yalnızca toplumdaki ayrımcılık ve kalıpyargılarla mücadele edebilecek güçlü bir beşeri sermayeye sahip olan Suriyelilerin azınlığı için mevcuttur. Kendilerini son derece istikrarsız yaşam koşullarında bulan geri kalan çoğunluğun acil ve kritik ihtiyaçlarını ve haklarını kolaylaştırmaları entegrasyon için gereklidir. Vatandaşlık ve göç literatüründen yararlanan bu tez, Türkiye’de vatandaşlığa kabul edilen Suriyelilerle yapılan 16 görüşmeye dayanarak vatandaşlık alan Suriyeliler arasındaki gerçek entegrasyon deneyimlerini derinlemesine inceleyerek, kendileriyle ilgili kurumsal ve akademik tartışmalarda sesi neredeyse yok denecek kadar az olan göçmenlerin kendilerini de tartışmaya dahil etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu tezin akademik katkısı, sadece küçük bir azınlığı içeren, hakların dışlayıcı ve adaletsiz bir şekilde dağıtılmasını içeren yeni vatandaşlık uygulamalarını eleştirel bir biçimde analiz etmektir. Öte yandan, Türk toplumunda yükselen ve göç karşıtı söylemler yoluyla toplumsal alanda pekişen milliyetçilik ile gerekli paralellikleri kurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda, Suriyeli nüfusun Türkiye’ye sosyoekonomik ve siyasi entegrasyonunu sağlamaya yönelik bir uyum stratejisi olarak vatandaşlığın tepeden inme dağılımının güvenilirliğinin eksikliğini de ele almaktadır. Bulgular vatandaşlık verilen küçük azınlığa yalnızca sınırlı bir entegrasyon sunduğunu desteklemekte; Suriyelilerin eşit fırsatlara ve kendilerine onurlu bir yaşam yaratmalarına yardımcı olacak araçlara erişimleri için daha kapsayıcı bir entegrasyon planının gerekli olduğunun altını çizmektedir. Tez sonunda, sosyal uyum açısından tehdit edici sonuçlara yol açabilecek bir göçmen alt sınıfının oluşumunu önlemek için daha fazla eylem önerilmektedir. Türkiye stratejik olmakla beraber istikrarsız bir bölgede yer aldığından, önümüzdeki yıllarda başka nedenlerle ülkeye yönlenebilecek zorunlu göçmenler için kapsayıcı bir entegresyon planı gereklidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mülteciler, Entegrasyon, Suriyeli Mülteciler, Eleştirel Teori, Vatandaşlık, Türkiye

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1951 Convention	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)
AKP	The Justice and Development Party
EU	European Union
IDP	Internally Displaced People
PMM	The Turkish Presidency of Migration Management
TPR	Temporary Protection Regulation
YUKK	Law on Foreigners and International Protection
WHO	World Health Organization

TABLES

**Table 1. Distribution of Syrian Refugees in the Scope of Temporary Protection
According to Shelter Centres**

Table 2. Information on informants



1. INTRODUCTION

With almost four million Syrian refugees under temporary protection in the country, the presence of the Syrian people in Türkiye has long since become a reality. While the civil war in Syria that started in 2011 has remained by far one of the biggest humanitarian crises of our time, the settlement of Syrians in Türkiye has in turn raised its very own political, economic, social, and cultural issues and the country currently hosts the largest number of refugees in the world. Syrians, who were early on regarded as Muslim brothers in need through political discourse, were eventually granted extended rights followed by a unique temporary protection status. Since 2016 they have the opportunity to acquire citizenship through a top-down distribution by the government. Although there are no official statistics on the acquisition of citizenship by Syrians, it was announced in early 2023 by the former Interior Minister, Mr. Süleyman Soylu, that 230.998 Syrians had been granted citizenship, with 130.914 of them being adults. The statement came as a response after having been confronted by civilians about refugees from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq being given citizenship only so that they could vote in favor of the sitting president (NTN, 2023).

The criteria of obtaining Turkish citizenship were never clearly stated, however, the fact is that only Syrians who can meet certain criteria for legal residence, work, level of education, as well as wealth has been offered the naturalization option under exceptional citizenship (Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018). Nevertheless, this amendment to the citizenship law is to be understood as part of the process of harmonizing certain Syrians into the wider aspects of societal contexts. At the same time, answering the question of what will happen to the remaining millions of Syrians is a remaining task for the Turkish authorities and as well as for other responsible actors. It is also necessary to understand whether granting citizenship will ensure Syrians integration in Turkish society, as it does not itself resolve the complex and multidimensional issues that Syrian refugees face in Türkiye. That is particularly relevant when the awarding of citizenship for the Syrians does not mark a longer period of an integration path but is on the other hand awarded through an unfair evaluation of desired individuals who cross off the list for certain arbitrary characteristics and possessions. Coinciding with a Türkiye in a deep economic crisis which within the last decade has commodified citizenship, questions can be raised towards the credibility of the naturalization option as a genuine integration strategy. First of all, it cannot accommodate all Syrians regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. Second, marketization and commodification of citizenship cannot coexist alongside a humane migration policy.

1.1 Problem domain and research questions

One problem is as regards to understanding and implementation of the concept of integration. As Türkiye is in the state of transitioning to an immigration country, this role places completely new demands on the authorities' approach towards integration and how this is implemented towards the newcomers of the country. Experience shows that the implementation of some form of integration measure is important, as the lack of it can lead to negative side effects for both natives and immigrants. This may, for instance, be marginalization, unemployment, ghettoization among immigrants, but also social tensions between natives and immigrants if the former perceive the new arrivals as a threat to work, economy, housing or local culture (Gathmann and Garbers, 2022; Hogan and Haltinner, 2015; Niyimbanira and Madzivhandila, 2016). With that in mind, there is evidence from recent studies (2023) that precisely various threat narratives which constitute central components in Turkish natives' negative attitudes towards the possible integration, membership, and the granting of citizenship to Syrians (Alakoc et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, important steps have indeed been taken for the integration of Syrians into the Turkish society. One of such steps has been the Foreigners and International Protection Law No. 6458 (YUKK) and the Temporary Protection Regulation issued in 2014, which made it so that Syrians who hold the status of “temporary protection” have the right to education in both public schools and at temporary education centers (Emin, 2016; Emin, 2019; as cited in Ozer et. al, 2021). The inclusion of Syrian children in Turkish public education system and gradual closure of temporary education centers was indeed crucial as the Syrian immigrant population is very young (Adalı & Türkyılmaz, 2020). This was followed up in Syrian children's integration was further strengthened in 2016 when the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) took important step in cooperation with the European Union to initiate the PICTES Program – support for the Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System Project (Tuzum, 2017, as cited in Ozer et. al, 2021).

Yet, despite this crucial effort to include Syrian children in education, studies find that there are several problems regarding their schooling. One is that the Turkish school, despite efforts to overcome such barriers, is monolingual in its approach, which can make it difficult to adapt to it for refugees (Aydin and Kaya, 2017; Orak and Alagözlü, 2020). This challenge also persists as Syrian students have mostly been placed in formal education classes regardless of their Turkish language skills. Cultural barriers have also been an issue where studies that have investigated difficulties faced by Turkish teachers have shown that there can be cultural barriers between teachers and Syrian students which are necessary to deal with (Taskin and

Erdemli, 2018). Türkiye had no prior experience in providing education to refugee children, whom for obvious reasons may experience major learning difficulties due to war-related trauma (Aydin and Kaya, 2017; Aras and Yasun, 2016). Another issue is that even though Syrian children have accessed education, there are several problems such as bullying, leaving school early, dropouts, capacity issues, discrimination, early marriages, gender-related social barriers, and other social problems (Aras and Yasun, 2016).

As for Syrians of working age, the right to access the Turkish labor market was granted through the Law on Foreigners and International protection (YUKK) in 2014, as well as the new regulation allowing registered Syrian refugees to apply for work permits which was issued in 2016. However, accessing work permits is difficult for Syrians as it depends upon employers' willingness to offer contracts of employment and for refugees to have held Turkish identification documents for at least six months (Şimsek, 2020, p. 7). For many, the reality is therefore to work without insurance, without contract, and with wages pushed down to the bare minimum, which in turn increases the risk of exploitation and inhumane working conditions.

Reflected through above-mentioned efforts, education and access to the labor market are critical issues for Syrian refugees in Türkiye (Aydin et al. 2019). Yet, despite the many important measures aimed at integrating Syrian children and adults into education and working life, several studies indicate how many Syrians still face several problems in these major spheres (Adalı & Türkyılmaz, 2020; Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018). Furthermore, it should be understood how although education and access to the labor market are indeed crucial to ensure integration, these are not necessarily absolute door-openers to membership and belonging in society as well as to integration at large. That is especially not the case considering that integration is such a multidimensional process, containing far more than that of limited access to work and education may offer. Several contextual factors also put the question of a broader understanding of integration on the Turkish agenda. It is a fact that in recent years, Syrians have become victims of a highly xenophobic and hateful discourse in the social media and political speech, perhaps most prevalent with an opposition party that built large parts of its 2023 election campaign on promising to deport the Syrian population during a period of two years.

Amidst these tensions, citizenship granted to Syrians triggered major debates regarding Syrian refugees' presence in Türkiye. Such debates especially have been taking place on Twitter/X which has been a central social media platform where the Turkish population – ranging from politicians to purely normal people – have voiced their opinions on the matter of immigration. One effect of this has been pointed out to be the reinforcement of nationalism and

an ethnocentric understanding of citizenship in Türkiye, referred to in the literature as bottom-up nationalism and discrimination (Bozdag, 2019). However, this is not a unique response to increased immigration, and several countries have experienced that nationalism is both reinforced and reinvented in a delineation between us and the “other” in how natives reject refugees and other newcomers in their country (Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013; Güney, 2022).

In the Turkish context, local people’s attitudes towards Syrians obtaining Turkish citizenship are largely based on their narratives and beliefs about Turkish citizenship in itself – as being solely linked to national loyalty, duty, belonging, patriotism, as well as fundamental idea of a citizen-state relationship that is based on kinship and ethnicity (Güney, 2022). Such discourses about citizenship may serve the function of setting restrictive framework for who will be allowed to take part in a community, and it should be an important goal to address such notions in Türkiye if one wants to see opportunities for immigrants to undergo integration which in the long term can lead to belongingness and social cohesion between in and out-groups. Like in other countries, the new naturalization option in Türkiye operates as a selective strategy of including some migrants instead of broadening the scope of migratory rights in general (Hudleston and Vink, 2013). Furthermore, as there is a strong relationship between naturalization policy and public opinion, the naturalization option legitimizes a selective acceptance of some Syrians’ integration into the larger parts of society, while other “disadvantaged” Syrians become undesirable and stuck within an undetermined position (Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018). This can not only be criticized from an integration perspective but also from a human rights perspective, as it for many entails a great psychological burden to live in such a precarious and undetermined position (Ilcan et al., 2018).

Anyhow, the fact is that some Syrians with higher human and economic capital do obtain the Turkish citizenship which they can often extend to their children and spouses if they manage to overcome bureaucratic barriers. Although this opportunity for naturalization must be considered positive for those who can benefit from it, this selective and assimilation-oriented naturalization is not a guarantee that selected individuals will be integrated into a larger whole.

Finally, having emphasized the multifaceted issue of concern, the research questions of this thesis were shaped to address scientific aims of the study. To begin with, this thesis seeks to conduct a closer evaluation of how the integration stands in the case of Syrians who obtained the Turkish citizenship. That is, as if integration outcomes are not properly assessed, one might go down for a slippery slope of missed opportunities and future challenges where the refugee population do not stand on an equal footing with the native population. Secondly, this thesis

aims to explore the nuances of the naturalization option critically, as it is believed by policymakers to contribute to integration processes among selected individuals. That involves understanding the actual relationship between citizenship and other critical dimensions of integration, such as belonging or social, political, and democratic participation, while also probing relevant contextual factors such as rising anti-Syrian sentiment and reinforced nationalism in Türkiye. As it is rather clear that the citizenship is increasingly being treated as a marketable and exchangeable commodity in the world at large but also in the case of Türkiye, this raises several questions related to the dimension of class and inequality within migration. With that stated, the following four research questions form the basis of the thesis:

- A) What are the integration experiences of Syrians that obtained Turkish citizenship, and how is their integration linked with their legal status among other cultural, economic, political, and social conditions in Türkiye?
- B) How do Syrian naturalized refugees consider their Turkish citizenship? How do they position themselves vis-à-vis Syrians without Turkish citizenship?
- C) To what extent have obtained citizenship led to improved life situation for Syrians that might foster integration and social cohesion into the Turkish society?
- D) Does citizenship lead to belonging in Türkiye or rather is it compatible with the desire to settle permanently in Türkiye? Why/why not?

1.2 Scientific contribution to the existing literature on migration and citizenship

This thesis will place the development of migration and citizenship, with the example of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, into a larger context of a global shift in the understanding of citizenship. In that way, this thesis attempts to grasp at micro, meso and macro-levels where a holistic point of view is adopted. To begin with, at the macro level, the rise of neoliberalism in the end of the 70s brought about a global shift in the relationship between market, state, and society, which is intricately connected to contemporary phenomenon of commodification of citizenship as well as the demand for flexible citizenship options both in Türkiye and globally (Ong, 2006). It is in essence the Turkish authorities, as central and local meso-level actors, such as the Turkish Ministry of National Education, Turkish Ministry of Labor and Social Security,

Presidency of Migration Management under the Turkish Ministry of Interior, the Presidency's executive branch, and local governments that are directly or indirectly influenced by macro-structures. These, in turn, affect social phenomena that determine social interactions, perceptions in society, and agency and actions taken at the micro-level, which is where this thesis claims its main emphasis.

For Durkheim, the holistic sociological analysis of society was essential, often understood as a perspective on society as the whole of smaller individual parts (Steffensen, 2019). At the same time, like Marx, this thesis does not overlook single individuals, but attempts to affirm the relationship between the whole and the part within its dialectics. A simple explanation for such an understanding can be recognized in a so-called all-round theory, which claims that individuals live in a larger social system that is dependent on varying resources and conditions to exist (Yanqiong, 2019). Furthermore, this thesis seeks to achieve two interconnected goals which is centered around migration and citizenship. To begin with, the thesis has a large focus on integration and wants to contribute to a larger theorization of what meanings refugees in particular attribute to obtaining citizenship in their host countries. That is singularly interesting as Türkiye's new citizenship practice deviates from European practice of citizenship in exchange for proven integration through systematic action plans, but on the other hand is awarded to refugees who meet certain criteria for wealth and education without other qualities being considered (e.g., intention to stay in Türkiye, socio-cultural anchorage, language etc.). Hence, through 16 qualitative interviews, this thesis explores a small fraction of naturalized Syrian refugees' experiences, feelings and challenges relating to their acquired Turkish citizenship. Reaching this information from the refugees themselves is critical, as a such a comprehensive evaluation is necessary to accurately understand the effectiveness of naturalization as a harmonization and integration effort in the case of Syrian refugees in Türkiye. Secondly, this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discussions about the development of citizenship in contemporary nation-states. Several scholars and academicians have raised concern for how states are reconfiguring citizenship regulations to orient themselves better on the global market (Ong, 2006). As it is obvious that the institution of citizenship, through being submitted to the forces of the market, has implications for refugees and human protection, the thesis seeks to open a critical and ethical discussion of selective processes concerning naturalization and integration in Türkiye. Previous research has shown that Syrians are already undergoing a "class-based integration", and furthermore, the question of a fair integration process is still unanswered (Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018; Şimşek, 2020).

Finally, this thesis attempts to fill the critical research gap that exists when it comes to topics such as migration, forced migration and refugee integration in the context of the global south, even though it is well-known that it is in these regions that the majority of migratory movements occur. It has, for instance, been reported that 76% of the world's refugees are hosted low- and middle-income countries, which constitute a great majority. Furthermore, only the minority of the world's refugees ever cross international borders, as most people are internally displaced. Thus, considering that the number of internally displaced people (IDP) in 2022 was reported by UNHCR as 57.3 million (UNHCR, 2023), and that south-to-south migration in fact constitute the bulk of international crossings, it is necessary to encompass the migration experience also within these regions.

1.3 Target audience

As the thesis topic encompasses multiple stakeholders, the target audience may be broadly defined as anybody from professionals and policymakers to scholars and fellow researchers working on issues of immigrant integration, contemporary citizenship, refugee policies, as well as questions regarding naturalization. The findings in this thesis may contribute to a greater understanding of the need for a more thoroughly regulated and inclusive policy that can strengthen the participation and integration of Syrian refugees in the Turkish society. Particularly, national experts and other responsible actors concerning integration, naturalization, and refugee policies in Türkiye can benefit from the thesis. Finally, the findings may be of interest to fellow researchers who are interested in the theorization of the implications linked with contemporary citizenship practices, as recent citizenship amendments in Türkiye reflect a clear position in the way citizenship is strategically mediated by socio-economic background, class, hosting states' economic needs, as well as talent in today's world.

1.4 Structure of Thesis

The thesis is clearly structured and consists of the following chapters: Introduction, problem domain and research questions, literature review, contextualization of Türkiye, theoretical framework, method and research design, analysis and results, discussion, as well as a concluding chapter summarizing the findings of the thesis.

After the introduction part and research objectives, the thesis begins with a literature review concerning Syrian refugee integration as it is the overarching theme. This chapter also deals with the link between integration and citizenship. Chapter 2 attempts to review some of

the most relevant and significant studies conducted so far regarding the Syrian populations' integration into the Turkish society. Justification of the research questions based on existing academic gap is elaborated at length under the sub-chapter titled as problem domain and research questions. Then follows a more comprehensive contextualization of Türkiye in Chapter 3. This chapter describes the context in order to clarify conditions of the research subjects that may be important for understanding of the setting in a more detailed manner. Chapter 4 presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter 5 presents the method adopted for data collection as well as the methodological point of view and scientific theory. This chapter deals with the chosen method for data collection, analytical tools, description of empirical material, as well as a discussion of reliability and validity. In Chapter 6, collected data is presented and discussed thoroughly. Then in Chapter 7, a detailed analysis of empirical findings linking them with major theories follows. Chapter 8 concludes while discussing the main argument and findings in the context of larger questions related to contemporary migration and citizenship debates.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, significant research that has been conducted in the field of Syrian refugee integration in Türkiye will be outlined. The chapter begins with a brief introduction of key events and policy developments, as well as how academic literature has understood such events within the framework of various theoretical standpoints. Furthermore, key studies that have dealt with understanding Syrian refugee integration from both social, economic, political, and structural conditions will be explored. Finally, the research questions for this thesis, based on reviewed research contributions, will be seen in connection with gaps in the literature where further investigation is needed.

2.1 Brief introduction, key events, and policy developments

The support of Syrian refugees' integration into Turkish society remains an important and complex endeavor which up until now have mainly consisted of a series of new legal and administrative tools. This somewhat unsystematic and bumpy pathway to integration, at least if compared to what can conventionally be understood as integration strategies, can perhaps be better understood through Türkiye's historical approach to migration. Türkiye has historically been a country of emigration rather than immigration, and thus the large and rapid acceptance of nearly 4 million Syrians have created a great deal of attention and speculation that rakes through the political, academic, and social layers of society. In addition to very large number of refugees, Türkiye's open-door policy and avoidance of securitization towards the Syrian asylum-seekers, at least in the initial stages of the conflict, differs from its previous attitudes to other asylum-seekers and from the global trend (Aras and Mencutek, 2015, as cited in Akdemir, 2019). However, it is important to note that although Türkiye has not implemented a traditional integration strategy aligning with those in northern European countries, Türkiye has indeed taken important steps to address the needs of its refugees, including access to labor markets and compulsory education as outlined in Chapter 1.2.

In April 2011, Türkiye announced that they were ready to open their door to Syrian people in need to flee from their homes due to the civil war. The first period of Syrian immigration consisted mainly of setting up six refugee camps, and by the end of 2011 Türkiye had become the largest host of Syrian refugees (Ilgit and Davis, 2013). As the situation in Syria did not improve in any way, it was obvious that the number would continue to rise. In November 2012, there were already 100,000 Syrian refugees registered in Turkish refugee camps, whose numbers did not include those Syrians who rented apartments outside the camps

(Özden, 2013). It can be mentioned that Türkiye, in line with a good part of the international community, did not expect that the Assad regime would last very long. The above-mentioned open-door policy was based on these exact presumptions, making it a weak basis for long-term refugee policies (Kirişçi, 2014). This benevolent assumption that the regime would sooner than later collapse led to an enormous and unexpected strain on Türkiye's economic infrastructure (Memisoglu and Ilgit, 2017). The accommodation of Syrian refugees was at the Turkish government's expense initially, but it soon became necessary to call for help from the international community. The reason behind Türkiye's response was also related to Türkiye's geographical limitation in terms of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, which claims that the Turkish state only grants the right to asylum and refugee status to "persons who have become refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe (Ilgit and Davis, 2013; Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018). In other words, Syrians in Türkiye are not and cannot be, although frequently referred to as such, legally refugees within the country. To handle the mass influx of Syrians, another suitable legal status was thus needed, hence the adoption of the temporary protection regulation of Syrians in Türkiye (TPR) on October 22, 2014. Before this, there had been no legal instruments that could clarify the Syrians' rights and entitlements in Türkiye, nor the need for it as the reception of the Syrians, as mentioned, had been understood as purely temporary.

As soon as the TPR was adopted, Syrians who registered with the Turkish authorities as temporary protection beneficiaries became entitled to several rights, including access to healthcare, identity cards, protection from being detained on account of irregular entry, as well as access to preschool education, language education, and vocational training (Ineli-Ciger, 2017, pp. 555-559). As for the granted rights under TPR, Turkish authorities claims, as defined by the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), that the temporary protection "*has no termination date, and that it is the president of the republic who is authorized to terminate the protection*". Another key aspect of the TPR is that beneficiaries are required to obtain permission from the PMM in the registered province to travel from one city to another (PMM, 2023). Regardless of many exceptions initially, Syrians under the TPR are therefore not overall free to settle and move within Türkiye but are restricted to the above-mentioned rights and assistance within the city in which they are registered.

Lastly, the next big step in getting closer to a policy for integration for Syrians, although only available for certain individuals, was the opening for the granting of exceptional citizenship under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government in 2016. The idea was first voiced by President Erdoğan in Kilis, a city near the Syrian border which is the home to

many Syrians (Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018). However, as this possibility of naturalization was regarded as blending in with the AKP's authoritarian neoliberalism and part of a larger process of granting citizenship to many Sunni Muslims, especially Middle Eastern investors (Serdar, 2021), the reality remains that most Syrians are still in a precarious situation based on legal uncertainty, limited rights as well as insecurity in terms of their future plans.

2.2 Crucial studies on Syrian refugee integration

Several research articles, reports and working papers have covered a range of topics concerning the integration of Syrian refugees into the Turkish society. Studies focusing on the quantitative analysis of word frequency and key themes in examination of the literature of Syrians in Türkiye, have found that integration became a more prominent topic within the literature from about the year of 2015 (Akdemir, 2019). Officially speaking, Türkiye has chosen harmonization rather than developing a comprehensive integration scheme as its approach to the integration of Syrian refugees, which has been said to reflect a rather cautious approach to the problem (İçduygu and Şimşek, 2016). Integration also does not exist as a word in Turkish law either, and the analysis of integration measures therefore consists of looking at implemented measures and legislation, as it is such measures that currently constitute a framework for integration into Turkish society for Syrians.

Overall, Akdemir (2019) finds out that within the topic of integration, public education and children's schooling seemed to be the most pressing issue regarding Syrians' integration as of 2019. This is consistent with the fact that the Syrian population is indeed very young, and it has been critical to ensure the Syrian children's education to prevent lost generations. According to Bircan and Sunata (2015), Turkish authorities began to concentrate on the matter of Syrian refugees' education at the end of 2013. In brief, Syrian children have had access to education through three options. Firstly, they received some form of formal education in the refugee camps, often through Syrian teachers who have volunteered to teach the Syrian curriculum. Subsequently, Syrian refugee children who have lived in urban areas who have a residence permit have had access to enroll in Turkish schools. For Syrian children who do not hold residence permits, they have been able to attend Syrian Schools operated in Arabic by NGOs, individuals, and community organizations (Bircan and Sunata, 2015). Since Türkiye, as described, expected that the situation in Syria would eventually calm down, the first measures concentrated around educational problems for Syrian refugees were less permanent. Şahin and Sümer (2018) has managed to identify some of the main issues with Syrian students

integration into the Turkish educational system, and found that it is in particular language problems, lack of communication, cultural differences, as well as inadequate tools, classrooms, competence, and numbers of teachers which persist as barriers within the crucial field of Syrian refugees schooling (Şahin and Sümer, 2018; Aydin and Kaya, 2019). Studies have also emphasized that it is crucial to understand how critical problems, such as lack of language skills, also become root to and lead to other additional problems including further academic delay and failure, but also may cause frustration and conflicts with teachers and fellow students among refugee students (Ciğerci and Güngör, 2016; Şahin and Sümer, 2018; Aydin and Kaya, 2019). It has also been documented how emotional and psychosocial challenges associated with war-related trauma constitute challenges for Syrian students in their schooling (Aydin and Kaya, 2019), and it was for instance indicated that 23,4% of Syrian refugee children in Istanbul has PTSD symptoms while 17,6% showed severe depression symptoms (Uğurlu et. al, 2016). The need for a thorough action for extra measures and resources has thus been highly advised, as Türkiye basically had no experience in providing education to refugee children (Aydin and Kaya, 2017; Aras and Yasun, 2016). Within the topic of education, it can also be mentioned that some research has emphasized the use of adult education (AE) as part of the integration and empowerment of Syrian refugees (Erdoğan et al., 2021). In Türkiye, it is the Ministry of National Education who oversees AE, with key providers being vocational training centers, public education centers, and the Turkish Employment Agency (Subasi, 2018).

Language, which is obviously an important indicator and key prerequisite for Syrian refugees' integration, is also important to consider. A study by Gürsoy and Ertaşoğlu (2018) shows that Syrian refugees in Türkiye have an overall positive attitude towards learning Turkish and towards Turkish society as a host society. However, the same study also provide evidence that gender, employment, and age seem to have a significant importance in terms of willingness to learn the language. For example, their findings show that younger Syrian refugees are more willing to learn the language and to interact with members of the host society, and that men have more opportunities than women to communicate with the new society (Gürsoy and Ertaşoğlu, 2018). According to Dilek et al. (2018), most Syrian refugees attend Turkish language courses provided by TÖMER, in universities or in refugee camps, and many Syrians do indeed want to learn Turkish as they find it necessary for attending university, opening their businesses, and for the reason that they generally like Turkish language (Dilek et al., 2018). There are, however, several challenges linked to both resources, the system, teachers, and students in language centers (Dilek et al., 2018). It has been emphasized the critical need to meet such challenges as language is not only crucial for communication and

participation within education and for integration into society, but also plays a major role when it comes to the employment prospects of refugees (Kayaoğlu and Erdoğan, 2019, p. 15).

As for access to healthcare, Syrians have access to all health services provided in the province in which they are registered thanks to the TPR. It is obvious that access to healthcare is thus limited as they are bound to the city in which they are registered. That is in addition to the fact that Syrians under the TPR are not allowed to approach secondary and tertiary care without referral from a primary care provider, which is another clear limitation (Alawa et al., 2019, p. 5). Other challenges and limitations are those linked to the precariousness of TPR and the consequences it has for Syrians to reach the rights which they are entitled to (Ilcan et al., 2018). For example, after the Turkish authorities' decision to alter one of the digits of the registration numbers on Syrian identity cards, many Syrians have struggled to update their identity card numbers due to language barriers and lack of access to computers. Such a problem thus leads to Syrians having to rely on hospital staff for assistance which only adds to the precarity and hardships that the Syrians face as refugees in Türkiye. There have also been reports of cases where Syrians have been asked to pay for health services, even though they have the right to full health care through TPR (Ilcan et al., 2018). Another important problem is the language barrier with health care providers, which has been pointed out as one of the primary barriers for Syrian refugees in Turkish healthcare in addition to stigma (Alawa et al., 2019). It has been noted that Türkiye's policy response in respect to health care provision for Syrians moved from a largely passive approach to an active approach, as it was first expected that the Syrians would simply just adapt to the existing health care system (Ark Yıldırım et al., 2019, p. 79). On the other hand, after the country took several active measures such as through the establishment of Refugee Health Centers (RHCs) by the Ministry of Health, both linguistic and cultural challenges have been alleviated since Syrian healthcare workers have also been able to work in these facilities (Zikusooka, 2021; Alawa et al., 2019; İçduygu and Şimşek, 2016). The opening of RHCs, as well as expanded versions of these in areas where it lives more than 20,000 Syrians, also have made it so that health professionals have the opportunity to enter the workforce in their field of expertise. In order to prepare Syrian health personnel to be able to work in Türkiye through a program that lasted from March to December 2017, EUR 10 million was also granted by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO) to the World Health Organization (WHO) to open training centers where Syrian doctors, midwives and nurses undergo theoretical and practical education carried out by Turkish physicians under the Ministry of health (Yildirim et al., 2019, p. 9). Another initiative is the EU funded health project "Improving the health status of the

Syrian population under temporary protection and related services provided by Turkish authorities”, referred to as SIHHAT after its Turkish acronym (Ark Yıldırım et al., 2019). Similarly, the SIHHAT program also aims to offer culturally appropriate health care service, lighten the burden on the primary Turkish health system, as well as to integrate high-skilled and skilled Syrians into the labor market. The SIHHAT project were launched in the beginning of 2017 and completed on January 31, 2021, and today about 3422 Syrians are employed and offering health care services at the various SIHHAT locations across Türkiye (The Sihhat Project, n.d.). According to a recent study carried out by the WHO (2021), Syrian health personnel who have been employed through SIHATT have been highly satisfied as work has been able to provide them with stability and security. At the same time, the study finds several problems related to the Syrians' employability. Many Syrian health care professionals perceive that lack of Turkish proficiency is still a barrier to further employment, and , they perceive the lack of Turkish citizenship as a barrier to enjoy stability in terms of employment. In addition, it was found that even though some health-care professionals had completed the above-mentioned training programs and even signed job contracts, they had waited for more than a year for a job allocation (WHO, 2021, p. 4). It has also been pointed out that although the Syrians under the TPR legally are entitled to health care services, this is not a sufficient guarantee that vulnerable populations will be able to access these services (Alawa et al., 2019)

Syrians in Türkiye have since January 2016 had the right to acquire official work permits to a new regulation. Under this regulation, Syrian refugees can apply for work permits from the Turkish Ministry of Labor and Social Security after six months of receiving their status as under the TPR. Employers then apply on their behalf online, or individuals can apply if they plan to work independently. Two key aspects of this law include ensuring that workers receive at least the minimum wage and limiting the number of refugees under temporary protection to ten percent of Turkish employers (İçduygu and Şimşek, 2016, pp. 63-64). The aim was to promote and assist the Syrians road to self-sufficiency, as well as to reduce dependency on social assistance and foster their active participation in the Turkish economy (Del Carpio et al., 2018). A study has found that Syrian refugees, essentially due to a large informal market in Türkiye where most are employed, have integrated well into the Turkish labor market. Especially for Syrian refugee men, there is no gap between unemployment for native Turkish men and for Syrian, while for Syrian refugee women the gap is wider (Demirci and Kırdar, 2023). Similarly, in another study, it was found out that there was a positive correlation between higher likelihood of employment and several factors – such as being male, holding an above-secondary school diploma, having a higher income level before migration,

as well as possessing better proficiency in the Turkish language (Kayaoglu and Erdoğan, 2019, p. 15).

Although integration policies on access to labor markets, education and health service have improved since 2011, there are still significant problems with the integration process of Syrian refugees in Türkiye. Research has shown that when it comes to Syrian refugees in Türkiye, their integration processes are widely affected by their class position due to the lack of policy which provide opportunities to the refugees who do not have economic resources (Şimsek, 2020). Furthermore, research has shown that Syrians in Türkiye, when asked to reflect on their own integration, mainly understand integration as whether they have access to the labor market or not, as work is seen as the main contributing factor for surviving in Türkiye, rather than more sociocultural aspects of integration which is perhaps more frequently valued in European contexts (Şimsek, 2018). There seems to be a large consensus among academic circles that a more well-structured integration policy is necessary to meet the challenges for integration and barriers to social cohesion that exist within both health, education, language, and the labor market (Dilek et al, 2018; Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018; Şimsek, 2020; Erdoğan et al., 2021; Kayaoglu and Erdogan, 2019).

A critical concern seems to be the in-depth examination of the interplay among the above-mentioned facets of integration encompassing education, language acquisition, employment, and healthcare, which also result in due to the authorities' lack of a clear definition of what successful integration is. The next chapter further attempts to understand some key contextual factors surrounding Türkiye and the situation with Syrian refugees. It also provides important information about Turkish citizenship and its guidelines for nation building and ideas about nationhood.

3. TÜRKİYE AS CONTEXT

Gaining an understanding of context is important in any scientific attempt. The statement “*you should see it in context*” often arises in a moment of judgement or misunderstanding, and in everyday conversation people might call upon context when a question arises about the meaning of someone’s statement or action (Minow and Spelman, 1989). The context, which characterizes the specific situation, historical event, relationship, or location to be addressed, may thus have the power to influence how the interpretation process will take place. It may however be a challenging task to explain the scope and extent of a context. That is not less true in the case of this thesis, which encompasses several social, political, cultural, and economic aspects. Regardless of the evident challenges, the context for this master thesis is explained in more detail under this chapter so that any reader can understand the framework surrounding the formulated issues.

3.1 Türkiye and its transition from an emigration to an immigration country

Straddling Europe and Asia, Türkiye is both a country of origin, transit, and destination for migrants (IOM, 2023). To begin with, in the West, Türkiye has long been known as a country of emigration, especially with the labor migration to Europe which lasted from the 1960s well into the 1990s – first due to high unemployment rates in Türkiye and later on under the family reunification scheme and marriage migration (Akcapar, 2006). These unemployment rates in the country of origin coincided with rising job opportunities in Europe, and Germany received large number of Turkish labor migrants, although bilateral agreements were also made with several other European countries (Abadan-Unat, 1976; Akdemir 2019). However, more recently, Türkiye has also become a country of transit for irregular migrants who aim on entering the European Union (EU), often from countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. Moreover, Türkiye have also become a destination country for EU professionals and retirees as well as regular and irregular migrants from former Soviet Bloc countries (Kirişçi, 2010).

In regards of Türkiye, having sent large numbers of migrants to European countries, to Germany in particular, it seemed out of the ordinary to become a receiving country within only a few decades. Nevertheless, major political unrest, conflicts and war in the region have been able to contribute to this happening in a short time, in addition to the fact that globalization processes have largely involved Türkiye in a larger network of international migration and thus expanded various migrant categories in the country. Furthermore, quite large number of migrants are “stranded” in Türkiye, which has to do with the many migrants who uses the

Turkish territory on their way to another, usually more developed country, very often in Europe (Akcapar, 2017). Getting into Europe, however, is not an easy task, and many of those attempting to transit may remain in the country indefinitely while maintaining the idea of being transit (Akcapar, 2006; Akcapar, 2009; İçduygu & Akcapar, 2016).

In this thesis, the setting is mainly Türkiye as a destination for immigration, as we focus on the Syrians who have *de facto* migrated to Türkiye. Yet, the complexity of transit migration will be elaborated as well, since Türkiye continues its role as a springboard to the West.

3.2 Türkiye's population

According to Turkstat which is Türkiye's official statistical institute, the population of Türkiye became 85 million 279 thousand 553 people in 2022 (Turkstat, 2023). Furthermore, following reports on the monitoring of migrant presence by IOM, according to the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), there were more than 5.2 million foreign nationals present in Turkish territory by the end of 2022. According to their legal statuses, these were divided into 66.5% Syrians under temporary protection, 22.8% holders of residence permit, 6.1% holders of international protection, 0.9% Syrians under temporary protection in camps, and 0.6% applicants for international protection (IOM, 2023, p. 1).

Throughout history, Türkiye has welcomed many cultures and societies, and as modern Türkiye was founded on the land of the Ottoman Empire, it thus took over a social structure that is both rich and complex in relation to ethnicities and cultures (Eryurt and Koç, 2015). Nevertheless, ethnicity in Türkiye has remained a sensitive topic and not discussed until recently, even within academic circles. This means that there are a small number of studies of socio-demographic characteristics of ethnic groups in the country. It can nevertheless be stated that the largest ethnic groups are the Turkish people, followed by the Kurdish people and Arabs (Eryurt and Koç, 2015), although 51 different ethnic groups have been reported according to an extensive study published in 1992 (Andrews, 1992), Türkiye does not keep any public statistics on who and how many people that obtain citizenship, which makes it difficult to present statistics on the groups transitioning to Turkish citizenship after having held a previous citizenship. It also implies that we cannot truly get an overview of relevant demographics such as citizenship transition by gender, age, ethnicity, or former citizenship. Data based on announcements from official institutions and ministries indicates that in addition to the 230,998 Syrians that were announced by previous interior Minister Süleyman Soylu in 2023 (NTN, 2023), that Turkish citizenship was also issued to 104,976 Ahıska Turks, 7,001 Uyghur Turks and 39,294 Afghan nationals (Mülteciler Derneği, 2023).

Furthermore, when addressing refugee and immigrant population in Türkiye in general, one must keep in mind that Türkiye holds a geographical limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol (UNHCR, 2023), making it so that Türkiye is not obliged to provide non-European asylum seekers with refugee status. Thus, it can be understood how even though Türkiye is frequently referred to as the country in the world that hosts the largest number of refugees, only a minority of these are recognized as actual refugees and are therefore not holders of the rights specified under the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. However, this does not mean that the Syrians in Türkiye do not have rights corresponding to refugee status in line with the 1951 Convention. With the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (YUKK) which entered into force in 2014, it was for instance stated that foreigners cannot be sent back to a country where they will be persecuted, and *non-refoulment* was thus regulated for the first time in the Turkish law (Göküş and Çubukcu, 2018). Attention can be brought to the 4th article of the YUKK, which claims that “*no one within the scope of this of this Law shall be returned to a place where he or she may be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment or, where his/her life or freedom would be threatened on account of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.*”¹ Not least, the establishment of a Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) through YUKK has come to signal a greater focus and attention on migration and integration on the part of the Turkish authorities (Göksel, 2015, p. 76), and also the fact that Syrians through the temporary protection status have access to education, health services and a limited right to work represents a major advance from the previous status of “guests” given in the beginning. There are still several key points to consider which mean that the status of TPR is not equivalent to the rights and protections under the 1951 Convention. As noted by Ilcan et al., (2018), the TPR eliminates the possibility of claiming refugee status or defining a pathway that would lead to permanent residency, since it is clearly stated that the TPR will not guarantee permanent residency. The Syrians under TPR also enjoy only limited social and economic opportunities, and the uncertain character of the TPR also makes it a grey zone where rights such as residency, social welfare and employment are constantly negotiated (Ilcan et al., pp 59, 2018).

¹Law No: 6458: Law on Foreigners and International Protection (YUKK): Part one, Article 4:
<https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>

3.3 Türkiye and Syrian Refugees

When the Syrians first started arriving at the Turkish border back in the spring of 2011, all of them were allowed to enter Türkiye. Those who came without documents or passports in order were admitted to temporary refugee camps and those who had passports could enter Türkiye in the same way as they had been able to do before (Dinçer et. al., 2013). Türkiye shares the longest border with Syria, approximately 800 km, which must be considered one of the main reasons why so many Syrian refugees chose to go to Türkiye in addition to the open-door policy. Furthermore, Türkiye and Syria both have a historical, cultural, and religious connection, which is perhaps particularly evident in border towns such as Kilis, Gaziantep or Antakya where many Syrians have come to reside (Memişoğlu, 2023).

After the beginning of 2013, many Syrians also began to settle in more urban areas and large cities such as Istanbul and the capital Ankara in addition to the shelter centers (Şimşek, 2020), and especially after the end of 2013 when the capacity of the camps were surpassed, the Syrians were allowed to settle anywhere in Türkiye. This quite liberal approach by the Turkish government, mainly stemming from the belief that the war would not last very long, eventually have led to an unbalanced distribution of migrants between regions, provinces, towns, and even neighborhoods (Erdoğan, 2019). Today, most Syrian refugees are staying outside of the temporary protection centers, and as for 2023 it was reported that only 73,854 Syrian nationals were residing within shelter centers. At the same time, in 2023, there were 3,234,028 Syrians who were reported outside the scope of shelter centers (PMM, 2023).

Table 1. Distribution of Syrian Refugees in the Scope of Temporary Protection According to Shelter Centers

**DISTRIBUTION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN THE SCOPE OF
TEMPORARY PROTECTION ACCORDING TO SHELTER CENTERS
(9 SHELTER CENTERS IN 7 PROVINCE)**

PROVINCE	NAME OF TEMPORARY SHELTER CENTERS	TOTAL	GRAND TOTAL
ADANA (1)	Sarıçam	17.526	17.526
HATAY (3)	Altınözü	6.429	13.822
	Yayladağı	3.458	
	Apaydın	3.935	
KAHRAMANMARAŞ (1)	Merkez	13.918	13.918
KİLİS (1)	Elbeyli	7.728	7.728
OSMANİYE (1)	Cevdetiye	8.789	8.789
GAZİANTEP	Nizip	1.713	1.713
MALATYA	Beydağı	10.358	10.358
TOTAL		73.854	
NUMBER OF SYRIANS UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION THAT NOT IN THE SCOPE OF SHELTER CENTERS			3.234.028



*By the date of 17.08.2023

Source: (PMM, 2023)

3.4 Nationhood, Nationalism, and the Turkish Citizenship – A Changing Concept?

In the context of the Republic of Türkiye, the question of citizenship is particularly interesting, not only because of the somewhat drastic amendments that have been made very recently, but also in that citizenship and nationhood must be seen as the very foundation of the entire construction of the republic under Türkiye's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (İçduygu et al, 1999). Although this sub-chapter will not provide a complete overview of the development of the Turkish citizenship and its policies for nation building (nor would it be compatible with the purpose of the thesis), it is still appropriate to understand some of the events that have led up to today's amendments, as it will be clear how integration, citizenship and nationhood is interlinked in the case of Türkiye.

It was perhaps most of all modernity, civilization, egalitarianism, and non-religiousness that underpinned the building of a new nation as well as the idealization of what it would entail to be a participant in Turkish society, thereby a new form of citizenship (İçduygu et. al, 1999). The new republic with its people emerged as a passionate and patriotic unity, much connected with the war of independence which continues to be a constant theme throughout Turkish history and up until today. This patriotism also groomed nationalism, and the latter is up until today displayed in every sphere of Turkish society; starting primarily with the school where it not only functions as history education but also as a role of a tool for students' mental configuration as well as a tool employed to define identity (Vurgun and Avaroğulları, 2021). This top-down construction of nationals can be understood to stem from Atatürk's early efforts,

where he was much concentrated on reforming not only the country's institutions and legal framework but also its people. Among other things that concerned both how citizens should dress and behave, it was out of utmost importance to foster patriotism and national pride and an attachment to the motherland among the Turkish people. Based on that, important institutions whose purpose was to contribute to the preservation of the culture were established. This included, for example the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) and the Turkish Language Reforms (Türk Dil Kurumu) (Landau, 1984). Although nationalism and nation-building in Türkiye quickly became an evident part of society after the establishment of the new republic, Anatolia at the beginning of the twentieth century was a heterogeneous piece of land with several groups, such as Orthodox Christians, Armenians, Kurds, Jews, Circassian, Laz, and other ethnic and religious groups. That was mostly due to the Ottoman Empire which has spanned across large parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa for nearly six centuries, with different ethnic and religious groups coexisting under ottoman rule. It has been noted how the rise of nationalism led to conflicts and the obliteration of this heterogeneity, for example through the forced migration of Armenians in the First World War and the exchange of populations between Greece and Türkiye that took place in 1923 (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2007, p. 294). The Kurdish rebellion of Sheik Said in 1925, as a response to the newly established Turkish Republic, has also been singled out as a significant event for the development of Turkish nationalism (Olson, 2000; Kadirbeyoğlu, 2007). However, it was not the case that all non-Turkish groups were excluded from the national community, and the new republic secured its loyalty to certain groups, such as Muslim Bosnians, Albanians, and Macedonians. In this way, it is clear how, despite an abrupt rejection of Ottoman and Islamic heritage, Islam continued to play a role in how Turkish identity was defined (İçduygu et al, 1999). An important step to modernize and reshape Türkiye after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire came with the Settlement Law (*İskan Kanunu*) No. 2510 of 1934. The Settlement law specified the conditions that had to be met by immigrants and refugees to be eligible to be part of the Turkish national community, distributed the areas of settlement and decided who had to undergo assimilative practices (Schad, 2016). The settlement law was also crucial in how it brought a shift from the standing on citizenship from a territorial notion to a more culture and descent-oriented one (Soyarık-Şentürk, 2013).

As for Turkish nationalism, Türkiye was not alone in this flourishing of a national consciousness as ideas about nationalism has also grown in other European countries, and both German and French influences can be found in the Turkish nationalist ideas. The French model can be said to counter the official argument, as it grounded nation on a bounded territorial state

with its political institution, thus, the territorial or civic model. The German model, however, was largely oriented around ethnicity and culture, hence *kulturstaaten*. Experience shows that Turkish nationalism carries features from the former and the latter, and together make the Turkish nationalism effective (Ergü, 2009, p.178). Furthermore, Turkish nationalism has many different forms that have changed across time and place, in the same way as other nationalisms and national identities (Maksudyan, 2005, p. 292). Although the Kemalist period until the 1950s largely defined a framework for who the Turkish people were and should be through the focus on the civilized and patriotic citizen as an ideal in the national identity, the multi-party system from 1950s onwards lifted the restrictions on public Islam transforming the society, and religion in general gained significance in a sociological sense. This relaxed attitude towards Islam was at the same time a political matter, as the preservation of Islam and conservative family ideology was an important antidote to the communism that was beginning to find a place also in Türkiye, which had then joined the U.S-led Western bloc (Öztan and Kaynak, 2020). Although Islam only had a relatively modest importance at this time, religion in the 80s became a even more important aspect through an increased focus on historical and moral values in the 1982 Constitution that replaced the previous constitution that had been in force since the establishment of the Republic in 1923 (İçduygu et al, 1999).

The importance of the Kemalist construction of citizenship has been very significant for today's notions of citizenship, in that it has built on a monolithic and cultural understanding of national identity which emphasizes cultural assimilation for a unified and homogeneous national identity. It was also international migration that provoked what has been pointed to as one of the first major challenges to the established notion of Turkish citizenship, which resulted in citizenship becoming politicized to a greater extent (İçduygu et. al, 1999; Tiryakioğlu, 2006). For the sake of clarity, reference may first be made to the starting point for this new distinction, which was the original Turkish Nationality Act (*Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu*) (TVK) which entered into force in 1964. The new nationality act aimed to modernize and standardize the regulations on nationality, and governed the acquisition, loss, and regulation of Turkish nationality. Prior to the Act of 1964, it had been the Ottoman Nationality Law dated back to 1869 which had governed the citizenship and was considered outdated in light of the new republic as it was important that nationality regulations and the citizenship law were to be aligned with contemporary standards.

The Nationality Act came with the important provision that a child born to a Turkish father or mother even outside the Turkish territory would be a Turkish citizen, allowing Türkiye to first and foremost apply a *jus sanguinis* principle in how citizenship is acquired

(Tiryakioğlu, 2006). The first important driver towards a revisit to the 1964 came as a result of the many Turkish migrant workers who went to European countries. As the 1964 Act did not allow for dual citizenship, it was extremely rare to see Turkish emigrants anywhere in the world who had obtained citizenship in the countries they lived, worked, and paid taxes for through several decades (İçduygu et. al, 1999). Thus in the early 80s, it was understood how it was necessary to allow dual citizenship, hence the nationality act was amended to remove obstacles for dual citizenship for Turkish citizens (Tiryakioğlu, 2006).

Then in the 2000s, Turkish citizenship policy also changed, especially as the country had started to become a receiving country for international migration and there was a need to adapt to these changing dynamics. An example of this was through the amendment of Article 5 in the TCK, which made it possible to acquire Turkish citizenship through marriages with Turkish nationals (Tiryakioğlu, 2006) albeit under certain conditions. Since the early 2000s, several amendments were also made to the Turkish citizenship legislation. In addition to important amendments concerning the granting of citizenship to persons of Turkish origin living abroad as well as adoption and birthright in 2009, YUKK was adopted in 2013, which had as its overarching goal to bring citizenship legislation into accordance with the European Union (EU) standards and generally brought significant changes to laws relating to immigration, asylum, and citizenship regulations in Türkiye. Providing a regulation that is much more detailed and systematic, these changes brought the introduction of six new residence permit categories as well as a new category of non-deportable persons based on humanitarian concerns (Kibar, 2013). Another notable amendment came in 2016, which introduced the acquisition of Turkish citizenship through investment. The new regulation differs from other amendments in that it exclusively considers an economic argument for naturalization where new nationals with their assets can make a significant contribution to society (Özbek, 2021).

The recognition of nationalist tendencies is important in the discussion of citizenship and immigrant integration, especially since the idea of nationhood is so central to the understanding of both concepts. Furthermore, it is inevitable that inherent nationalism existing within both people, the state and its institutions will shape the way in which integration of “others” will take place in Türkiye. Understanding this starts with distinguishing between patriotism and nationalism, which indeed are not just insignificant names for similar phenomena, but which can show how different connections between the state and individuals affect society's overall attitudes about outgroups. Although there is a research gap considering the link between nationalism and refugee hostility, studies have shown that this is indeed

crucial for integration outcomes. Yet, another difference concerns relations to minorities and outgroups. In its endeavor toward intersocietal homogeneity, nationalism supports the degradation of outgroups, whereas patriotism supports tolerance toward outgroups and minorities in accepting intersocietal variety (Blank and Schmidt, 2003). When it comes to Türkiye, there is only one official language, and monolingual education is favored since bilingualism or multilingualism is perceived as a threat to the national development like in the case of UK, USA, and Germany (Orak and Alagözlü, 20). This is also why Türkiye only recognizes non-Muslim groups as minorities in the country and through the Lausanne Peace Treaty distinguishes only between “non-Moslems” and “Moslems”, making it so that above-mentioned groups cannot really be considered minorities in the case of Türkiye.² That is just one example of how nationalism affects social rooms that are crucial for integration, in being either inclusive or exclusive based on ethnic affiliation and how these are embraced on state and civic level. Anyhow, the rise of nationalism in Türkiye, which has started slowly but surely since the establishment of the nation in the 1920s, is sociologically significant in the understanding of today’s notions of nationhood and citizenship since it is undeniably an important factor which also affects contemporary policies and public courses on nation-building as well as in the definition of membership into the nation.

Having gained valuable contextual insights, the next section will provide the theoretical framework which will cover the formulated research questions and the thesis over-all topic. Key theoretical concepts as well as contemporary phenomena of the evolving nature of citizenship will be explored, as well as a comprehensive examination of identity and belonging in light of nationhood and the age of increased securitization of migration.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

After a thorough review of critical research and important contextual factors in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, this chapter presents the thesis’ theoretical framework. The theoretical framework is primarily the conceptual base that has guided the formulation of the research questions put

² The Lausanne Peace Treaty, Part I. Article 39:
https://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa

forward in the thesis. Furthermore, the different parts of the chapter contribute to a further contextualization and conceptualization which will be important for further analysis and discussions in the final part of the thesis. This involves a theorization of several concepts which are central to the thesis, such as integration, naturalization, legal nationality, membership, and belonging. The chapter begins with an overview of key developments in citizenship practices and directs a particular focus on the commodification of citizenship in the contemporary world. This is followed by an analysis on naturalization and citizenship in the age of the securitization of migration, which attempts to theorize how opportunities for naturalization given to refugees and migrants can be influenced by specific policies, political climate as well as public discourses within host societies. Another sub-chapter explores what achieving citizenship can mean for refugees before a thorough review of questions about identity and belonging, as well as how nationalism in host societies can mediate their experiences. Finally, a theoretical framework for refugee integration is followed by another related sub-chapter on different policies of nationhood.

4.1 The complexity of contemporary citizenship

Put easy, the word citizenship refers to an individual's legal affiliation to a country, and in its most fundamental meaning T.H. Marshall's definition as "*a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which this status is endowed*" may be recognized (Marshall, 1983). However, in recent decades, the meaning and value of formal state citizenship has shifted dramatically (Nunn et. al, 2016; Ong, 1999; Ong, 2006; Ellermann, 2019), and the interrelationship between citizenship, politics, and economics has seen a significant expansion. In academia, this expansion has for instance been theorized by Joppke (2018) in which he claims the recent developments constitute a "instrumentalization of citizenship", which refers to the rise of diverse trends for *how* and *why* citizenship is achieved and perceived in our modern world. To illustrate the point further, Ong (2006) draws parallels to how modern nation-states increasingly mimics the market, and how neo-liberal decisions have led to new ways of inclusion, as well as setting apart some citizen-subjects while new spaces that enjoy extraordinary political benefits and economic gain are also created (Ong, 2006, p. 5). At the same time, due to global migratory movements, transnational political societies arise where rights are demanded beyond nation-state boundaries and where individuals' non-singular sense of belonging creates a from-below globalization (Fox, 2005; Bauböck, 2006).

Furthermore, other scholars have attempted to get an understanding of how the

worldwide inequality gap leads to an increase in the so-called commodification of citizenship (Boatcă, 2015; Joppke, 2018), signaling an ongoing transformation where certain rights and privileges are being traded within the global market. The term commodification originates from Karl Marx, who claimed that the commodity lies at the very core of capitalist mode of production. In his first chapter of *Das Kapital* he defined the commodity as “*an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference*” (Marx, 1837, p. 27). According to Marx, the commodity was the symbol of a system where different things, but also human labor, can be used and consumed where it acquires a value based on utility. Marx defines it as the “utility of a thing”, which implies that all things contain an amount of exchangeable labor, which he refers to as “congealed homogeneous human labor”. As these different things acquire a utility value, they are also included as subjects in an arrangement of an exchange system (Marx, 1867).

Marx’s attachment to the commodity, the value, and the exchange system in which it exists, must at the same time be understood in contrast to the form of production before his time, the so-called subsistence economy, where trading in market fairs was no longer as prominent in order to survive. As the process of acquiring commodities is no longer mediated through trading commodity for commodity, the understanding of money as a chief function to supply commodities as it serves what Marx calls a universal measure of value (Marx, 1837, p. 67). Similarly, as citizenship is increasingly being commodified, it exists in a system which involves the trading or exchange of economic investments, services, or contributions for the acquisition of citizenship. Today, contemporary citizenship also surpasses mediation through money, and citizenship can be exchanged not only with money, but with unique university degrees, sports skills, or being high-skilled in other sought-after fields. One may for instance look at the talent-for citizenship, which defines several countries’ practice of handing out passports in exchange for Olympic medals (Shachar, 2011). The Olympic citizenship not only represents one of the biggest innovations in terms of citizenship, but also testifies to a world order characterized by a race and competition between countries to attract the most talented and highly skilled individuals as possible (Schachar, 2006). At the same time, commodification of citizenship defines a wider normalization of and implementation of corporatist logic into the nature of citizenship, where nationality can not only be exchanged for talent but also purchased in several countries. This involves a neoliberal rationalization of governments, which ultimately has a link to how mobility and migration are carried out in the world (Mavelli, 2018).

Nevertheless, concerns have already been raised against several countries in how they

commodify citizenship as a method of strengthening economic development. For example, in response to Malta's intentions to carry out an amendment to the Maltese Citizenship in 2013, The European Parliament declared that this would undermine citizenship of the Union in total and stated the following in their 2014 resolution; *"This way of obtaining citizenship in Malta, as well as any other national scheme that may involve the direct or indirect outright sale of EU citizenship, undermines the very concept of European citizenship"*.³ As examined by Gonzalez (2017), the Parliament at the time criticized the Maltese program on a number of grounds, but for the purpose of this thesis, attention can be drawn to the 11th item of the EU resolution⁴, which claimed that *"whereas concerns exist as regards possible discrimination because these practices by Member States only allow the richest third-country nationals to obtain EU citizenship, without any other criteria being considered."* The EU resolution touches on an important aspect of the new citizenship option, namely the more controversial idea that certain human qualities should determine whether civil rights are to be guaranteed or deprived; especially when considering migration and cases of forced displacement.

Even though the above-mentioned practices have been subjected to various critics, a discussion and exploration of the possibility of a market for citizens has accelerated, especially within the study of economics (Becker, 2011; Bengtsson, 2022). The most radical idea here might be the possibility of determining a price to be sold based on high-skilled migrants taking out an entrance loan in which, precisely because they are high-skilled graduates, they will pay off quickly through employment in the prestigious and well-paid jobs they are meant to cover. Becker (2011), who draws models for such a system, thus claims that this form of market can ensure that rich countries, such as the United States, will get the young, the skilled, and those who have the greatest commitment to the country. Becker further states that every individual who can pay should be given this opportunity, but that terrorists, criminals and people who are ill and would thus become an immediate burden on the health system should be denied (Becker, 2011). This concern held by countries in the Global North that they may have to deal with individuals who may become a burden rather than a contribution to society is also a clear symptom of the increasing pressure to attract human capital. Similarly in Canada the increasing focus on generating economic migration can be demonstrated by a clear market-orientation of Canadian family reunification policies, where new and stricter measures has led to a significant decrease in the number of family reunifications (Ellermann, 2019).

³ European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2014 on EU Citizenship for sale: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-7-2014-0038_EN.html

⁴ The 11th item of the same resolution.

Even though these new methods of accumulating capital, talent, and overall development through exchange for civil rights represent one of the most significant changes for citizenship rights in recent decades, the topic has been rather little explored within academia. Thus, it has been argued for a more thorough analysis of this current state of citizenship with its “picking winners” mentality, as a more thorough theorization is needed (Shachar and Hirschl, 2015).

4.2 Naturalization and Citizenship in the age of Securitization of Migration

Next, theory can provide an understanding of how refugees’ opportunities for naturalization may be influenced by specific policies, political climate as well as public discourses within host societies. That is especially relevant as such aspects indeed can serve as barriers and facilitators to refugees’ naturalization processes. According to Džankić and Vink (2022), citizenship and migration have a common constitutive relationship in two ways. Firstly, citizenship is crucial for the very enabling of migration, both as a status that can facilitate and restrict individual mobility, as well as a driver for mobility aspirations. Secondly, the political and economic contestation over migration affects the regulation of citizenship itself (Džankić and Vink, 2022). Furthermore, it may be understood how migration policy and citizenship are interlinked, and that provisions on naturalization for immigrants are governed based on needs defined by time and space, such as supply and demand within the neoliberal economy (Bansak et al, 2020). That is for instance the case when western democracies adopt quota systems when deciding for the number of refugees they would allow into their territory, with the provision that these individuals are to be integrated on the road to naturalization as the final stop. Within this system, the number of quota refugees and the countries they come from are politically governed in within each nation state, making it a highly political matter. Besides, social interests in civil society, such as raised nationalism or Islamophobia directed towards Muslim immigrants, may also impact the relationship between refugees and their pathway to obtaining citizenship. It has been noted how voters, although they are rarely an organized group that can exert great influence over authorities, can become more influential if they are mobilized by political parties (Zaun, 2018). For instance, as what have been the case in large parts of Europe in the last decade, authorities can be pressured to adopt restrictive immigration policies if right-wing populist parties gain voters from mobilizing immigrant xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment (Howard, 2010).

Nevertheless, a number of western democracies, by opening the acquisition of citizenship through naturalization, have increasingly become more accepting towards the

permanent presence of ethnically and religiously diverse immigrant groups in society from the 1990s (Freeman, 2004). Such provisions were often based on the understanding that granting citizenship to immigrants can entail benefits for both the host country and for the immigrants themselves. For the former, it is often that individuals who are granted citizenship have been able to demonstrate that they would be able to provide economic benefits to the host country at the least. For the latter, the decision to naturalize may be diversified and have to do with several reasons such as legal stability, security, freedom in terms mobility, but also as a formal recognition of equality and belonging (Birkvad, 2019; Caitlin et al., 2016). However, opportunities for obtaining citizenship are still quite limited for many immigrants and their descendants (Paparusso, 2019), and the last two decades have shown an intensification of the political discourse regarding immigration, naturalization, and integration. Even then, naturalization alone does not guarantee full membership and successful integration, as seen in the recent examples in France in early 2023.

The politicization and securitization of the so-called refugee crisis in Europe have reinforced this discourse, where dramatic images of arriving boats, drownings and loss of human lives caused the EU to implement an extensive border regime set to govern mobility into and across the European Union (Bojadžijev and Mezzadra, 2015). At the same time, internally these countries have been occupied with the integration of immigrants who are already residing within their borders, having led to Europe becoming divided between the need to remain faithful to its core democratic values and freedoms while at the same time counteracting the rise of nationalist leaders who demand more power to the nation states (Postelnicescu, 2016). These political and global phenomena have had great power to put questions of integration, naturalization, and nationhood on the agenda. In western Europe, this has been referred to as the fear of the Muslim other, while in Eastern Europe, increased fear of a growing Roma population has been politicized (Kuhelj, 2011).

Europe's growing fear of increased immigration may perhaps at best be reflected through their attempt to handle the hysteria caused by the above-mentioned refugee crisis. In that regard, through the so-called EU-Türkiye deal, an attempt to jointly address the Syrian refugee crisis and to manage irregular refugee migration to Europe was entered into the agenda (Rygiel et al, 2016). The primary purpose of the 2016 Agreement between Türkiye and the EU was to curb arrivals of refugees in Greece and prevent their onward movement. At the same time, part of the agreement implied that the EU would return irregular migrants and in exchange Türkiye can send Syrian refugees to Europe for resettlement – known as 1:1 – in a form of population swap (Weber, 2017; Rygiel et al, 2016). The agreement, which has proven to be

dysfunctional on several levels, has been strongly criticized for allowing European authorities to shirk their international commitment to refugee protection as signatories to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol (Rygiel et. al, 2016). Anyhow, it is perhaps clear how the political climate and issues related to securitization can easily contribute to the process and the prospects of refugees' naturalization in their host societies. This issue is taken up in the following pages since it has significance for how the refugees experience integration and belonging in their host communities and why they opt for naturalization despite problems of integration and social exclusion.

4.3 Refugees and the various meanings of citizenship

The global hierarchy of state citizenship provide a context where the attainment of a second citizenship is pursued. In that aspect, research has shown that it is particularly immigrants from less developed countries who aspire to naturalize, as for them, in contrast to immigrants who already enjoy reasonable rights, it constitutes a greater benefit (Birkvad, 2019). Nevertheless, obtaining citizenship can provide immigrants with invaluable advantages as they must navigate their way through the host society. This is especially true in the case of refugees, who have often been forced to flee their homeland because of conflict, war and persecution that have threatened their civic rights connected to their citizenship. Qualitative studies have shown that for refugees who have been naturalized, the meaning of citizenship is complex and may relate to conditions such as legal protection, stability, mobility, but also equality that follows from being formally recognized as equal members (Birkvad, 2019; Haggis & Schech, 2010). It has also been theorized how achieved citizenship for refugees can lead to a form of “ontological security”, where citizenship provides a sense security against future displacement (Nunn et. al, 2016). In addition to being a significant milestone in refugees resettlement process in terms of eligibility for benefits, the legal status which citizenship provides may also potentially change the perception of refugees held by natives (Craig, 2012).

Furthermore, studies have emphasized differences among naturalized immigrants in how they give meaning to their new citizenship. It is not always perceived in the same way as how native-born citizens do, such as having a patriotic relationship to the nation state. In contrast, naturalized citizens are most often labelled as “multi-layered citizens”, indicating how different layers may be emphasized as immigrants construct the relationship with their new nation-state (Nunn et. Al, 2016; Yula-Davis, 1999). Additionally, studies have also pointed out that obtaining citizenship in a country is not always about definitive settlement but can also be

about the possibility of moving to a perceived better country through obtaining citizenship (Codini and D’Odorico, 2007; quoted in Puppa and Sredanovic, 2016). Besides, when faced with highly restrictive requirements for residence permits or citizenship, research has demonstrated how refugees might experience ambivalence within their integration process if they understand their own membership and participation in society as temporary (Shaheen, 2019). To complicate the matter a bit more, countries have different sanctions towards obtaining another citizenship. While it is impossible to get out of citizenship in some countries no matter what, one might lose the citizenship if naturalized in some others. That is for instance the case in Germany, where according to paragraph 25 of the German Citizenship Act, a German individual who willingly apply for and receive a foreign citizenship, automatically lose their German citizenship.⁵ Although this article is subject to change in Germany, some countries may still require individuals to renounce their citizenship if they are to become candidates for naturalization. This is, for example, the case in Japan, where naturalization into Japanese citizenship requires the individual to renounce their previous citizenship (Kondo, p. 7, 2016). The rule is mainly present to make the threshold higher for naturalization, and can be said to be motivated by both the Japanese desire for a reasonably homogenized society as well as Japanese principles of loyalty (Murazumi, 2000; quoted in Kondo, 2016, p. 13).

Hence, crucial research that has theorized the meaning of citizenships can demonstrate how refugees in their meaning-making processes make various sense of citizenship and the different aspects connected to it. It becomes particularly clear how the meaning of citizenship, through the experiences of refugees, acquires several meanings extended from traditional perceptions of citizenship.

4.4. Identity and belonging – refugees between nationalism and citizenship

The traditions and conceptions of citizenship within nations are not fixed but can change. In addition to gaining membership by birth, most nation-states have some alternative mechanisms through which the membership can be acquired (Iija, 2011). Generally, the three main pathways determining citizenship are the principle of *ius sanguinis*, *ius soli* or residence-based naturalization. National citizenship is almost always acquired by birth and some states use a principle of *ius sanguinis* with slight differences and amendments. In most countries,

⁵ The German Nationality Act: Section 25 (Loss of citizenship when acquiring a foreign citizenship upon application; permission to retain German citizenship):

https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_stag/englisch_stag.html

citizenship is bestowed upon those born to citizen parents independently of their country of birth. *Ius soli*, i.e., citizenship acquired by birth within a territory is the dominant principle only in the North America, classic settler states, where *ius soli* was seen as the best way to assert independence vis-à-vis former colonial powers by ensuring that all newly born were citizens of the new republics rather than colonial subjects (Bauböck, 2018; Acosta, 2016). The main difference between the two principles is that *ius sanguinis* reflects “the right of the blood”, while *ius soli* reflects “the right of the soil”.

Citizenship through naturalization, however, is a way for immigrants to gain access full membership in a nation state. For the individual who attempts to naturalize, for example in the case of refugees, such a step often involves a process of longer residency, an administrative fee, a perfectly clean record, as well as some sort of language, history, and integration tests (Bloemraas and Sheares, 2017). To draw from examples from contemporary Europe, Italy, which similarly with Türkiye has transitioned from being a country of emigration and transit, has in the last two decades of the 20th Century experienced becoming a country of immigration. This has seriously challenged Italian citizenship legislation, which in its quite strict tone, offers the naturalization option only to immigrants who have stayed within legal residence for ten years. Moreover, it includes a discretionary act of the competent authorities who judge based on the person's affiliation with the Italian society, personal characteristics, and not least economic sufficiency (Pagotto, 2012).

Similarly in Norway the recognition of a need for new citizenship legislation came due to the changed immigration situation and increased mobility in the world. With this, Norwegian legislation developed from being purely linked to *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli* principles, to taking a position on new issues such as naturalization, integration, and dual citizenship (NOU, 2000, p. 4). The Norwegian legislation holds that immigrants must intend to remain in Norway, meet the conditions for a residence permit, have lived in the country for a minimum of eight years, not have committed criminal offences, and meet language requirements (A2) and having knowledge of Norwegian history and social norms. Immigrants' transition to Norwegian citizenship is seen as a solemn ceremony, and the new citizens are invited to a dignified celebration where the participants take a pledge of loyalty and support for democracy, laws, and human rights (The Norwegian Government, 2022).

Germany too underwent a radical shift from their somewhat strict understanding of citizenship, having been one the few European countries who primarily applied the principle of *ius sanguinis*. Although, having been a country of immigration since the 1950s, it was not until new legislation in 1999 that the principle of *ius soli* was also introduced in Germany,

which enabled children of migrants to obtain German citizenship. The case was particularly important for precisely these individuals, as up until then their substantive position as long-term residents were not into alignment with the formal membership they were given as descendants of Turkish labor migrants (Brubaker, 2010). Today, like both Norway and Italy, there is also a naturalization option for German citizenship that links integration and citizenship closely together in the legislation (Möllering, 2010). Immigrants who are to be eligible for naturalization must have lived in Germany for eight years, possess the appropriate residence permit, complete an integration course, as well as prove sufficient knowledge of the German language. In contrast to the Norwegian legislation, new citizens were expected to ultimately give up their previous citizenship to become German nationals, although after the German federal Cabinets adaptation of a new legislation on 23 August will come to apply that individuals may retain their previous citizenship as soon as it enters into force in 2024 (BMI, n.d.) Germany also requires a naturalization test which will give the new citizens a thorough understanding of German society, living conditions and the German legal system (BMI, 2023).

As can be understood, both Italy, Norway and Germany follow the European trend for naturalization where the duration of the residence and knowledge of language is emphasized. Furthermore, all the legislations involves both a focus on the vertical dimension of citizenship, which embraces the concrete and formal relationship between the individual and the state such as duties and rights, and the horizontal dimension, which reflects how the citizen takes part in a civic life and identifies with the community's values and rights. The relationship between the two dimensions illustrates the linking mechanism that new citizens must take part in, namely the bond between the state as well as the fellow citizens (Cairns, 1999). Regardless, membership is still an ambiguous topic when discussing citizenship, as formal entry does not necessarily go hand in hand with crucial aspects such as belonging and identity. That is especially true since naturalization behavior is also shaped by a number of other factors, such as ethnic belonging or feeling other-ized (Carillo, 2015). An important area for study is how refugees experience feelings related to belonging in their host communities after naturalization, and the degree to which social integration and acquisition of citizenship is linked. According to Yuval-Davis (2006), people can belong in many ways and to many different attachments. Differentiating between three analytical levels, belonging is constructed mainly within 1) social locations, 2) in individuals' identification and emotional attachments to various groups, and 3) within ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006). For the latter, it is often the case that a nation-state is an institution which, through its legislation, based on values and ethical beliefs, can draw both

socio-cultural, ethnic, political, and sometimes also economic boundaries for who can and cannot join the national community. Thus, it has been argued whether and in what ways governments shape feelings of belonging, for instance in how they facilitate integration and what is being promoted and fostered through political speech (Birka, 2013).

According to Brubaker (2010), one of the greatest sources of internal and external politics of belonging is migration, as it disrupts the congruences central to the "idealized" model of the nation-state. Regarding migration and membership in the modern nation-state, Brubaker (2010) draws four distinctions within the politics of belonging. The first distinction is about the politics of belonging not only taking place at the level of the nation-state but also being played out and politicized in various sites such as cities, neighborhoods, workplaces, clubs, associations, parties, tribes, and families. He nevertheless states that it is the policy of belonging that takes place at the national level that is consistent, i.e., to influence significantly (Brubaker, 2010, p. 64). The second dimension deals with the gap between formal state membership and material membership. Brubaker claims that although formal citizenship is often not in doubt, the essential part of feeling accepted as full members varies. This ambiguity that can arise is generated by various forms of social closure, be it discrimination, nationalization, or marginalization of out-groups. Thirdly, the politics of belonging has a formal or sophisticated aspect. There is a difference between legal nationality and membership in a national community. The former is determined by specialized staff who use formal codified rules. The membership that individuals experience or do not experience in civil society, on the other hand, is not administered by professionals but by ordinary people in everyday life who construct ideas about who belongs and who does not. This distinction between formal and non-formal belonging also applies in the various sites in society, such as schools, neighborhoods, associations etc., where formal membership does not imply informal acceptance (Brubaker, 2010, p. 65). Similarly, this phenomenon has been defined in the literature as "processes of othering", where a dominant culture, for example the natives or social groups within the native population, establishes a new sense of self while inventing the other (Holslag, 2015). Finally, Brubaker claims that the internal dimension of belonging politics can be separated from the external dimensions. Individuals who are subject to internal membership policies in one state may be subject to external membership policies in another state. This link can occur through migration. An example of this was how the *Aussiedler*, ethnic German migrants from former Soviet Union – were automatically granted citizenship rights through their blood ties, even though they could speak little or no German. Turkish second-generation immigrants, on the

other hand, who spoke fluent German and were integrated into German society, were still regarded as derivations (Brubaker, 2010, pp. 64-67).

Moreover, through legislation for residence permits and citizenship, national authorities set important frameworks for how immigrants and refugees perceive hospitality in their host societies. In the aftermath of increasing pressure on European countries to accept refugees in the years 2015-2016, nation-state's swift ability to shift attitudes towards refugees became evident with the example of Denmark (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017). Denmark which previously had been known for its humanitarian efforts and willingness to assist refugees, suddenly changed into becoming increasingly hostile while taking the leading role in stemming refugee flows through a series of controversial measures (Shaheen, 2019). For instance, in 2015, the Danish authorities placed advertisements in several newspapers in Lebanon where a lot of Syrians had found refuge, listing several factors that would make Denmark an undesirable destination for would-be migrants (Taylor, 2015). In the same year they cut assistance for refugees by half, and in 2016 they introduced the controversial jewelry bill, which allow police to search and confiscate valuables from asylum-seekers to help pay for their accommodation (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017).

At the same time the civil society, through the power of social media's echo chamber can be an important public opinion that may influence immigrants' experience of hostility or hospitality directed towards them in society at large. That has for instance been the case in Türkiye, where academicians have already addressed the way nationalism has been reinforced through the bottom-up nationalistic and discriminatory discourses which further reasserts preexisting ethnocentric perceptions of citizenship as well as for questions about inclusion and exclusion (Bozdağ, 2019). In the Turkish case, this has not only led to a normalization of hate speech against minority groups, such as Syrians, but also that an actual exclusion in social spaces have become justified and legitimized (Bozdağ, 2019). The flourishing and reinvention of nationalist ideas, on the other hand, is not a unique phenomenon within an immigration context. All over Europe, a flourishing of populist far right political movements has been witnessed since the turn of the century. To capture how the rise of far right arose in Europe, the thinking regarding the integration question starting from the 1970s well into the mid-1990s must be revisited. This period was characterized by a de-nationalization of citizenship among Western democracies, while the idea of multiculturalism as an integration strategy was a clear trend in these same countries. The point was to reject previous ideas about unitary and homogeneous nationhood, and instead to promote a more celebratory understanding of ethnocultural diversity (Kymlicka, 2012). Today, on the other hand, the picture is a little

different, and multiculturalism has been said to have both a detrimental effect on integration processes and, to go as far as the former British prime minister David Cameron, it basically “failed” (BBC, 2011). Nevertheless, in the midst of changing policies, securitization of the immigration issue and increasing anti-refugee sentiment, many refugees must navigate a sea of rules, criteria and requirements that could possibly lead to permanent residence or citizenship within their host country.

Citizenship, and perhaps even more so in today’s political climate, is also a sensitive topic as it shakes nations' basic ideas about nationhood and identity. According to De La Paz (2012), citizenship is as much an identity as it is a legal status, which indicates the purely subjective dimension of citizenship as equally important in how people perceive themselves and the relationship, they have to nation state(s), namely subjective citizenship. Furthermore, how the state and the population perceive refugees and immigrants in the country, as well as the meaning construction of citizenship, is linked with the sense of belonging and loyalty (Baubock, 2002).

In the case of Türkiye, negative attitudes towards the granting of citizenship to Syrians are mainly related to subjective reasons such as nationalist and chauvinistic ideas (Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018; Güney, 2022). Güney’s study (2022) also points out that individuals display attitudes that are close to the hegemonic discourse that is unfolding in Türkiye, which can emphasize how constant negative portraits of Syrians in the media and politics may be effective in reproducing and gaining supporters to anti-Syrian sentiment.

With the above-mentioned hypotheses, in this complex interplay of identity and belonging, refugees might find themselves between the possibility of full membership through citizenship and the forces of nationalism which may create social and legal barriers to their integration process.

4.5 Refugee Integration and Citizenship

Integration is a contested term as there is no single definition of what it entails. In the literature, the concept has been used to cover everything from “objective” indicators such as focusing on participation within the labor market, formal citizenship, and rights, to more subjective feelings dealing with empowerment and belonging (Likić-Brborić and Björkman, 2016). In the sociology, integration has been approached in various ways and in different contexts. For instance, in Durkheim’s social analyses, social integration was so important that he claimed lack of it produced suicide (Stark et al., 1983). Furthermore, in the migration literature,

integration defines the process of adaptation between immigrants and the society they come to. Simultaneously a narrower definition may point out that integration is a two-sided and mutual adaptation process (Brekke et. Al, 2020). However, depending on the nationally embedded or ideologically envisioned understanding of “integration” and its endpoint, other concepts have been used to denote the process, such as assimilation, acculturation, inclusion etc. (Likić-Brborić and Björkman, 2016). In any case, when doing research that deals with integration, it is necessary to adopt a working definition to set some framework. For this purpose, Ager and Strang’s (2004) definition may be applied as a reasonable understanding, which reads as follows:

An individual or group is integrated within a society when they: achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities; are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (Ager and Strang, 2004, p. 5).

Their definition depends on the condition that what “sufficiency” entail is determined by the given nation state. More generally however, there are some common conditions that are usually assessed when working with integration. According to Ager and Strang's framework in which they have attempted to define the main aspects of integration, there are 10 main domains that usually shape understandings of the concept of integration. Within this framework, there are four of the domains which the authors have characterized as “markers and means” of integration. Within this is first *employment*. employment is central when it comes to integration because refugees can actively contribute to the host society and at the same time become financially self-sufficient. Yet, a problem is often that even if the refugees possess varied qualifications, it can be difficult to get them recognized in host communities. Therefore, it is often the case that vocational training and further education are considered key aspects of the refugees' integration path. Subsequently, *housing* is generally seen as essential for refugees, as it provides an experience of security and belonging. Housing can be an important way to meet established members of the community. Thereafter, it is well known that *education* can provide skills and competences that are necessary in the host society. Educational institutions are also

fundamental as they can often provide a social arena for establishing contact with members of the local host communities, while language is practiced at the same time. Lastly, as also recognized as a marker and mean for integration, having good *health* and being able to have access to healthcare services for both mental and physical well-being is considered crucial for refugees. Experiencing good overall health is a vital resource for active engagement in society.

Social connections, which grasp both *social bridges*, *social bonds*, and *social links*, are further important parts of immigrant integration, and constitute the second category of Ager and Strang's framework. These can involve everything from relationships with like-ethnic groups, family, social links with state structures but also connection and social bridges with other communities such as with natives or other ethnic groups for that sake. Over-all, social connections can play an important role on processes of integration at a local level, as it can bring a feeling of being "settled", while engaging in social relations may also bring health benefits.

Language and cultural knowledge are also key areas of integration. Being able to speak the main language of the host society is essential for full participation. It can help immigrants to become empowered as it allows them to advocate for themselves within national and local processes, not least to communicate with natives and/or other ethnic/social groups. Ager and Strang identifies language and cultural knowledge, as well as safety and stability as the facilitators of integration. Thus, *safety and stability* are also to be understood as necessary for immigrants to feel integrated. Safety can be about how refugees are feeling safe where they live, such in their local environment, but also in the sense of feeling safe as regards to verbal or physical violence.

Lastly, *rights and citizenship* are defined as the foundation in Ager and Strang's framework. Access to legal status and citizenship is fundamental for refugees' access to rights and services, as well as a sense of interpersonal safety. In the case of citizenship, for instance, it also allows refugees to engage in central civil and community activities, such as voting. The domains are not independent other but are interconnected where achievement within a domain can facilitate achieved integration within another domain. For instance, one of the biggest problems when it comes to accessing to healthcare services for immigrants is language, which difficult to communicate with healthcare professionals (Ager and Strang, 2008). Linguistic and cultural understanding can thus, for example, contribute if immigrants must go through bureaucratic procedures in the healthcare system, and lead to the individual feeling empowered and able to self-advocate.

With the above framework, a general idea of some important integration aspects can be

gained. Nevertheless, there are various dynamics and processes that shape the integration of refugees. That is for instance related to the fact that refugees do constitute a unique and complex group of people who often have conflicted attitudes towards resettlement (Craig, 2012). On the other hand, it is an important imperative how policies on nationhood are being communicated through law and political speech. This crucial link between how newcomers are being integrated into societies and nation-states policies on nationhood will be further elaborated on in the following sub-chapter.

4.6. Policies on nationhood and integration

Faced with phenomena such as refugee influxes and growing minority populations, many countries have developed their own strategies to integrate their immigrant populations, and the successful integration of immigrants into a host country's society, economy, and polity has become a major issue for policymakers in recent decades (Harder et. al, 2018). Furthermore, social, and ethnic integration is often highly complex, especially since it affects all aspects of a receiving nation's human ecology, defined as the political, social, and economic systems that dictate human interaction, (Koff, 2009, p.1). Koff illustrates something that is perhaps not as self-evident in the formal matter, namely that a central and underlying question when faced with the task of integration, is crucial task of articulating ideas on nationhood as it encapsulates important ideas on shared values and collective identities. Thus, it has been argued that to develop an effective policy on integration, governments need to clearly articulate policy on nationhood and citizenship, and thus the rights accorded to refugees. That is, as such considerations are fundamental to the normative framework that determines refugee policy and understanding of 'successful' outcomes. (Ager and Strang, 2008). For example, there has been no other topic that divided the member states of the EU as much as the recent flow of refugees. While the EU political leaders agreed for the need to preserve the core European values, they significantly disagreed on how to do it and what qualifies as endangered European values (Dogachan, 2018). For instance, in Europe, although an economic slowdown of the early 1970s put a stop on the import of labor, the settlement of temporary workers, family reunification as well as asylum policies allowed large flow of immigrants and asylum seekers to continue entering Europe throughout the decade (Givens, 2007). Western Europe consequently in the 90s directed their nationhood policies towards a process of de-ethnifying citizenship, i.e., shifting from exclusive ethnic or cultural consideration towards more inclusive principles, e.g., democratic or civic citizenship.

This distinction can be traced back to the German historian Friedrich Meinecke's work, who was concerned with understanding the development of the German nation-state throughout the 18th to 19th Centuries. In his classical work *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, he distinguishes between *cultural nations* and *political nations*, in which cultural nations are primarily based on some jointly experienced cultural heritage while political nations are primarily based on the unifying force of a common political history and constitution. Accordingly, Meinecke claims that a standard language, a common literature, and a common religion are the most important and powerful cultural assets that can create a cultural nation and hold it together. Often it is also the case in cultural states that there is a strong connection between religion, state and nationality, whereas in a political institution, on the other hand, there can be a strong feeling that one is part of a political unit and that one agrees on some common principles and values (Meinecke, 1970, pp. 10-11). As such, civic citizenship is often portrayed as much more open and egalitarian than the more closed ethnic conception (Reekens and Hooghe, 2010), which is rooted in a commitment to democratic principles rather than solely ethnic or ancestral criteria. Hence, there are diverse ways that historically have shaped how countries understand nationhood (Ager and Strang, 2008). For instance, Germany for years had a national consciousness and self-understanding based on *ius sanguinis*, which for a long time influenced both their idea of integration, but also how new settlers could obtain rights in the country. According to Brubaker (1992), political and cultural geography is also an important thing to consider in order to understand patterns of national self-understanding, where he compares what became the development of a French idea of nationhood as "assimilationist" and the German idea of "differentialist". As Brubaker claims, it was a gradual formation of the nation-state around a single political and cultural center in France which was the historical basis for an assimilation self-understanding, while on the other hand a conglomeratic pattern of state-building in polycentric, biconfessional, even binational Germany was the historical matrix for a more differentialist self-understanding (Brubaker, 1992, p. 5).

All these historical elements have had an impact on integration policies and in turn the national legislation on citizenship policies in various western countries. Today, almost all European countries have shifted from a "nationalist" to a more "multiculturalist" citizenship policy towards immigrants. However, opportunities for obtaining citizenship are still quite limited for many immigrants and their descendants (Paparusso, 2019). In essence, the process of de-ethnifying citizenship as well as a reinvention of nation-states ideas on nationhood can be an important process whilst working on issues such as integration and social cohesion.

The next chapter takes up the thesis' research design and scientific method to obtain data. The methodological approach that underlies the field and interview work will be explained here, as well as the participants in the study will be presented in more detail.



5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Having gotten an overview of the thesis theoretical framework, this chapter gives the reader a guide to the methodological aspects of the thesis. As mentioned, this thesis is concerned with four research questions which altogether has guided the author throughout an inductive investigation of the topic. The chapter begins with an explanation of the thesis' methodological approach. This includes the choice of research design, type of reasoning and social inquiry. Thereafter, the empirical matter will be explained, which includes the data collection, sampling, strategy for recruiting informants, interview guide, and selection. As the thesis has benefited from thematic analysis as a method for analyzing empirical evidence, a chapter follows which deals with the systematic procedure for data analysis. Followed comes a sub-chapter which will introduce the informants who make up the empirical material for the thesis. The informants are introduced through demographic characteristics in a table, as well as a short introduction of each informant. Finally, a section has been devoted to a discussion regarding

the reliability and validity of the data, in addition to the authors reflections regarding the limitations and challenges that were faced throughout the process.

5.1. Methodological approach

To begin with, the starting point for this thesis were the four exploratory research questions as they early on set important frameworks for the data collection method as well as for the sampling. For the sake of clarity, the research questions are given below:

A) What are the integration experiences of Syrians that obtained Turkish citizenship, and how is their integration linked with their legal status among other cultural, economic, political, and social conditions in Türkiye?

B) How do Syrian naturalized refugees consider their Turkish citizenship? How do they position themselves vis-à-vis Syrians without Turkish citizenship?

C) Does citizenship lead to belonging in Türkiye or rather is it compatible with the desire to settle permanently in Türkiye? Why/why not?

D) To what extend have obtained citizenship led to improved life situation for Syrians that might foster integration and social cohesion into the Turkish society?

An inductive and exploratory approach was adopted with the main purpose being to obtain new knowledge about a topic from the perspective of naturalized Syrians. As the thesis is obviously of a smaller scope, it does not aim to develop any theories based on limited data nor does it claim representativity. Surely, a much larger and representative sample is required to be able to do so. Other than the sample size, the relationship between citizenship and integration should be analyzed in a similar context. What the study can do, on the other hand, is to arrive at new insights and to uncover knowledge that might be valuable to fellow researchers as well as other experts and actors dealing with the issue of refugee integration. The study can also show some simple connections and patterns about the link between citizenship and integration in the case of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, and in general provide insight into the informants' perceptions on identity, integration and citizenship based on the research questions.

As for the social inquiry, the thesis is also constructed through the identification of what the researcher considers to be a current problem within the social reality, namely a particularistic inclusion of certain refugees while it is indeed crucial to encompass the Syrian population at large. Since it has been significant to establish a clear picture of the reality, a thorough chapter that deals with context of this master's thesis is written in Chapter 3. In this regard, fundamental thinking within critical theory has been adopted, which is generally understood as a body of social thought both emerging from and responding to Marxism (Alway, 1995).

Critical theory was started as a new direction that attempted to reappraise and reconstruct Marxist theory in the light of changed historical conditions. This took place at the so-called Frankfurt School, the first of its kind, which was a Marxist-oriented research institute founded in 1923 in Frankfurt, Germany (Alway, 1995, p. 22). According to the several theorists and philosophers connected to the institute, a critical theory may be distinguished from a traditional theory where it serves a specific practical purpose: a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human “emancipation from slavery”, acts as a “liberating ... influence”, and works “to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of human beings (Horkheimer, 1972, as qtd. In Bohman, 2005). Furthermore, critical theory has developed in different directions and deals with different dimensions and contexts where people are subjected to domination in modern society. In any sense, the main purpose of critical theory is to provide a descriptive and normative basis for social inquiry which is aimed at the liberation of people in all forms. Another important aspect of critical theory is the understanding of philosophy and social sciences as best combined, rather than separated as it allows research to be practical in a distinctively moral (rather than instrumental) sense. The normative task that critical theory aims to complete, simply cannot be accomplished without the interplay of the philosophy and social sciences (Bohman, 2005).

5.2. Collection of data: In-depth and semi-structured interviews

In addition to experiences gained early in the data collection phase, the adaptation of an inductive reasoning made it clear that semi-structured interviews would be appropriate method to collect data. The semi-structured interview is also a popular data collection method as it has been proven to be both versatile and flexible (Kallio et. Al, 2016). That is for instance, as it allows for a reciprocity between the interviewer and informant, enabling the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on the informant's answer (Kallio et. Al, 2016). The data

collection period, which has involved both café meetings, but also more extensive fieldwork such as visits to the informants' workplaces, homes, and communities, has been characterized by great variation in the degree of opportunity for duration of time with the informants. In some interview situations, being a guest for dinner and spending hours with the informants gave room for long and complementary interviews as well as interesting input from family and relatives who were present. Sometimes, however, the informants were short on time, and the author had to settle for a 25-minute conversation over WhatsApp-call. Although the variation in time was a challenge, conscious use of interview techniques enabled the author to ask good questions that effectively gave information that could contribute to answering the thesis' issues. In addition, before the start of this project, a questionnaire was drawn up and sent out to a group of respondents, while also using a similar interview guide to conduct several pilot interviews. Thus, the designed interview guide was tested ahead of the actual data collection period, which provided the opportunity to adjust and improve the interview guide. Both the questionnaire and the pilot interviews were carried out with a criteria-based selection, so that these respondents also fulfilled the requirement of being Syrians with acquired Turkish citizenship.

5.3. Selection, size of sample, and strategy for recruitment

It is essential in qualitative studies that informants are knowledgeable about the topic and experts by virtue of their involvement in specific life events. However, that does not mean that he or she must possess in-depth theoretical knowledge. Rather, the informant should be able to reflect and provide detailed information about the phenomenon as he or she are someone who has undergone or is undergoing the relevant experience (Morse, 1991). This thesis has benefited from purposeful sampling where the author has chosen informants according to the needs of the study. In this context, that meant only Syrian informants who have obtained Turkish citizenship and other variables such as age, financial status, gender, or level of education were not taken into consideration in relevance to the study. Furthermore, since there are approximately 230,000 Syrians with citizenship which corresponded at the time approximately 3.8 % of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, it is obvious that the sample only represents a small proportion of Syrians in total.

As there is no register of who has acquired citizenship available to the public, snowballing method was the best way to move forward. Yet, it created a burden as well. The author has at each possible opportunity tried to recruit new informants, especially while being in contact with the network of informants. Nevertheless, it was experienced that having

obtained citizenship not necessarily mean that the informant has friends or relatives in close surroundings who also have citizenship. Sometimes the informants had obtained citizenship before marriage and before having started a family, having resulted in them being the only one in their family with a Turkish citizenship. Sometimes, the informants had many friends who were in the process of obtaining it but had not yet had their process completed. Other times, however, meeting the informants led to a chain of interviews which made it possible to conduct interviews with individuals within the same community. Then again, interviewing individuals within the same local community may create a blind spot that the informants may hold the same environmental perceptions which may contribute to little variation in the empirical material. This has been tackled through initiated snowball sampling from several quarters and within several environments, such as among students from various universities, families with children, academic environments, government officials and so on. By conducting interviews with informants from various cities, the author has been able to counteract the effect that the informants exist in a specific environment that can influence their attitudes and perceptions about integration. This turns out to be an important aspect in the Turkish context, as due to variation in minority representation in different regions, it might constitute a great difference between living in the east and the west of the country. Interviews have therefore been conducted both in Ankara and Gaziantep, in addition an interview made with an informant living in Bursa. For example, out of the Syrians established firms in Türkiye, the greatest measured importance is made up in the south-east (Kaymaz and Kadkoy, 2016), such as in the city of Gaziantep, which is one of the Turkish cities with the largest population. Compared to Gaziantep, where about 21 percent of the population is Syrian under the TPR, only about 2% of Ankara's population is Syrian under the TPR (PMM, 2023). With that in mind, it is possible that Syrians living in areas with high proportions of refugees, such as Gaziantep, may have perceptions that may be influenced by a larger support network, cultural familiarity but also that the native population are more used to immigrants.

5.4. Thematic Analysis

Through 16 interviews, this thesis has aimed to figure out how Syrian naturalized citizens create meaning regarding their own integration process, life situation and belonging in Türkiye. With that in mind, and since the interview data consisted of accounts of varying length where the informants described their own feelings and experiences related to the thesis topic, it was chosen to use thematic analysis as a data analysis method. Thematic analysis was considered

appropriate for various reasons. Firstly, thematic analysis is a tool that can be applied across a range of theoretical frameworks as it is not confined to one single theoretical commitment and has proven to be flexible. Furthermore, as thematic analysis is focused around systematically identifying patterns of meaning, or so-called themes within the text, it was chosen to use a thematic approach through the process of generating codes and themes from transcribed data material (Braun and Clarke, 2015).

It is the thematic analysis that thus forms the basis of the argument that has been built to answer research questions. The thematic procedure itself has been done by getting familiarized with the data after having completed all the interview transcriptions. This was followed by a period of coding in several rounds so that related utterances, words, and statements could be identified and assigned codes (Braun and Clarke, 2015). The codes have thus helped to finally identify several themes that have provided the basis for the thesis analysis which is structured into various subchapters.

5.5. Respondents and their backgrounds

Over time, it has become quite self-evident why many Syrians have chosen, and still choose to flee from Syria. That is especially since prospects for a stable future within the regime is questionable, as well as the overall lack of basic necessities and limited livelihood opportunities because of negative effects of the widespread war and the destruction it brings about. However, although often portrayed within number and statistical figures, it is crucial to remember how all Syrians carry their own unique and personal journey that should be honored with dignity and respect. Below is a table providing basic demographic descriptions of the informants within the thesis sample:

Table 2. Detailed Information on Participants.⁶

Name	Sex	Age	Occupation Syria	Occupation Türkiye	Ethnicity	City of birth	City of Residence
Ahmad	M	34	Student	Teacher	Arab	Qamishli	Ankara
Mazen	M	23	High School	Student	Arab	Aleppo	Bursa
Amira	F	33	Volunteer	Diplomat	Arab	Aleppo	Ankara
Anas	M	26	Student	Student	Arab	Aleppo	Ankara
Abid*	M	25	Student	Business owner	Arab	Raqqa	-
Mayar	F	36	Unemployed	Translator	Arab	Aleppo	Ankara
Abbas	M	45	CEO of family company	CEO of family company	Arab	Aleppo	Gaziantep

⁶ Pseudonyms are used for all participants in this study to protect their identity and maintain anonymity in line with the ethics committee rules and regulations of Social Sciences University of Ankara.

Salim	M	41	Carpet trader	Mechanic trader	Arab	Aleppo	Gaziantep
Masa	F	38	Chemist	Chemist	Arab	Aleppo	Gaziantep
Abdil	M	32	Economist	Economist	Turkmen	Aleppo	Gaziantep
Huda	F	52	Construction engineer	Construction engineer	Arab	Aleppo	Gaziantep
Kareem	M	47	Business owner	Business owner	Arab	Aleppo	Gaziantep
Safiaa	F	31	Student	Teacher	Arab	Aleppo	Gaziantep
Omer	M	35	Teacher	Teacher	Arab	Aleppo	Ankara
Zeinab	F	32	Student	Computer engineer	Arab	Damascus	Gaziantep
Hussain	M	52	Mechanical engineer	Medical engineer	Arab	Damascus	Gaziantep

Note: Abid, marked with a “”, does no longer live in Türkiye and has relocated to a third country.*

The informant group in question consists of a relatively varied group of individuals who, apart from their many differences, are all Syrians who have obtained citizenship during their varied time spent in Türkiye. The informants consist of both females and males, referred to as either “F” or “M” in the table, and their ages vary from the youngest being 23 to the oldest being 52. The median age is 38, while the average age of the informants is 36. Although the informants’ degrees and jobs vary, there is an important common denominator that all the informants have some form of university degree, i.e., higher education. Informants who do not hold any university diploma does in another way hold a valuable and elite position, such as through excessive wealth or being involved within politics or diplomatic relations. Furthermore, as the table can show, there is a large majority of Arabs where this thesis has attempted to investigate different experiences of integration that can arise in relation to ethnicity. However, only one informant has been located who is both Syrian with Turkish citizenship and who also has a non-Arab ethnic background, namely Abdil (32), who is a Turkmen of origin. The data is thus not very fruitful for a comparison of perceived integration and experiences that is linked with ethnic affiliation. Regarding city of birth, there is a large majority of informants from Aleppo, in addition to some coming from cities such as Damascus, Raqqa and Qamishli (Raqqa and Qamishli are not exactly urban in the sense of Aleppo or Damascus but also is not village-like). This means that the informants have mainly migrated from urban areas. In order to give more detailed information on their backgrounds and current situation, each participant in this study is further elaborated below:

Ahmad is a 32-year-old teacher from the town of Qamishli in northeastern Syria. He has done varied work since arriving in 2014 but is now working on his profession as an art teacher in

Türkiye. He has a son and a wife from Syria whom he married in Türkiye, and these days he is in the process for them to also obtain citizenship. They stay together in Ankara.

Mazen is a 23-year-old university student who reside in Bursa. He is monthly travelling to Ankara as he is going to university there, currently finishing his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He is the only one within the sample who has Turkish ancestors within his family.

Amira is a 33-year-old diplomatic project developer from Aleppo. She came to Türkiye as far back as in 2013 and has since then been working with political and diplomatic projects along with her husband who is also involved within Syrian opposition policies. She lives in Ankara.

Anas is a 26-year-old software engineer from Homs. He did his bachelor's degree in Türkiye and was the only one in his family who fled to Türkiye. Now he is trying to leave the country as he wants to start his life in another place, preferably a gulf country. He currently resides in Ankara

Abid is a 28-year-old businessman from Aleppo. He obtained the citizenship, but decided to leave Türkiye quite recently as he doesn't recognize it as the place, he wants to build his life. He is currently living in Moldova but is transnationally connected to Türkiye as he still is involved with a business here.

Mayar is a 36-year-old translator who graduated from a university in Ankara. She is currently unemployed, lives with her family in Ankara, and is waiting to find a job aligned with her interests. At the same time, Mayar spends a lot of time volunteering and uses her translation skills to help other Syrians with their everyday problems. Mayar came to Türkiye from Raqqa.

Abbas is a 45-year-old CEO from Aleppo. He is married with children and has taken over his father's company that manufactures and supplies chip machines to countries all over the world. Abbas is located in Gaziantep, and travels all around the world on a yearly basis due to the character of his business.

Salim is a 41-year-old trader from Aleppo. He is married, and is the sole breadwinner for his wife, mother-in-law and his 3 children. During the time he arrived in Türkiye and until now,

he has also lived in Tunisia for two years as he was offered a sales position there. However, as proximity to his hometown Aleppo is important for him, the family decided to return to Gaziantep which is where they currently reside.

Masa is a 38-year-old chemical laboratory expert from Aleppo. She is married with children, and now works full-time in Türkiye in a civil servant position. She is living Gaziantep.

Abdil is 32 years old and has come to Türkiye from Aleppo and holds a bachelor's degree in economics. He is married with children, working full-time as a civil servant position, and is located in Gaziantep.

Huda is a 52-year-old construction engineer. She is widowed and came to Türkiye very recently; therefore, she does not speak any Turkish. Her children are grown ups and also, they are highly educated engineers in various fields. She currently resides in Gaziantep together with her daughter.

Kareem is a 47-year-old businessman and self-claimed family man. He lives in Gaziantep with his wife and four children and has a university background from business administration. He is also a translator.

Safaa is a 31-year-old teacher who spends most of her time volunteering at an orphanage center. She is not married and is still not sure whether she wants to build her life in Türkiye. She resides in Ankara with her parents.

Omer is a 35-year-old teacher from Aleppo. He has been struggling a lot in Türkiye, especially due to the harsh working conditions he has experienced in Ankara. He graduated from English literature and is currently working as a teacher. He is single and provides financially for his mother and brother who has not yet obtained the citizenship. He currently resides in Ankara.

Zeinab is a 32-year-old computer engineer who holds a bachelor's degree from Syria and a master's degree from Türkiye. She is single and works for an international company remotely. She came to Türkiye alone but was quickly followed by her sister whom she now lives with in Ankara.

Hussain is a 52-year-old mechanical and medical engineer from Damascus. He is currently residing in Gaziantep and has five children. Hussain has not been able to find engineering jobs but is working on various short-term contracts about translation and issues related to development in northern Syrian cities.

As seen above, the informants' background and key information seem to agree with the literature that the Syrians who possess certain key characteristics, such as being wealthy, educated, intellectual or rich are more likely to obtain the Turkish citizenship.

The following semi-structured interview guide has been used during the interviews. The interview guide has been developed in line with the research questions and to suit the criteria-selected informants in order to extract information about their experiences with integration and belonging:

Citizenship Questionnaire

1. Age
 2. Gender:
 3. Education:
 4. Place of Birth: (Urban/Rural)
 5. City of Residence:
 6. Marital Status:
 7. Size of Household: (Number of people staying under one roof)
 8. Number of Children:
 9. Occupation in Syria:
 10. Occupation in Turkey:
 11. Nationality/Citizenship:
 12. Ethnicity: (Arap/Turkmen/Kurdish)
-
- 1) In what year did you migrate to Türkiye?
 - 2) When did you obtain the Turkish citizenship?
 - 3) How many of your family members have acquired Turkish citizenship? Who are they?
 - 4) Can you explain the procedure? What are the stages of acquiring Turkish citizenship?
 - 5) Were you aware of what would happen after obtaining Turkish citizenship? What

were your major concerns?

6) Has your life changed since you were granted Turkish citizenship? Have you changed your name with a Turkish sounding name?

7) If you were to compare your life in Türkiye before you got citizenship with your life in Türkiye after you obtained citizenship, what are the biggest differences?

8) (When relevant) Do you feel that obtaining Turkish citizenship has been a positive addition to your life?

9) Can you name some reasons why it has been positive for you?

10) (If relevant) Do you feel that obtaining Turkish citizenship has a negative impact to your life?

11) Can you name some reasons in what ways it has been negative for you?

12) When you agreed to obtain Turkish citizenship, what were the main issues you considered?

13) Have you experienced being included as an equal member of society after you received Turkish citizenship or life is as usual?

14) Have you ever received positive reactions from native Turkish citizens if / when you say that you have been granted Turkish citizenship? If so, what were these reactions about?

15) Have you ever received negative reactions from native Turkish citizens if / when you tell them that you have been granted Turkish citizenship?

16) If so, what were these reactions about?

17) Have you voted in elections in Türkiye yet? What kind of reactions did you get?

18) Do you feel an increased sense of belonging to Türkiye after obtaining Turkish citizenship? Why/Why not?

19) Do you speak Turkish language? If yes, what is your proficiency? Where did you learn it?

20) Do you think it is important to speak Turkish language to be accepted in the society?

21) Do you believe that even if you speak the language, you will not be fully accepted into society? How did you come to this conclusion?

22) Have you ever felt remorse or uncertainty regarding your Turkish citizenship? If so, why? Do you think it can be taken away from you?

23) What do you feel about integration? Do you think integration is related to citizenship? Explain.

24) What are the 3 most important issues about Syrian refugees in Türkiye?

25) Do you envision to build a life in Türkiye, or do you plan to go elsewhere? Why/why not? What are your future plans? (including moving to another country or return)

5.6. Reliability and validity

Important aspects such as reliability and validity will now be addressed, as well as how the author understands this within the study. Resorting to Bryman's (2021) definition of the concepts, it can be claimed that reliability is concerned with whether we would get the same results from a study if we repeated it under the same conditions, while the validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions generated from a piece of research (Bryman, 2021, p. 40). Both reliability and validity are thus important to ensure quality in both qualitative and quantitative studies. Ensuring reliability and validity has been a point of awareness in this thesis, and the researcher has been critical of own data while several efforts and precautions have been taken.

To begin with, as part of the thesis research questions deal with how the informants understand their own integration into Turkish society, not obtaining a mutual understanding during the interviews were a danger. Through preliminary studies and reading, the author came to the knowledge of how refugees might perceive integration in wildly different ways. One study for instance refers to how some Syrian refugees in Türkiye understand integration largely as being integrated economically (Şimşek, 2020), while further social or cultural aspects are not necessarily emphasized to the same degree. As it was crucial to gain an insight into how the informants understood their own integration into the wider aspects of society, it was therefore not appropriate to use the word integration alone. That is as the answers could thus become incomplete and affect the reliability of the study. By being aware of the terminology and trying to create a clear and distinct dialogue, the interviewees may bring the essential empirical life to the project, thesis, or report. However, it is important to note that this asymmetry between informant and researcher has some implications for both reliability, validity and not least ethics. Bourdieu was concerned with exercising non-violent communication in the interview situation, grounded in his view that that language is not exclusively a medium of communication, but is also means of distinction, dominance, and violence that may also be submitted to his concept of symbolic violence (Topper, 2001, p. 45) According to Bourdieu, the researcher should do everything in his power to reduce this asymmetry that can arise between researcher and informant. This can be done through

everything from the words the researcher uses, how the project is presented, what the researcher emphasizes and what is withheld (Drageset and Elingsen, 2010)

Furthermore, the author has been careful to provide an open and transparent description of the method and the research process, which can strengthen the reliability of the work. The author strengthens reliability through a thorough review of the methodological approach, recruitment, implementation of data collection and by also making critical objections to these.

Lastly, several linguistic precautions have been taken. The author has occasionally been dependent on using a translator, which is something that might lead to a difficulty in giving follow-up questions, as well as the fact that certain cultural and language-specific nuances might disappear within the translation. In situations where a translator was necessary, this barrier was met by using a translator who speaks the informants' native language, Syrian/Levantine Arabic, which ensured to a full understanding during the fieldwork.

5.7. Limitations and challenges

In the aim of contacting Syrian refugees who have obtained citizenship, it was primarily chosen to use the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management (PMM - Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı) statistics on the distribution of Syrians under temporary protection by top provinces. Based on this distribution, the initial goal was to visit the five cities: Istanbul, Gaziantep, Mersin, Hatay and Izmir. Unfortunately, during the period in which had been set to travel, on February 6, a series of earthquakes and aftershocks struck Türkiye and Syria, leading to deadly consequences for large parts of the southeastern region of Türkiye. In a state of emergency with fatal consequences such as injuries, killings, as well large displacement of people, a decision was made to not travel to certain cities or to even travel during a period. Based on this consideration, the data collection plan changed to cover only Ankara and Gaziantep, which was also a matter of the given time period.

At the same time, as the data collection period took place during the election campaign ahead of the national election in 2023, it was sometimes difficult to locate informants who were willing to participate. Many stated that they would like to talk, but that they preferred to wait until after the election results were clear. Some explained that even though they had now become Turkish citizens, they felt uncomfortable staying in public places in the days before the election as many Syrians were targeted by opposition parties and their supporters.

Lastly, as will appear, the importance of gender as a dimension in the experience of

belonging and integration has not been a key aspect in neither the theoretical framework or in the further analysis. Gender aspects thus stand as a clear weakness in this thesis, as it may be gendered disparities in refugees meaning-making processes as well as gender-specific constraints related to integration.



6. ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the thesis' empirical material will finally be presented. The findings have been obtained through fieldwork which has included semi-structured interviews as well as focus group interviews. Data material has been divided into nine categories of themes in close proximity to the research questions. As the thesis is concerned with including the voice and perspective of Syrians, relevant excerpts from the in-depth interviews will be provided under each theme frequently. Reflections by the respondents can help to illuminate the topic as well as to finally find an answer to the research questions.

6.1. The naturalization process is rather long, informal and obscured

As experienced through interviews with the informants, receiving Turkish citizenship is quite an ordinary process. Most of the informants explain that they have either received a message or a phone call, and that they have been briefly and simply asked if they wish to become Turkish citizens. If they have answered yes, which is the case for all the informants, they have then been asked to collect a list of necessary documentation which they will bring as they are invited to a meeting with the authorities. As Syrian refugees' acquisition of Turkish citizenship has been a somewhat secretive process hidden from the public by the authorities, it was during the interviews a goal to gain a greater understanding of what the procedure had entailed for the informants. Through their personal experiences, it can be understood that obtaining citizenship largely consists of providing the above-mentioned documentation as well as giving personal information if requested during an interview. In addition, the procedure has been described as characterized by several periods of waiting between different stages. Ahmad (32), who explained that he had heard rumors that people like him might have the opportunity to obtain citizenship, had went directly to the offices of migration management, and found out that his name was in fact put on a list for candidates for citizenship. He explained his first-hand experiences on the path to naturalization:

"I realized my name is there, so that is when they offered me to get an appointment. They also informed me about the documents that I should bring with me. I prepared the papers, I went, and I waited for the process at Göç İdaresi to be completed. After that, I got the citizenship."
(Ahmad, 32)

Ahmad also revealed that between the time he started the process for his own citizenship and until he was invited to the physical meeting, he had gotten married. He was nevertheless refused when he asked to include his wife within a family file, as his contact person had explained that they had already opened an individual file which could not be expanded to also include his wife. On the other hand, they had explained that when the process was completed and he became a citizen, he could request citizenship for his wife as well.

Furthermore, as demonstrated under the theoretical framework, several nation states, set several requirements for refugees and other immigrants who wish to become citizens. Such requirements usually concern a desired level of language, in addition to naturalization exams and a relevant social and historical knowledge about the society. Although it is well-known that Syrian citizens are selected solely based on their academic skills or economic prosperity, it was desired to understand whether further conditions had ever been assessed in the informants' individual processes. Nevertheless, there were few informants who stated that they had been questioned about topics related to their linguistic or social knowledge. From Anas (26) statement the minimal importance of linguistic knowledge can be emphasized, as he stated:

“I was answering them in my very basic Turkish and they didn't ask any questions regarding my language. In fact, it was not mentioned at all.” (Anas, 26)

It may have something to do with the fact that candidacy for citizenship in the Turkish context is already predetermined based on desired qualifications and is not a matter of traditional pathways for integration. Anas's experience can also point to the informality in which citizenship is awarded, as he explained:

“When I got to the seventh stage finally, they just told me to come and get my Turkish ID. So, then I traveled from Istanbul and Ankara and picked it up.” (Anas, 26)

Anas says that the process of obtaining citizenship consisted of seven steps, but that he himself does not know the details of each step, other than the fact that an extensive investigation about him had found place. He also explained that the whole process was contactless and that he did not need to meet those responsible for his process before he had to show up in Ankara to collect his ID-card.

Similarly, Salim (41) explained that he had simply submitted documents about himself, and then he had waited for the process to be completed by the authorities. He said:

“I just received a message about it. I then handed in all the necessary information and documentation that they needed. I then only waited for the steps to proceed. There is nothing more to it really.” (Salim, 41)

However, Salim explained that as for his knowledge, the process is not that easy for everyone and based on information he has received from other Syrians he knows, he stated:

“For other people it's harder... Especially these days. My friend was stuck in the fourth step, that's where they do all the research about his past. This step is the most important one, and if they find any issue the process can stop completely. Just if the person or that person's father or someone they know have any issue, they can stop it” (Salim, 41).

It can be understood that the informants themselves have little opportunity to influence during the actual stages within the process as it is mostly handled within the authorities. Kareem (47), who had gone through a similar process to provide requested documentation, had waited several years to have his process completed. He wasn't sure why his process had taken so long but thought it might be because he belonged to the group of the first Syrians who obtained work permit in Türkiye. He had heard that for several people in that group, citizenship processes had stalled because of a communication problem between the offices in Gaziantep and Ankara. When it came to issues of the security step, as emphasized by Salim, Hussain (52) also were of the opinion that the security issue was the most important in the process of obtaining citizenship. From his and his family's experience at the day of their interview, he told the following:

“He asked about my relatives, I had to call my father and ask him because I personally do not memorize all this information... He asked about the aunt of my father, and it is difficult for me to remember those names.” (Hussain, 52).

Hussain also explained that similar questions had been asked to his wife, as well as that they had to elaborate on their intention with coming to Türkiye. Also, Hussain, who did not speak

Turkish, could not recall to ever have been questioned with any requirements for language skills.

To conclude, the informants' accounts overall testifies that the process for obtaining Turkish citizenship consists of 7 steps. That is although it seems, that the steps within the process are somewhat obscured even to the informants who has partaken in it. The central experiences of the informants revolve around receiving the message or the call that one is a candidate for citizenship, a collection of personal documents that is delivered on the interview day, a step concerned with security matters, as well as a period of waiting time before one is issued an ID card that confirms the citizenship.

6.2. The duration of stay in Türkiye is unimportant for the naturalizations

It is often that in cases of refugee's naturalization that the duration of stay is an important consideration, and many immigration countries have defined specific conditions for the length of stay when new citizens are to be assessed for citizenship. In Chapter 3.3. through the elaboration of the immigration countries Italy, Norway, and Germany, it was understood how naturalization, which signifies an important step towards refugees' integration and participation in the host society, is often linked to a longer time of stay, such as on renewed residence permits. This time duration is usually not accidental but may serve crucial functions aimed at integrating the potential new citizens into further aspects of the host society. This can, as in the cases of both Italy, Norway, and Germany, be concerned with the refugees acquiring decent language skills, undergoing a civic education, achieving cultural awareness regarding the host society's values and culture, but also dealing with whether the refugees must achieve economic self-sufficiency. In the case of Türkiye, it has been noted how the most important criterion for Syrians obtaining exceptional citizenship has been the extent to which they can contribute to Turkish society through fields such as science, economics, social life, sport, culture and art (Akcapar and Şimşek, 2018), rather than setting up a well-established framework for integration pathway that may lead to citizenship on the long term. With that in mind, it has been observed great variation in terms of length of stay in Türkiye among the informants, and their accounts of naturalization show little evidence of a strategic plan from the authorities' side, apart from the fact that everyone is handpicked based on the idea that they might contribute to the Turkish society somehow.

A clear example of this was illustrated by the informant Huda (52), a construction engineer from Aleppo who lives in Gaziantep. Huda had received her citizenship 4 months

before the conducted interview, and according to herself she came to Türkiye in 2022, which were at the time of writing this thesis approx. one year ago. Thus, Huda had undergone the whole citizenship process and had her citizenship issued within a period of 6-7 months, which is a short time compared to other informants. As Huda had only lived one year in Türkiye, she was naturally enough one of the informants with the least knowledge of Turkish. When asked how the responsible migration office had dealt with her not being able to speak Turkish, she indicated that those handling her process had offered a rather relaxed attitude towards her lack of language knowledge. She explained,

“They said later, if God wills” ... They didn’t mind this so much, actually ... They said that it’s not important, but they also said that by the willing if God it would improve...” (Huda, 52).

However, most of the informants have spent a relatively long time in Türkiye and did indeed hold good language qualifications. Many arrived early in the years between 2011-2013, and had their citizenships issued in 2017, which means that about a year passed from the citizenship amendment in 2016 until their citizenship were issued. The informant Zeinab (32), who compared to Huda spoke Turkish fluently, had waited a total of 4 years since she had arrived in Türkiye until she was issued the citizenship. The actual invitation for citizenship had come a year after she arrived in Türkiye, exactly around the same time that she had started a master’s degree in computer engineering at a Turkish university. Yet, she still had to wait until after her graduation to have her citizenship issued. This was the same situation for Mayar (36), who had also obtained her citizenship only when she had finished her university degree. As she explained,

“I was contacted earlier, four years before that. So, my process lasted for four years in total... Yeah, it took them 4 years to give it to me. I don’t know why, but I believe it has to do with a security check.” (Mayar, 36).

With that, it may seem that how long Syrians have been in Türkiye is an unimportant aspect in the awarding of citizenship, as there is no connection between time spent in Türkiye and the date of citizenship invitation.

6.3. Turkish citizenship is primarily seen as a tool for security and equality

Acquiring Turkish citizenship gives whoever obtains it several rights and obligations in the country. It also represents a formal confirmation that the person in question has become a

Turkish national, and that he or she are now formally equated with those who were born and raised in Türkiye and who descend from generations of “ethnic Turkish” individuals. A central part of the thesis is about understanding the importance of Turkish citizenship for Syrian refugees and, not least, getting closer to an answer to what significance naturalization has for integration among other cultural, economic political and social conditions in Türkiye. Here, the theory has shown us that for refugees, citizenship can have several varied meanings that are often related to aspects such as legal protection, safety, mobility, or equality. For individuals who have undergone forced displacement, theory shows that the achievement of an ontological security against future displacement can be an important part of the meaning refugees attach to the possibility of or achieved citizenship in a host country. At the same time, refugees’ perception of citizenship relates to the distinction between the vertical and horizontal dimension of citizenship. With that said, although Syrians under the TPR have gained access to several rights that have contributed to a limited stable existence in Türkiye, they still do find themselves in a highly precarious and vulnerable situation. For instance, this follows from the fact that their protection status is indeed temporary and is constantly under threat where larger interest groups in society want to deport them back to Syria. With that said, the informants’ accounts can testify to the central understanding of citizenship as an instrument for stability and security.

For Ahmad (32), security was linked to the rights one had in dealing with other people in society, for example if someone had a problem with him. Citizenship meant that in such cases, he was “*on the same level as locals in terms of rights*”. Moreover, Ahmad’s accounts also show the importance of feeling equal in the face of other civilians. Subsequently, the informants have also shown how the security aspects citizenship provides can lead to self-confidence, as well as how formal reward is an important confirmation that they can carry in everyday encounters with racism or discrimination. This is shown by Salim (41), who refers to an example when the teachers had denied that his son was a Turkish national, but where he and his son had confidently been able to read out the Turkish ID number and refute the teacher:

For example, during the first day of school this year, the teacher was asking some questions to my son in the class. I do not know why, but they had asked for his Kimlik number. The teacher had been sure that it would start with 99, so when he said different numbers, the teacher was shocked. And he denied him being Turkish. But we can stay with confidence, because we have the citizenship and therefore there is no difference between them and us.” (Salim, 41)

When it came to stability, the informant Masa (38) mentioned that citizenship was the main thing that had contributed to her and her family being able to put behind them the stress they had experienced in years prior to the citizenship. She stated:

“The life is slowly becoming normal because with the citizenship we can live as full citizens here. We enjoy the same right as anyone else.” (Masa, 38)

As can be understood, Masa also emphasizes the importance of being equal in the sense of citizenship. Safaa (31) also drew lines to the issue of equality, and particularly linked it with the opportunities she had for work before citizenship compared to after. She stated the following:

“Without the citizenship, to have a good job as a teacher, that is very difficult. A really good official job, where I can have a normal salary. I am educated after all. After the citizenship, I finally have this option on my life.” (Safaa, 31)

Finally, in line with theory, an empirical example shows that the importance of citizenship can be linked to the value it has for some refugees when they want to move to a "perceived" better country. This applied to Abid (28), who maintained a transit-mentality as he had always wanted to relocate to Germany, which he perceived to be a country that was more aligned with the dreams and aspirations he had for his life.

To summarize, it is particularly ideas about security, stability, and the fact that one can be and feel as an equal to others that are of central importance to the informants. Not having sufficient identification papers, legal rights, and legal protection have been described through the informants' accounts as major problems for the Syrian population in experiencing security and stability. As described by Abdil (38), the lack of perceived security before citizenship was associated with the fact that it was not easy to integrate in Türkiye, and as he states, he had wished that *“Türkiye were like Europe when it comes to integration models.”*

6.4. There are different attitudes in adapting one's name after naturalization

A rather neglected topic is how refugees sometimes change their name when they become citizens of a host country. It is quite common for individuals to change their name when they become citizens of their new country due to various reasons. Such reasons might be both linguistic, cultural, and personal, but can also be related to legal and administrative reasons,

for example when transcription of a person's name is difficult. Sometimes refugees' name changes can also be related to the relationship between name and social stigma, for example the stigma of a religious or ethnic group (Khosravi, 2012). Khosravi (2012) finds, among other things, that the idea of changing the name of Muslim immigrants in Sweden who experience the stigma associated with Islamophobia may be related to the expectation that bearing a "white" name will be rewarded with a "white privilege" and thus facilitate their individual integration with society (Khosravi, 2012, p. 78-29).

In the case of Syrians in Türkiye, such otherness cannot be solely linked to religiosity as both Türkiye and Syria are predominantly Islamic countries, thus cases of names with an association to Islam are a shared cultural element between the two. However, distinctions in name giving do occur as both countries have unique linguistic and historical context. A point of interest in my study was to understand both expectations and experiences with name change for Syrian naturalized refugees. Through the informants' experiences, two conflicting points of view have been found in addition to a more neutral attitude, which is name change as a purely practical matter and as an unimportant detail, and name changing as a crucial and unshakable identity marker. First and foremost, changing names as a practical matter can be analyzed. Ahmad (32) is one of the informants who chose to change his name when he became a Turkish citizen. His experience points to the idea of name change as a natural part of citizenship transition, and Ahmad had changed to a name which, according to himself was 100% Turkish. About the idea he said:

"First of all, my name is hard for Turkish people, and it was strange. The other reason is that I wanted to appear as if I am closer with them. I don't want to appear as foreign." (Ahmad, 32)

Ahmad was nevertheless clear about the point that changing one's name as part of becoming a Turkish citizen was not exclusively about Türkiye, but that it was a natural consequence of becoming a citizen of any country. He explained:

"If I went to America, it would be the same. I would change my name for an American name." (Ahmad, 32)

The informant Abbas (45) also downplayed the sentimental meanings of changing one's name and had adopted a Turkish name himself when he became a citizen. He explained:

“... when I got the citizenship, I changed my name to a more Turkish sounding name. I really don't care about it; I just had my business in mind, and I also don't pay much importance to this. Names, and so on. The name that I have now is very close to my old name as well, it's my name but in Turkish.” (Abbas, 45)

However, Abbas – a wealthy businessman living in Gaziantep – had conflicting opinions. While saying that changing his name was not important and his Turkish-sounding name is very close to his original Arabic name, he also linked the name change to racism and discrimination in bureaucratic processes, which he believed that he was not immune against although he was quite rich.

Next, the understanding of name changing as a signifier of identity was often described with great passion during the interview situation. The question was often answered with a definite no, usually followed by an assurance from the informant that such a name change would never take place. Salim (41) with his family was one of the informants who had kept his name of birth. He described the decision by saying that the ethnic and national tag associated with his name was important, and not least it was about being proud of who he was:

“My name is Salim and I will not change it for a Turkish style. That was so important to me. I even got a copy of my Syrian passport just for them to copy my name to the smallest detail. They also tried to make my wife change her name, but we kept our names. We didn't want to change our names because this is who we are. We are proud.” (Salim, 41)

Similarly, the informant Mayar (36) understood the name as an important identity marker that had to be preserved, and explained:

“... my name is a part of my identity. I want to be able to mix the cultures and I can be multinational without giving away my name and my identity.” (Mayar, 36)

Mayar herself had experience with assimilating in line with Turkish customs. That was according to her both accepted and necessary in certain situations, such as when she was going to vote in the Turkish elections and felt that she had to tie her hijab in the Turkish way so as not to provoke ethnic Turkish people. However, at changing her name which was assimilation of a more permanent character, she drew her personal limit. Others, such as the informant Abid

(28), reacted with disgust and horror when the topic of name change was mentioned during the interview, and blurted out:

“... of course not! Why would I do something like that? They asked me if I wanted to change it at Göç İdaresi, but I said no, of course.” (Abid, 28)

However, it can be mentioned that Abid was an informant who had already used his Turkish citizenship to permanently relocate to another country and only established a transnational connection to Türkiye where he had a business. According to himself, Abid did not feel any connection to Turkish society, which he also believed had not given him anything positive. Lastly, several informants stated that they had changed their names in a completely insignificant way, such as to overcome linguistic challenges between Arabic and Latin written languages. However, the changes were seen as so small that it was not perceived as a name change, but instead a way for Turkish people to be able to pronounce their name.

6.5. The feeling of being desired through naturalizations can offer a sense of entitlement

Since the Syrian naturalized refugees are aware that their acquired Turkish citizenship is linked with their skills, qualifications or contributions, an interest was directed toward how this understanding could be associated with a sense of entitlement in society. Additionally, it has been particularly interesting to understand how these selected individuals create meaning of their position as refugees in Türkiye and vis-à-vis other non-naturalized Syrians. As the question of a possible formation of a migrant underclass has appeared in the literature, it is even more interesting to understand how important previous inequalities will come to light in the Syrians' new existence. Yet, the time when Syrians could be positioned as desirable addition to Türkiye in the public discourse has perhaps long since been overtaken by a series of negative connotations such as how the Syrians “disrupt wage levels, taking away Turkish people's economic benefits, and mix their uncivilized Arab culture into Turkish culture”, which is only a portion of the hate speech that has been directed towards them in society.

On the contrary, Syrians who have been offered the naturalization option under exceptional citizenship can feel desired and recognized by the nation-state in which they live and they would be more willing to formally integrate to become a part of the host society. Within the much-discussed criteria-based election of candidates, this also leads to a process where refugees possible contributions and potential are being acknowledged, which could positively impact their integration path. Examples of this are expressed through vivid stories

from the informants, often facing situations where they have countered harsh or critical comments from natives.

The computer engineer Zeinab (32) claimed that she rarely paid attention to comments from certain Turkish people and when she was sometimes asked why she had obtained citizenship, she felt that the combination of her two degrees as well as having a good job gave her confidence when she answered back. She stated the following:

“They think that all the three million Syrians got it, which is not true at all ... Such a small portion of us got it. But I can say proudly that I do more for this country than what they do. I have a better salary, so I spend more money here.” (Zeinab, 32)

When asked why the informants think they have received citizenship, most had a clear idea of why exactly they have been selected to receive this benefit. Not surprisingly, it was usually university degrees or capital, - often in the form of investment opportunities or that the individual has had ownership in a large company, which had justified the informants' attainment of citizenship. For example, the teacher Ahmad was still waiting for his wife and son to get citizenship. He obtained his citizenship based on his teaching qualifications. However, it was not always as straightforward to legitimize his right in society, as he explained:

“... They might ask me “you are a teacher from Syria, why does that give you a right to take a citizenship here?”. And when I explain them more about all what I do and my teacher experience, they tend to be more accepting about it.” (Ahmad, 32)

Amira (33), by referring to her and her husband's critical position as responsible for diplomatic relations between Türkiye and the interests of the Syrian opposition, acknowledged that she was in a rather special position. She said:

“We earned a lot of respect in this country, and we are dealing with elite Turkish people every day through the work we do. We have even engaged in meetings in the presidential palace.” (Amira, 33)

Not least, the fact that Amira had native Turkish people working under her and her husband, also became an important signifier that she held an elite position which according to herself required her to enjoy full rights in society.

The sense of entitlement was not only recognized in how the informant's encountered incitement or criticism from natives, but also in how they resonated with their own position as valuable assets for the country. This sometimes even applied to the informants' children, which similarly with their parents usually possessed good educations and were excellent students within the grade level they attended. The possible opportunities for nation-states receiving a young generation of refugees into a country, such as in the case of Syrians in Türkiye, was something that the informant Kareem emphasized. Kareem also emphasized the importance of the young Syrians in Türkiye in how they master several languages, making them suitable for taking leading roles in international business. He said:

"... We extend investment, we can build businesses, we can bring more opportunities to the Turkish economy... And our children are a big investment to Türkiye because now they speak fluent languages. So, I believe they can play important role in future and Turkish economy ... my oldest son is doing foreign trade in university in Istanbul, he is working with Turkish company which want to establish a new cargo line with Arab countries. So, they are now asking him to come and to help, to plan with Arab people how to open a new branch in their countries. There are a lot of opportunities that we can give to Turkish society." (Kareem, 47)

6.6. The acquired citizenship provides stability and mobility

In this thesis, it has been desired to understand how achieved citizenship could lead to an improvement in the living situation which can further foster integration and, in the long term, social cohesion in Turkish society. Most of the informants have spent a great deal of time in Türkiye before becoming citizens. Nevertheless, the invitation to become citizens has come at different times while the informants have all undergone their individual integration phase ahead of citizenship. Nevertheless, it has been possible to understand how the achievement of citizenship, in terms of improved life change, nevertheless boils down to some common points that all the informants mention in their reflections. Although the answers were often formulated differently and the content could vary, the change in their life was often linked to questions of freedom, human dignity, and finally being able to have a "normal" life. Essentially two points were repeated in the data:

- o the possibility to travel out of one's city of residence.
- o A sense of stability and confidence in everyday life

It is obvious that these points were only fraction of the aspects that were highlighted during the interviews but are nevertheless some important points of reference where they can be understood to be important nexus points for integration. To begin with, the rule is that those who are under temporary protection and hold a work permit are required to obtain permission from the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management in the registered province to travel from one city to another (PMM, 2023). The fact that the informants can now escape this legislation and travel freely has constituted a big step forward for them. Many refer to very difficult times in their lives where they have been trapped in what is sometimes described as a mental and physical "prison" because they could not leave the cities they lived in. The informant Zeinab (32) believed that being able to move freely is a matter of humanity:

"Ankara ID is only for Ankara, and it's not easy to get a permit to leave as well. You can have it under very rare conditions only, if you mother is sick, even then it's hard. We are human, we need to see some places." (Zeinab, 32)

Zeinab specifically referred to an incident where the police had refused her to take a flight from Antalya back to her hometown of Ankara once when she had forgotten to apply for leave to travel. She told:

"One time we went by car with friends, I didn't have the permission. Because if you are student, it's normally ok and you can get out of it. But I graduated, and I forgot about the rules. We went to Antalya, and I didn't have citizenship in those days. I got a flight to return, and I get to the airport on the last day... All of a sudden, I just saw myself sitting with police." (Zeinab, 32)

The police had then refused Zeinab to board the plane, and she said that she had started crying because of the shock she experienced in this situation. Even after one of the police officers allowed Zeinab to move from Antalya to Ankara by bus, problems persisted:

"After that I went to the bus station, everyone was asking for travel permit. I was begging them and telling them that I needed to get to Ankara, it was very hard, but I got to a bus finally." (Zeinab, 32)

Today, however, Zeinab can travel as she wants, which is important as experiencing new places is an important part of her and her sister's lives. Nor was Zeinab alone in linking the ability to

travel to basic human rights. Safaa was also of the opinion that being able to move freely was one of the significant changes that had come with citizenship:

“Now I can go to other countries and travel as I like, which is important to me. Not being able to move freely is not healthy for any human.” (Safaa, 31)

During interview she remembered the days when she hadn't been able to leave Kilis, a small town near the Syrian border with a high population of Syrians. Furthermore, such as in Hussain's case, restrictions relating to mobility can cause a psychological burden. That had been the case when Hussain's mother in Istanbul had been ill, and he could not travel to see her and his father:

“It was forbidden for me to leave Gaziantep. And most of my family live in İstanbul. For a period of two years, I never left Antep, and I couldn't see them.” (Hussain, 51)

For Masa, the travel restrictions had been about feeling excluded and different, and the many different situations where her obstacles became extra visible. The fact that she had not been able to travel was particularly noticeable in connection with work and when her colleagues had gone to other cities for work trips before she had obtained the citizenship. She said the following:

“Before I gained it (Turkish citizenship), I could not travel in relation to work. I was only allowed to stay in Kilis, where I was living at the time. If I wanted to travel, I had to go to Göç İdaresi to take permission. This is making my life very complicated. I ended up not joining the company for work trips. I stayed as the only one left behind ... It makes me a different person.” (Masa, 38)

Mayar is also one informant who emphasized the meaning of being able to travel freely. As she had friends all over Türkiye, being able to travel without getting permission from the authorities was important for her.

“I can go to İstanbul, Urfa or anywhere I want without travel documents which was required before.” (Mayar, 36)

Other points mentioned were a sense of belonging, to feel as a part of society, being able to claim rights, improved mental strength, simplified life due to not having to renew residence permits and pay for the Syrian passport, being able to vote, being able to take a job as a civil servant, less bureaucratic hinders, travelling domestically and internationally, opening contract for electricity, water and gas, getting a house contract, a feeling of being “normal”, becoming full citizens, easier going to the hospital, psychological benefits, being able to register for higher education, not being a refugee, and being “like them”.

6.7. Civic duties and the right to vote: Confirmation of an ongoing integration process

Understanding how the informants approached voting in the Turkish election was interesting as it is undeniably a fundamental aspect of citizenship. Voting, not only as a right, but as a civic duty, indicates the cornerstone of the citizenship. In relation to immigration and the naturalization of immigrants, the right to vote sets a fundamental boundary between who is inside and who is outside. Non-citizens cannot vote. Generally, only full members, although occasionally exceptionally in local elections, have the right to perform the act of voting. At the same time, the right to vote indicates that one as a citizen takes part in a community who collectively has a say in the election of representatives who will advocate for its interests. In the case of Syrian refugees in Türkiye the Syrians themselves were subjected to play a central role in the nerve-racking election campaign that took place during the 2023 spring in Türkiye. They were in fact so important, that the main opposition itself built large parts of the election campaign on promising to return all Syrian refugees within a period of 2 years, having ran heavy anti-immigrant discourse in years prior to the elections. Thus, finding themselves at the center of Turkish politics, it is interesting to understand how Syrian naturalized refugees understand their own participation in democratic processes in Türkiye, as well as how it relates to their overall integration experience. Within this framework, it was particularly interesting to understand their reasons for voting decisions as well as what voting might mean to them. During the interviews, it was found that among the informants, participating in elections is perceived differently.

First of all, having escaped from an authoritarian regime with a lack of genuine democratic institutions, there were several informants who connected electoral participation with a great victory as they now were actively participating in a free, open, and democratic election. Especially Salim (41) drew lines to previous experiences in the Syrian regime, and how he had felt in contrast when he voted in Türkiye. He expressed the following:

“... we voted two times here ... It was so nice! Now I am 41. I am here for 9 years. 2-3 times I voted in Syria, but I didn’t find myself relaxed or free at all. You really cannot imagine... In Syria we also go to vote, but you know. They give me a vote that is ridiculous. There is basically just a note with a picture of the current president, and underneath the picture there is the option “yes” and the option “no” while asking “Do you agree with the current president?”. So, you don’t really have an option. In the Turkish election I felt like a human with a choice.” (Salim, 41).

During the interview Salim elaborated on his feelings regarding the elections in Syria, and how he had felt mainly powerless when he entered the voting stations in his home city Aleppo. Salim showed a ballot paper that he had saved up and taken a picture of.



Picture 1. Ballot from Assads father, Hafez al-Assad, captured by the informant Salim.

Like Salim, Hussain had a lot to express when it came to the feeling that voting in Türkiye had given him. About voting and being able to take part in what he believed to be a semi-democracy, he said the following:

“At the day of voting, we were welcomed to act our right perfectly. And I respect the system who manages the election for 67 million people It is a semi-democracy, but at least there is a system and rules. So, I will follow...” (Hussain, 52)

He went on stating that:

“Voting was amazing, I dreamed about this in Syria. In Syria it’s all fake. You need to go to the voting center, but it’s not a real election. The results are always the same, 99,5% for Assad.” (Hussain, 52).

Hussain further elaborated on his perception that he has not previously had citizenship, as least according to how it is supposed to work in theory. His experience points to a fundamental right to participate in democratic processes which also relates to Hussain's subjective perception of what a society should be like, and not least how he should be able to exercise rights as a citizen within any given society. Hussain also drew lines to the other aspect of Syrians' participation in the Turkish elections, which is their dual membership, - now as Turkish citizens, but also as members of a specific group within the population who are subjected to heavy anti-refugee discourses within public debate. Through Hussain's reasoning, it can be understood how Syrians, even though they are now part of the community, still experience feelings such as anxiety and insecurity through election processes. Obtaining citizenship does not mean that one is no longer Syrian and knows no allegiance to one's minority group. Most Syrians who have obtained citizenship are closely related to one or more individuals who have not obtained citizenship. For Hussain, the act of voting was thus, parallel to democratic participation, about supporting politicians whose policies were aligned with the continued presence of Syrians in Türkiye. He explained:

“I was scared for my parents. Now we fled Assad and then my parents will be sent out of Türkiye as well ... They were in panic. They are old, elderly people. When they hear this... they live in Istanbul, it was too much for them. My mother called me desperately and asked me to please go and vote.” (Hussain, 52)

Most of the informants acknowledged the importance of voting, even though not everyone was equally committed to politics and democratic processes. The businessman Abbas (45) described it like this:

“We have to do it and it’s our duty. I can’t say politics are a big interest for me but of course we have interest in who will be sitting as president. For us Syrians, we have to think of this.”
(Abbas, 45)

For Huda (52), the choice of the right presidential candidate had also been easy, and as she explained, she had always been well acquainted with the sitting president, whom she described as a good man:

“I don’t know Turkish politics too much actually, but I know President Erdoğan and he is good. Therefore, it was a great experience for me to go and vote for him.” (Huda, 52)

In summary, it can be understood that voting is of great importance to naturalized Syrians, and although the degree of political interest varied between the informants, most stated that they either had or were going to vote in the election following the fact that interviews were carried out both before and after the 2023 elections and that some informants had also voted in the 2018 election. An exception to this was the informant Abid (28) who straight up stated that *“this does not interest me at all”*, and whom recently had relocated to another country after having acquired his Turkish citizenship. Nevertheless, the Syrians' perceptions indicate that voting in elections is a multifaceted action that can be linked to both ideas of democracy, where it signifies engagement in society and empowerment, but also as an important duty towards their belonging to the Syrian minority population as they feel the need to vote in alignment with the interest of those who have not yet been offered the naturalization option. That is especially crucial since most naturalized Syrians are in close relations with or have family members who may still be under temporary protection.

6.8. Local and individual experiences determine belonging - rather than citizenship

Citizenship in all its formality is a confirmation of belonging to the national community. On the other hand, the theory shows us that belonging does not have a straightforward answer, and the experience of belonging in our modern and globalized world is both non-singular and might be affected by various aspects such as ethnic or religious affiliation or for instance feeling otherized when countering the natives.

During the interviews, an attempt was made to understand how the informants experienced belonging because of the citizenship they had acquired. In that context, several questions were asked that tried to grasp life before citizenship compared to life after, as well

as how citizenship could contribute as a door opener to society's social communities. Their experiences show how formal and informal belonging are separated, which was, among other things, the case for Omer (35). Omer described his time in Türkiye as a very painful one, and the experience he had had in working life and with other people in general made him very despondent about his situation. At the same time, as Omer supported his non-citizen brother and mother, he found himself forced to remain in Türkiye where he felt like a victim of what he believed to be dehumanizing practices. He said the following about the sense of belonging linked to the citizenship:

"I want to leave this country. Everything is the same here, before and after the citizenship. And being integrated... even If I have citizenship, I can't be one of them. They see themselves as superior people. They have this complex. Their way is the best, they think themselves they are the best. It's a shame." (Omer, 35)

In Omer's case, legal recognition did not seem to have a significant impact on his belonging, as Omer perceived the possibility of belonging as predetermined by Turkish natives considering themselves superior. He thus perceived that his ethnicity as an Arab was a salient marker that followed him regardless:

"... I had racism towards me having the citizenship. I have several experiences against me and family. In the bus for example, some girls told us you are a Syrians, what are you doing, go and go away from Türkiye. Even when I work in some language schools, I have been treated as a Syrian. Even if I say "Günaydın" they didn't say good morning back to me. Some schools I worked in also didn't give me my money. In the middle of the year, they just fired me and without paying the full salary. They don't respect the contract. And they come up with an excuse... Like one time, they told me that I had opened inappropriate songs in English, even though it's just lies." (Omer, 35)

The group interview with Masa (38) and Abdil (32) showed how the experience of belonging is not fixed but can be fluid. Their accounts also testify that the transition to citizenship can also involve a feeling of being "in between". The interview that was done at their workplace where the two of them were the only ones with a Syrian background. Both Masa and Abdil agreed that belonging depended on the situation and where one was, and not least with whom. Abdil's statement can illustrate this more fluid nature of belonging:

"... We feel a bit in between, I think. Because of racism. In some places you can feel completely accepted, in some places you can't. So, it depends." (Abdil, 32)

Masa agreed with this. Abdil also believed that personally for him there had been cases where he had felt like a full member of society. Interestingly, Abdil also believed, in contrast to Ahmad who emphasized language skills as a language aspect of belonging, that it was not a matter of course to experience belonging. He based this on his own experience and the fact that he himself spoke Turkish like a native:

"For me personally, I think that there are very few times I have felt as a full member. And I am Turkmen of origin, I had quite some knowledge about the language before coming and I now speak it as a native. It doesn't help me to belong for that reason." (Abdil, 32)

At the same time, some informants had a slightly different views of belonging. The informant Zeinab (32) was one of these, who drew lines between the Syrians' own efforts to questions of both integration and belonging. She herself felt both integrated and felt a strong sense of belonging to Turkish society. Her reasoning was based on the fact that she had many Turkish friends and were not part of that category of Syrians who surrounded each other without making an attempt to integrate. She stated the following:

"I feel very integrated and basically all my friends are Turkish. I only have one Syrian friend, and I am not that much in contact with her. So yes, I would say that I belong here. Sometimes I get angry to the Syrian community. They are living in one place, gathering. This is very negative. They need to integrate and reflect their values and show that we are good people. Most of them are closed. In this way you won't ever belong." (Zeinab, 32)

Like Omer, Ahmad, Masa and Abdil, Kareem's (47) accounts also show how the understanding of belonging is purely subjective and relates to a more personal feeling. Local and individual experiences in the host society gain importance, and different aspects are emphasized as important:

"Yes, 100%, totally. Even before we had the citizenship, we felt as full members. I am talking about my wife, children, all our friends are Turkish citizens. We have very good neighbors, and the community is safe. So, we belong here now, and I believe we are fully integrated here. Another reason is that we have all of our children in Turkish schools now." (Kareem, 47)

Hussain's (52) account can also show a very similar understanding of how belonging is to a greater extent linked to locally determined conditions. He compared the city of Bolu with his city of residence Gaziantep, and stated that:

“For example, in Bolu, they consider us as a lower race than them. It’s not possible for us Syrians to think that we can even do anything there. But in Gaziantep we can be happy.”
(Hussain, 52)

What is significant in terms of the degree to which the informants feel belonging thus appears to be determined locally and subjectively based on their own experiences. The informants' accounts suggest, for example, that encountering situations where nationalist discourses for belonging is manifested weakens the sense of belonging and aspirations to integrate, as it can seem like a hopeless case to belong in a society that defines its members based on descent and kinships. Informants who have had experiences that conflict with this strict ideology of state brotherhood and membership, for example through having friends who are Turkish or feeling integrated into neighborhoods and local communities, may feel a greater sense of belonging.

6.9. Citizenship alone has not increased motivation to stay in Türkiye

Through the interviews, an attempt was made to understand what future plans the informants have, and how the attainment of Turkish citizenship has interfered with their plans. It would perhaps be natural enough to think that with a Turkish citizenship, the probability that Syrians who have obtained it would choose to settle in Türkiye, as the citizenship can after all solve most of the structural barriers that are well-known obstacles for the Syrians to be able to live normal lives. Nevertheless, as it is well known that many migrants in Türkiye use the country as a transit country and can thus often maintain such a ‘transit’ mentality, it was interesting to understand whether the acquisition of citizenship has contributed to a changed mindset. An excellent example of this was Abid (28) who, after obtaining citizenship, chose to leave Türkiye for another country. He said that when he left Syria, his plan was never to stay longer than two months in Türkiye as he had plans to migrate further to Germany. When asked to reflect on perceived concerns, it was mainly this plan for a second migration that was in focus:

“... I was mostly just hoping that I would succeed with my plan. Like I already started telling you a little bit about it, I wanted to take the Turkish Citizenship to go somewhere else. That was the plan all along. So, my expectations were mainly concerned around this idea, that I would finally be able to do it.” (Abid, 28)

Abid's story was interesting in several ways, perhaps especially because he was the only one within the sample who has used Turkish citizenship to move to another country. Meanwhile, Abid's story shows, perhaps most of all, how the integration process will always be multi-faceted and what is more, the concept of integration is purely subjective in how it is understood and assessed personally. And that belongingness and decision to stay can seem to be a total sum of several factors. Abid said:

“Like I said earlier ... before I thought learning the language was going to help me, but it didn't help me at all. My problems grew bigger. There was not this relation between once you learn the language you can fully adapt or whatever, no. It was not like this.” (Abid, 28)

Today, Abid's life what can be recognized in migration literature as purely transnational (Vertovec, 2009) where, for the social aspects, he is a permanent resident in Moldova, which he feels is a far more social and hospitable country. At the same time, he maintains his businesses in Türkiye and on a general basis, he travels back and forth between the two countries and plans to establish economic links with Syria as soon as he has “built himself up”.

Furthermore, there were several informants within the sample who stated that they wanted to relocate to a new country. Anas (26) is one of the informants who completed his entire education in Türkiye. He has spent a total of seven years in the country, but has not, on the other hand, learned Turkish at more than a very basic level. Anas also highlights, in addition to a lack of a sense of belonging in society, the importance of lack/access to opportunities for his future plan. Türkiye has not only given Anas the legal and formal rights to take part in the Turkish community, but he has also received the advantage of being able to hold a bachelor's degree from a well-known Turkish university. Nevertheless, his example shows that even if formalities are in place, they have little effect if perceived integration is low and if dreams do not seem to be fulfilled:

"I have been staying here for a long time now. Seven years, and nothing changed for me. I graduated from the university, and I haven't even found a job after all these years." (Anas, 26).

He weighs the idea of going somewhere else against the lack of opportunities, and thus thought that *"because of that I believe that it's up to me whether I will stay here or not."* Anas, who is engaged to a girl in Syria, now wants to move to a Gulf country. He believes that he has no anchorage to Turkish society either through language or friends and emphasizes how crucial it is for him to find a job abroad.

Like Anas, Safaa (31) also has plans to relocate to a new country, even though she has been in Türkiye for 10 years. She reasons this in the desire for an easier life as well as the need to feel like an equal member of a society:

"... I am thinking about leaving to an Arab country. First, Qatar. Qatar is a really nice place and the quality of life there is very different compared to Türkiye. Working there is also easier, and of course... Everyone there is Arab, and I won't feel as if I am a foreigner all the time." (Safaa, 31).

Like Anas, Safaa also received her education in Türkiye, but Safaa, on the other hand, spoke Turkish fluently and works daily as a translator in the city of Gaziantep, where she lives. What may seem to affect both Anas and Safaa, however, is a combination of not feeling "at home" and the fact that they assess and weigh the opportunities in other countries against each other. About feeling at home, Safaa says the following:

"... we are happy in Gaziantep. With a profession and a purpose here you can survive, but I can't feel at home in a place where someone rejects me due to being another ethnicity than them." (Safaa, 31)

Through their experiences, it can be understood how citizenship does not solve all of their problems. The informants also seem to perceive loyalty, as to the extent that they should now stay in Türkiye as they have obtained citizenship, in different ways. It seems that especially for the youngest informants, preferably newly graduated and single informants who are in the process of establishing their adult lives, such a loyalty is weakened through a lack of opportunities and an uncertain economic situation in Türkiye. At the same time, it can be understood how the subjective understanding of integration and how the Syrians' own attitudes

towards what they themselves should/should do in this process play a role in how the integration process has gone, and thus how they think about the future today. Both examples show that although immigrants can have citizenship and entry through, for example, a good job, being in education, or even owning a business, these are not necessarily guarantees for full participation or a sense of belonging, or for being able to feel “at home”.

Some informants’ accounts, on the other hand, can show slightly different perspectives on this matter. Although most of the informants stated a number of challenges they had in everyday life, there were many informants who were reasonably sure that they would remain in Türkiye after all. Masa (38) believed that although she did not feel like a full member of society, it was important for her to stay in the country as her children were already well integrated:

“... I want to stay here. My children are very well integrated in the Turkish society. They don’t even know how to read or write Arabic ... I also have a good job here. Going to another place would mean losing so much. And I don’t want to start from zero again.” (Masa, 38)

This view of the children, who have often become fluent in the language and who, in Masa's case, cannot write or speak Arabic, was also present in the views of other informants. Salim, who had three children, also had many concerns regarding his children. He said:

“... The life also got easier for my children, which is so important for me.” (Salim, 41)

Salim was an informant who had previously relocated to Tunisia, which was mainly about him getting a job opportunity there. Nevertheless, he stated that increasing stress and tensions between the Syrian and Turkish populations had made him want to try something else and to go through with the step of moving. Even though he had thrived in Tunisia, he and his family still found out that they wanted to give Türkiye a second chance, which was also about being close to their home country. Not least, Salim felt that the culture in Gaziantep was more similar with the one he was used to from Aleppo, even though in Tunisia they had been able to speak Arabic and, in that sense, were not strangers. Also, Kareem (47) is of the opinion that his children's wellbeing is a central factor in the decision to stay in Türkiye. Kareem, who has three children, particularly emphasized the importance of the children's schooling and the fact that, for example, his son knows Turkish culture better than the Syrian one. He explains:

“... the youngest boy was only 2 years when we came. He is going to a Turkish school, he knows a lot about Turkish history and Turkish culture, more than what he knows about the homeland. Because he grew up here ... Our children are growing up here, basically. So, you can imagine their network, friendships, then the future ... for such reasons we were dreaming about the citizenship. It's very important that we can obtain it. Not only for me, but also for the second generation.” (Kareem, 47).

Regarding integration, he has the attitude that for his children, they should be brought up as 100% Turkish because only in this way can they be fully integrated. The alternative, he says, is *“to be divided between two different cultures, the Syrian and the Turkish”*.

In short, there are various things that are considered when it comes to how the informants see the future. Through the informants' accounts, it is not the time spent in Türkiye that governs one's desire to stay, but on the other hand the contingencies of life, such as whether one has established a family or not, because it produces a kind of win or lose dilemma. Other reasons appear to be the degree of satisfaction with the quality of life at the given moment. Where the informants stand in life is also important.

The next Chapter will synthesize the empirical insights and themes, and further engage with the thesis research question in a more orderly manner. Thereafter follows a conclusion, the final Chapter of the thesis.

7. DISCUSSION

Having presented the themes that arose from the thesis' empirical material, this chapter will be devoted to discussing critically the data against the theory that was presented in Chapter 4 in conjunction with the crucial contextual factors reviewed in Chapter 3. The discussion takes place while putting the four research questions at the center, which will be answered in a detailed manner. Finally, with the objective of completing the thesis' two interconnected goals, a concluding chapter follows, which places the results of the thesis in a larger picture of the global development of citizenship.

7.1. Integration experiences of informants

To begin with, a crucial point for investigation in this thesis was to understand the integration experiences of Syrians who have acquired Turkish citizenship. At the same time, it was crucial to understand how their legal status were related to other conditions in their lives, such as the cultural, economic, political, and social conditions they experienced in Türkiye. The findings best demonstrate how integration is highly multifaceted and is defined differently among individuals. To begin with, the fact that Türkiye has not implemented a thoroughly regulated integration plan with defined frameworks for satisfactory levels of integration, such as language tests as a requirement for naturalization, seems to make it so that the informants have a wide range of expectations as to how and whether they need to integrate, while at the same time they also understand the authorities' responsibilities for their wellbeing and integration outcomes in various ways. This was indicated from the range of different ideas presented by the informants, where one extreme was illustrated by Anas who claimed that integration into society was up to each individual and that if one did not want to be "inside", then this should be fine as the whole refugee situation was involuntarily. Thus, it was in his opinion that learning language, making friends and participating in social life were up to each individual to decide. On the other hand, another extreme was, as Ahmad (32) believed, that the best thing was to

assimilate completely by adapting a Turkish name, as well as to behave in line with the native population. He meant this was the better option, as Turkish people would then feel closer to the foreign person:

“We have a woman in the work. When she saw my behavior and how I am over time, she concluded that I am not a Syrian and basically a Turkish already. Because of that, I believe the most important thing is how you act here as a refugee. If you act in accordance with them (Turkish people) and try to be a Turkish person, they will feel closer to you.” (Ahmad, 32)

“I guess integration is up to each person. If you want to be within the society then yes, if you don’t then no. In the end we are here involuntarily, we didn’t have a choice but to be in Türkiye or in any other place.” (Anas, 26)

What is at stake seems to influence the informants quite a bit in how they understand their own integration into Turkish society as well as how motivated they are. The two extreme cases above represent individual stories with very different preconditions; one is established familywise and expressed that it was crucial for him to stay in Türkiye which is the place he considers having become his forever home. The other, having just graduated, single, unemployed, and without an anchorage to local communities, expresses that he is not happy in Türkiye and wants to move to another country. It therefore seems that the formality of citizenship does not have a significant meaning for integration that is concerned with questions of social connection, participation or belonging. This discrepancy between citizenship and integration can thus appear to lead to the importance of naturalization being diminished in several ways. An example of this can be understood through informants who have become eligible to vote upon naturalization, but who show apathy in relation to their right to vote in Türkiye. This was, for example, the case for Abid (28), who had retained a transit mentality during his stay in Türkiye and had no affiliation with Türkiye. Therefore, he did not attach a greater emotional experience to his citizenship and saw it solely as an instrument of mobility. According to himself, he had previously tried to integrate, especially by learning the language as he had heard that life in Türkiye was better if you spoke Turkish fluently. However, his experience had not been a positive one, and he had thus continued with his plan to relocate to another country. This possibility for mobility, especially in Abid and Anas's case, highlights the theory of how the commodification of citizenship leads to rights being granted exclusively because of other exchangeable values.

For some informants, citizenship was perceived as a legal confirmation of the integration process that they have already undergone as a natural side effect of having been resident for a longer period. In this way, in line with Ager & Strang's framework (2008) for integration, citizenship becomes a form of interpersonal safety and a confirmation that the personal sacrifices and investments that they have made have paid off. In my sample, this is often represented as individuals who had extended family who also lived near them and with whom they maintained relationships. Most of the informants were clear about the fact that those who had already integrated were entitled to the same rights as other people. Thus, when they have obtained citizenship, they have already learned basic language skills, entered the rental market, had jobs, and most express that they have some social connections that does not originate from their own minority group, such as with native Turkish people. For these individuals, the citizenship became a legal status that were proportionally aligned with their personal investment in the country, as can be illustrated with the following quote:

“My citizenship also wasn’t given through investment, but I mean if I live in any country in another world and generating the same amount of money, I believe a lot of countries can offer the citizenship, right? It is somehow an investment. Now we are talking about the 9 years living here. I have children in schools, A child in university, I pay tax, I spend a lot of money into this economy, I pay rent and invoices, so I think I have the right to have citizenship after this period.” (Kareem, 47)

Critical research on Syrians in Türkiye’s integration process has shown how the economic resources of Syrians affect their degree to which they become integrated. It is fortunate, as illustrated through previous literature, as the Syrians do not have refugee status and due to the lack of state assistance in accessing fundamental rights in practice (Simsek, 2016). It was thus interesting to understand how naturalized citizens were integrated as well as to learn more about both positive and negative experiences they had. Are they, for example, more integrated than other Syrians? Do they all have a positive experience with integration, and which thoughts and conceptions about integration do they have?

The informants’ accounts suggest that even though they are naturalized and have indeed positioned themselves in Turkish society regarding equality and have better conditions in comparison to other more disadvantaged Syrians, they also experience several challenges that affect how they think about integration into the society. This was on the one hand about the

opportunities the Turkish authorities had given them, often compared to European countries that can offer refugees a different form of support and rights when seeking asylum:

“It’s very hard here so there are a lot of problems. The language is quite hard, and the work hours is hard. I think the whole idea of being a refugee here is very hard. Here in Türkiye, they don’t give courses and it’s not like European countries. It’s very different. Here in Türkiye, they don’t send you in courses and we are left alone.” (Masa, 38)

Another point is that even though the informants have obtained citizenship and no longer go as refugees or protected individuals, they are still Syrian and "others" in the eyes of many natives. Countering racism, hostility and anti-Syrian sentiment in society were elements that did not disappear simply by obtaining legal status and can lead to significant barriers for their motivation and hopes for long term integration.

To summarize, the data of this thesis can confirm previous research that suggests that integration is class-based in the context of Syrians in Türkiye. Nevertheless, data can also underline the importance of racism, anti-Syrian sentiment, and growing nationalism as the basis for constructions of others within Turkish society, not least to how they feel integrated. As the theoretical framework of Brubaker (2010) has claimed, the essential part of feeling accepted as full members vary even though formal citizenship is settled and not in doubt. This ambiguity that can arise is generated by various forms of social closure, be it discrimination, nationalization, or marginalization of out-groups. Some Syrians, as shown in my data set, may choose full assimilation as a strategy to cope with the part they do not fit in. Others, where they have experienced little opportunity to become members, have shown themselves to totally object to this narrow framework for membership and displays an attitude towards integration that since they cannot fit in anyway, it is better to move to another country. A majority seems to be in the middle, where they try to balance their Syrian identity as best as they can with also trying to assimilate the values and culture of the majority population. Data show how understandings of integration and whether one should integrate are consistent with the presented theory which claims that in matters of resettlement, refugees represent a complex and heterogeneous group that may have conflicted attitudes (Craig, 2012).

7.2. How they considered citizenship and how they position themselves vis-à-vis Syrians without citizenship

Next, the third research question asked how Syrians considered their Turkish citizenship and how they position themselves vis-à-vis Syrians without citizenship. The findings suggest that aligned with crucial theory on refugees' perception of citizenship that they acquire in their host nations, they can often become multilayered as in how they construct a relationship with the state but also non-state communities in their local areas. The fact that they are multilayered also seems to lead to a self-negotiation between their own affiliations, both as Syrians, Arabs, Muslims, and as Turkish citizens. At the same time, presented theory has shown how the understanding of nationhood and membership has a major influence on how naturalization and integration take place for newcomers. This is, as equated by the German historian Meinecke (1970) possible to understand as the way nation states base their idea of nationhood, where Meinecke distinguishes between cultural nations and political nations. According to Meinecke the two differ in that cultural nations are primarily based on some jointly experienced cultural heritage while political nations are primarily based on the unifying force of a common political history and constitution (Meinecke, 1970). From chapter three, which equated necessary contextual factors for Türkiye as a country of immigration, it was understood how historically membership in Türkiye has acted on primordial links based on kinship and common descend, which makes Türkiye a cultural nation rather than a political one. This means that on the one hand, being a Turkish citizen is related to some innate characteristics that can hardly be accomplished unless one has Turkish ancestors, which was the case for two informants. It seems to the informants that to the extent that they can become members and adopt a relationship with their citizenship that is based on belonging similar with natives, it is thus about the willingness to accept the criteria set by Turkish society, which is not very flexible for mutual accommodation (Birka, 2013). The informants appear to negotiate differently, with some adapting a full assimilation strategy, while others would rather remain multicultural. Some recognize that their position as first-generation immigrants in Türkiye means that they can never experience being full members but believe that their children or those to become "third generation immigrants" can be, and therefore chooses to raise their children as Turkish. In line with the theory of belonging, which claims that ordinary people's construction of who may be accepted to belongs who cannot, as well as on what premises are important in how immigrants can feel come to feel accepted in their new communities (Brubaker, 2010),

situations they encounter can help to influence their feelings related to belonging. This can be illustrated by the following quote:

“After the earthquake, I had written a post that I shared to my story in my WhatsApp in Arabic, and a Turkish friend got angry. She angrily wrote me that now since I am a Turkish national, I had to make my dua for Türkiye and not for Syria.” (Mayar, 26)

This account shows how natives can contribute to setting the framework for the criteria that apply to membership in the nation, which for the individual in the informant's account seems to define a rather strict frame that when one has become a Turkish citizen, the informant must leave behind his former identity as a Syrian. The fact that such perceptions prevail in society can be understood as problematic where it is unlikely that all Syrians who become naturalized will immediately lose their belonging to Syria or their identity as Arabs. For my informants, citizenship is mainly understood as strategic and as a key and a symbol for stability, rights, a path to equality and as a bridge to a future normal life. Nevertheless, there are some variations, where some informants accept that either they themselves or their children are part of a full assimilation strategy to feel as similar as possible to the natives.

7.3. Does citizenship lead to belonging in Türkiye or is it compatible with the desire to settle permanently in Türkiye? Why/ why not?

When it came to the informants' perceptions of belonging associated with citizenship, the data suggest that citizenship as a factor that effects how informants experience belonging is limited. It also supports important theory which have underlined how formal membership does not imply informal acceptance (Brubaker, 2010). The data also suggest that the extent to which citizenship has led to belonging or strengthened the sense of belonging varies as it is a matter of several other preconditions. Citizenship is for the most part considered an opportunity that has arisen because they possess certain qualifications for wealth, education or talent that are exchangeable according to demand. It gives the informants several privileges and rights, and it has simplified the informants' life situations in a practical way, which can obviously also ease processes that can lead to a further sense of belonging. An example of this is, for example, when the informants through naturalization do not have to apply for permission every time, they want to travel out of the cities they live in. Many of the informant's state that this aspect of citizenship allows them a sense of normality in their every life, which leads to a greater degree of feeling at home rather than a temporary state of mind.

Nevertheless, in line with the theory that claims that even if formal citizenship is not in doubt, the essential part of feeling accepted as a full member of society is something that varies and has a certain ambiguity attached to it (Brubaker, 2010). Hence, in line with the presented theory about the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of citizenship (1999), the data also emphasize that it is mainly the horizontal dimension that is intrinsically linked with dynamics of belonging. That is especially since the horizontal dimension essentially refers to how the individual takes part in and participates in society, and thus how it relates to fellow citizens (Cairns, 1999). In this regard, my findings suggest that it is the local experience of friendly natives, social ties, psychosocial relationships, and quality of working life that can be of great importance to the informants in terms of belonging. Some informants who have good experience with the systems and who have had positive experiences as they have entered neighborhoods, schools, and local communities, often state in the interviews that they feel a satisfactory sense of purpose and belonging, although these also state that there are a number of barriers for them to feel themselves as full members in society. These findings agree with theory such as Brubaker's (2010) theorization of belonging, which claims that an important factor in how immigrants can feel belonging, and membership comes from how civil society constructs ideas about belonging and othering. The informants' participation and experience that they are welcome in their local areas seems to influence their sense of belonging, because being welcomed also indicates one's membership as legitimate beyond only the legal status.

In the question of whether citizenship was compatible for the desire to stay, this was a topic on which the informants were much divided. Whether the informants feel that their needs are met in Türkiye determines their plans for the future, whether it is to stay in Türkiye, return to Syria, or to invest in finding happiness in another country. For some, the experience of feeling othered has led to them wanting to live in an Arab country, because that way they can at least speak the language and not feel like a foreigner which they have felt in Türkiye. Other informants rather had the opportunities believed to be found in the West in mind, and envisioned traveling to Germany or Canada as they had heard that in these countries you could have a good life. Such ideas did not always seem to be linked to a lack of belonging or perceived integration, and rather related to the lack of opportunities in current Türkiye.

A common characteristic between the informants, was their mentality characterized by uncertainty, which showed itself through apprehension and how they perceived Türkiye as unpredictable in terms of how the future would look like. Most of the informants had at several times considered whether they should move to another country, and many stated that when anti-Syrian sentiment was at its worst, such as during the election campaign, it created stress

and anxiety that made them consider the idea of leaving. This were also the situation for informants who experiences a decent sense of belonging and felt integrated in society for the most part. When it came to the idea of relocating, the arguments were not only based on the conditions in Türkiye but also on what opportunities they could find elsewhere, which brings the important element of refugees' own agency which is important to recognize as they are not simply subjects to aid and policies. For this reason, it also seems a bit ironic that when candidates for citizenship are chosen on the basis that they are assets that will add something to Turkish society, there is no mutual understanding between the individuals and the state to the extent that these people intend to remain in Türkiye. it is particularly strange, as the option of naturalization both imitates the citizenship by investment practice while at the same time adopts a harmonization and integration goal. The problem, however, is that since the social contract that can implicitly and explicitly express expectations associated with citizenship remains the same, Syrian naturalized citizens are not required to remain in the country and perform the implicit role they have been intended to play.

Lastly, even if the scope of the thesis is too small to draw any conclusion, it appears among the informants that the youngest perceive that they can have more to gain from relocation compared to older informants. It seems that, as pointed out in sub-chapter 7.1., being childless and single can make future mobility more attractive. For older and more established informants, on the other hand, the costs of changing one's country once again are perceived as much greater and ontological security is perceived as one of the most important aspects with the new citizenship.

7.4. Improved life situations for Syrians that might foster integration and social cohesion into the Turkish society

The final research question addressed the extent to which obtained citizenship have led to improved life situation for Syrians that might foster integration and social cohesion in the Turkish society. when it comes to citizenship as a path to an improved life situation, it is obvious that the achievement of rights that are equal to those of the majority in society has had a significant impact for their life situation. Being able to travel freely wherever one wants without the travel document (*seyahat belgesi*), being legally protected by laws in the labor market, having the right to vote, as well as stability and a sense of ontological security have improved the informants' lives, especially those who have spent considerable time in Türkiye as guests and under temporary protection where their rights and opportunities for long-term

planning have been significantly curtailed. How big of an impact these advantages have had on the informants' willingness and desire to truly integrate is reasonably large, even if the informants' accounts also show how individual circumstances mean that this is not always a foregone conclusion. Furthermore, the idea of social cohesion in Turkish society is also a question that becomes relevant and can be put to the test where the country transitions to become a country of immigration and with the seemingly permanent settlement of refugees. In its Action Plan for Social Cohesion from 2010, the Council of Europe have defined social cohesion as:

A society's capacity to ensure the well-being of all its members by minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization; to manage differences and divisions and to ensure the means of achieving welfare for all.

It is further stated that:

Social cohesion is a dynamic process and is essential for achieving social justice, democratic security, and sustainable development. Divided and unequal societies are not only unjust, they also cannot guarantee stability in the long term (Council of Europe, 2010).

Even though Türkiye can obviously be recognized as already significantly polarized between political, social, and cultural divisions, much linked to issues such as secularism, religion, and nationalism, the welcoming of large numbers of Syrian refugees has only contributed to this polarization. This seems to be a result of the fact that little attention has been paid to building an integrated society that can embrace different ethnicities, religions, and nationalities without undermining or forcibly assimilating minority groups in an attempt to homogenize society. Even if the granting of Turkish citizenship indeed does open for a wider acceptance of Syrians and other foreigners can become members of Turkish society, it does not combat notions that descent is the ultimate criterion of membership in Türkiye. Social cohesion, which obviously demands that there exist positive membership attitudes between different groups in societies, for instance through inter-group interactions between natives and minorities as well as between different minority groups, seems to be necessary in the case of Türkiye. Although it is improbable to think that Turkish society will become fully cohesive in just a few decades, the presence of the Syrians means that there is a growing need for an action plan towards social

cohesion, and it should be understood how the distribution of citizenship in line with the neoliberal constructions of market-citizenship and Olympic citizenship is not an instrument that will lead to cohesion. That is for instance since when Syrian refugees obtain citizenship and the granting of citizenship does not follow a regulated framework for naturalization that has an integration component, the legitimacy of that citizenship is weakened in the eyes of natives. This follows from citizenship becoming something anyone can achieve if they are financially sound.

To sum up, citizenship has significantly led to an improved life situation for Syrians who can foster their integration, although this is not exclusively the case since fostering integration also demands that the refugees experience that other individual pre-conditions are in place, such as positive experiences in the local environment and through the kindness of the native population. When it comes to social cohesion, it can be argued that it is questionable whether this highly selective method of awarding citizenship can lead to a cohesive society. This is because it is the author's opinion that a social cohesion that can, for example, follow the EU's action plan to minimize disparities and avoiding marginalization as well as a divided society, should be addressed at national level as it relates to society as a whole and at a group level. If citizenship in the Turkish sense is to be able to relate to more than ethnicity and common descent, then the question of a broader definition of the Turkish citizen should be defined and put on the agenda by the national authorities, while important Turkish culture and historical elements should be safeguarded and remain as a foundation for a society who can recognize different ethnicities and cultures.

The next and final Chapter is for concluding remarks and suggestions while highlighting important findings and future research areas.

8. CONCLUSION

The main intention of this thesis has been two-folded. To begin with, this thesis has explored citizenship, naturalization, integration, and social cohesion in the case of Syrian refugees in Türkiye within the scope of four research questions. The thesis has attempted to critically analyze the exclusive practice of granting citizenship rights to wealthy, rich, educated, or talented Syrians without any consideration of other aspects relating to integration, such as language proficiency, civic and cultural knowledge, or duration of stay, which are usually critical points to assess in terms of granting refugees as well as other immigrants' citizenship. It has been concluded that out of the Syrians within this thesis sample who have become naturalized under the exceptional citizenship have very different experiences when it comes to wider integration into Turkish society, which seems to have implications for their sense of belonging and overall wellbeing in Türkiye. The findings suggest that their integration is not determined by their citizenship but relates far more to how they have experienced the adaptation process into Turkish society within both cultural, economic, political, and social spheres. The thesis also finds that this experience can be much affected by social closure, such as when they counter racism or hostility in society through anti-Syrian sentiment or nationalism. In terms of how they consider the Turkish citizenship, findings suggest that the informants are multilayered citizens and base their relationship with the state in ways that are different than what of the natives, which is aligned with crucial theory. Most of the informants see citizenship as strategic, as well as a key to stability, rights, and a pathway towards equality. Not least, the citizenship seems to be considered a symbol of a normalization of life after the various forms of precariousness that displacement has led to.

Furthermore, the thesis findings suggest that it is not a matter of course that citizenship is compatible with the desire to settle permanently in Türkiye, although some informants do intend to stay and find it a good option for themselves and their families. The informants have different perceptions of this, which seem to be determined by several different elements. This was sometimes about the experience of being outside and feeling as “the other” but was just as much related to lack of opportunities in Türkiye for work. As for belonging, the informants have very different experiences and as with integration, citizenship seems to be limited in its power to make the informants feel that they belong. An actual sense of belonging on the other hand appear to be determined by other individual experiences, such as positive interactions with natives and shared experiences with the community, as well as the degree to which they have experienced friendliness and hospitality when entering crucial social arenas such as schools, neighborhoods, markets, and the like. Establishing deeper friendship and positive

social relations with natives also seem to play a role here, although these factors do not prevent the informants from questioning their belonging since they still occasionally experience racism or hatred directed at them in the media or when countered in everyday situations, as well as confrontations with natives who hold strict notions about their possibility of membership. Finally, citizenship has led to an improved living situation for the informants and especially those who have lived in the country for a long time under very restrictive regulations. Overall, the citizenship represents a degree of freedom and autonomy over one's own life, as well as the possession of legislation in relation to working life that makes one equal to the natives. Citizenship also provides an opportunity for long-term planning and entails an ontological security against future displacement, as most informants are sure that the citizenship can't be taken away from them once they have it. These factors seem to have a fairly large impact on their motivation and desire to integrate. Furthermore, it is questionable whether such a selective distribution of citizenship can lead to social cohesion in Turkish society and not least lead to a greater aspect for the Syrian population overall. To achieve this, it seems necessary to implement a larger action plan that can ensure a socially cohesive society, as formal membership does not imply informal acceptance for Syrians. With that argument, this thesis will also support previous research that has advocated that a comprehensive strategy must be developed to deal with the Turkish community's rejection of Syrian people who are granted the Turkish citizenship, even though there is a reasonably high acceptance for Syrians in Türkiye (Erdoğan, 2019). It is because the social cohesion also depends on the Turkish community's support.

Furthermore, this thesis was interested in a greater understanding of Turkish citizenship practices that has been submitted to the system of Olympic citizenship, golden citizenship, citizenship by investment, as the discussion about awarding citizenship to Syrians is not only a humanitarian question but a question that embraces both strategies of neo-liberal economy, development, and foreign policy. The fact is that this entanglement of refugee policies with neo-liberalism contributes to a large group of Syrians remaining in a vacuum where their rights and life opportunities are severely restricted. Ensuring that these refugees can obtain rights that can give them opportunities to create dignified lives for themselves should of course not be up to Türkiye alone, which has already taken up a great burden by hosting the world's largest number of refugees. At the same time Türkiye itself, if concrete plans for integration pathways through naturalization that can also define questions about duration of stay, as well as civic, historical, and cultural knowledge, may perhaps greatly benefit from receiving a young population that can broadly contribute to the development of social, economic and conditions

in Türkiye. As Syrians in Türkiye will become proficient in both Turkish and Arabic, as well as their shared cultural ties with Arab countries, they can serve as a valuable bridge for economic opportunities and even diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Arab nations. This may seem important as Türkiye's current condition calls for economic strength to keep on developing and maintaining its regional influence. Nor should the possibility that Syrians can contribute to the tourism sector where they can attract visitors and boost activities be ignored, as well as their over-all contribution to the workforce.

As pointed out in the analysis, it is also ironic that refugees are chosen to become nationals only based on the possible assets they will potentially be able to add to Türkiye. That is because such a selective process does not imply a mutual understanding between the selected individuals and the state to the extent that these people must remain in Türkiye to perform the implicit role that it is intended for them to play. This creates a discrepancy where the exceptional citizenship both imitates the citizenship by investment practice while at the same time adopts a harmonization and integration goal at a bare minimum. Another significant problem is that Syrians who are born in Türkiye are “de facto stateless”, since neither the Syrian state nor Türkiye automatically grants citizenship (Erdoğan, 2019). To deal with the above-mentioned challenges, it would be recommended that Türkiye redirect from applying a neo-liberal perspective in the exploitation of economically and intellectually favorable refugees to a greater focus on long-term planning towards social cohesion and integration. In that regard, a more transparent decision making and policy for refugees should be proposed, so that it becomes clear what are the objectives and what is intended with granting citizenship to refugees. That seems to be most necessary since there is obviously a great deal of incorrect assumptions within the public debate which hinders the possibility of positive inter-group interaction. Regardless of whether the current practice will continue, it can also be recommended that integration components are added to the naturalization process in the case of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, as it can contribute to the citizenship that is awarded being legitimized also in the eyes of the natives. This is important as it is unlikely that Turkish society at large will suddenly shift to a de-entification of perceptions of citizenship, and since such a process is believed to be long-term and to require a great deal of effort on a state-level. A naturalization process that sets requirements for language and social skills, on the other hand, can reassure natives that newcomers are willing to learn about their culture and values, while at the same time the refugees themselves can be strengthened by ensuring they have the necessary proficiency of language and valuable knowledge of norms that can give them socio-cultural capital for self-advocacy as they are navigating themselves in society. In any case, the

Turkish citizenship requirements for refugees are very rigid and do not meet the requirements for the integration that is necessary for the Syrians to become integrated members of Turkish society in the long term, as it is overly centered around benefitting from financial and intellectual human capital. More research that can substantiate this seems to be necessary, as well as a common settlement against the strong nationalist understandings of citizenship so that work can be done towards a renewed understanding of citizenship in the Turkish context. It should not, however, include an abandonment of important elements such as Turkish culture and history, but that these old components can be united with new elements that can take a position towards its own reality in a plural and diverse society.

Finally, as a desired objective, this master thesis has identified simple patterns in how Syrian refugees create meaning in their existence as new Turkish citizens, as well as what experiences they have with belonging and integration as a result of naturalization. However, there are several more perspectives and nuances that could have been included. Future studies should, in addition to discussing the need for a rights-based approach which can encompass all Syrians, focus on continuing to try to understand this somewhat unique group of refugees. Regarding the naturalization of Syrians in Türkiye, issues of gender, age, and ethnicity as implications for the experience of integration and belonging can be particularly important. This is especially so since the authorities do not share public reports that can offer sufficient information on integration outcomes, key developments, and trends, which can also make it difficult to detect cases of marginalization among more vulnerable groups within the Syrian population. It should also be a priority for future researchers to more carefully map how young Syrians who obtain citizenship behave regarding mobility, as generating more systematic data on this group can contribute to better integration monitoring as well as a better understanding of the needs and challenges of these individuals.

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