

**THE FRONTLINE WORKERS IN I/NGOs:
A MULTI-LAYERED PRECARITY**

by

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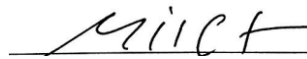
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To all Life Seekers.

ABSTRACT

THE FRONTLINE WORKERS IN I/NGOs: A MULTI-LAYERED PRECARITY

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This thesis explores the labour conditions and precarities of frontline I/NGO workers that operate for refugees by a focus on the neoliberal order that transformed the NGOs' position and their intraorganizational relationships -as they take on the role of serving public/beneficiary groups. The analysis provides an account of how neoliberal transformation of work leading to precarity affect NGOisation and refugee work in Turkey. The study analyses how precarity manifests itself, through qualitative interviews with 17 frontline workers that operate for refugees in 15 I/NGOs in Istanbul, Turkey. The interviews revealed prominent insecurities experienced by frontline workers, stemming from structural, managerial factors, and in relation to the content of their refugee work. The empirical sections present and expose the multi-layered precarity faced by NGO workers operating for refugees. This study also provides a discussion on workers' agency, their strategies to cope with their precarious setting. The academic work regarding civil society organizations in Turkey are mostly on their role in democratization and from a perspective from above, focusing on different actors including the state, the EU, and CSOs and their representatives. This research aims to fill the gap not only about organizations working in the humanitarian aid and development field in Turkey but also on research regarding the labour conditions of the civil society organizations -with a perspective from below.

Keywords: civil society, NGOisation, frontline workers, precarisation, Turkey, refugees, humanitarian work

ÖZETÇE

STK’LARDAKİ ÖN CEPHE ÇALIŞANLARI: ÇOK KATMANLI BİR GÜVENCESİZLİK

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Uluslararası İlişkiler, Yüksek Lisans

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Bu tez, STK’ların neoliberal düzende halka/yararlanıcılara servis sağlama rolünü üstlenmeleriyle hem konumlarında hem de iç ilişkilerinde meydana gelen değişiklikler doğrultusunda, mültecilerle çalışan sivil toplum kurumlarındaki ön cephe çalışanlarının iş koşullarına ve güvencesizliğe odaklanmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda araştırma; güvencesizliğe yol açan işin neoliberal dönüşümü, Türkiye’deki STK-laşmayı ve mülteci çalışmalarını nasıl etkiliyor sorusuna odaklanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede güvencesizliğin alanda kendini nasıl gösterdiğine, nitel yöntem aracılığıyla, İstanbul’da çalışan 15 kurumdan 17 ön cephe çalışanının anlatılarıyla bakmaktadır. Mülakatlarda en çok yapısal, yönetsel ve işin içeriğine bağlı güvencesizlikler ortaya çıkmıştır; araştırma bunları sergileyerek mülteciler için çalışmakta olan sivil toplum kurumlarındaki çok katmanlı güvencesizliği ortaya koymaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra çalışanların faillikleri; bu güvencesiz ortamla mücadele etme stratejileri tartışılmaktadır. Türkiye’deki STK’lara dair akademik literatürün büyük bir kısmı kurumların demokratikleşme üzerine rollerine odaklanmaktadır ve yukarıdan bir bakış açısına sahiptir. Bu bakış açısıyla devlete, Avrupa Birliği’ne, STK’lara ve onların temsilcilerine odaklanan çalışmalar çoğunluktadır. Bu çalışma, aşağıdan bir perspektifle, insani yardım ve kalkınma alanında çalışan STK’lar hakkında bir eksikliği gidermenin yanı sıra STK’lardaki iş koşullarını sergileyen akademik çalışma eksikliğini doldurmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: sivil toplum, STK-laşma, ön cephe çalışanları, prekarizasyon, Türkiye, mülteciler, insani yardım

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ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
I/NGO	International and Local Non-governmental Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
UN	United Nations



Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

This study primarily seeks to reflect on the transformation of the NGO scene and the labour conditions within that are due to the neoliberal ‘transfer’ of development work to the non-state actors. In this current era of neoliberal development politics, it becomes highly valuable to make a qualitative analysis in the NGO field, as precariousness emerges in various settings and affects the employees in different ways. To this end, I engage in two sets of larger literature that emerged as distinct fields of study in the 1970s: The research on development workers (Bierschenk et al., 2002.) and the research on precarious labour (Parker, 2018).

The development workers, in other words the “development brokers” (Bierschenk et al., 2002. p. 4), are people who work at development agencies that construct the assistance setting through their daily labour. These workers are in face to face contact with beneficiaries and have an intermediary position between them and donors (as well as managers). On the other hand, precarious labour emerges in the neoliberal employment setting with “employment instability, low material rewards, erosion of rights and social protection, de-standardised arrangements of working time, limited training and employability opportunities, lack of possibilities of employee representation and imbalanced interpersonal relations” (Bosmans et al., 2016, p. 1). The critiques of neoliberal re-structuring have fed these two distinct but interrelated literatures.

Therefore, although research on development brokers and precarious labour are two distinct phenomena, it is significant to consider their relationship as an intersecting branch of civil society literature. At the intersection of these two established literature, this research will focus on NGO work that entails provision of information, legal services and social assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey, and will examine working conditions, and the precariousness of frontline workers employed at various I/NGOs in Istanbul in the migration field.¹ I chose to actively use the word NGO instead of CSO, even though in Turkey NGOs are also referred to as CSOs, since these organizations

¹ It includes many dimensions such as relationships within the organization, support mechanisms, the subjective and objective possibility of dismissal, working too much or too little and future job opportunities (Benach et al. 2014).

operating for refugees are commonly based on professionalism rather than voluntarism and they are highly dependent on market and funding relations.

My research is a qualitative one, that centres on the newly blossomed NGO scene that is operating for refugees in Turkey. There were several organizations operating for refugees from the 1990s onwards (Şenses, 2020) yet there is an exponential growth in the number and sizes of the NGOs in the era after the Syrian refugee movement. Especially in the last five years, when people search for jobs in civil society online, they come across a high number of positions in the migration field. I was a member of the field for three years, two years full-time employed, in a frontline position.

The idea for this research came to me towards the end of my own working experience in an NGO operating for refugees. I had previous job experience that consists of a one-year internship and two years of full-time work under the protection officer title, between October 2016 - September 2019. My initial thesis idea was on the health access of the refugees, through my academic and personal interest in people on the move, and my observations from work. However, as time passed, I came across a high number of academic research on the refugees in Turkey, but very little on the people who assist them. Hence, based on these initial observations, this research focuses on the *experiences/perceptions* of service deliverers, namely the frontline workers in I/NGOs that operate for refugees. I contextualise these in Turkey's refugee setting and conceptualise them under my research question through the theoretical frameworks of precarisation and NGOisation.

Initially, the analytical focus on NGOs mainly explored the external environment in which NGOs operate (Ismail & Kamat, 2018) along with the forces that influence them and forces that they want to change. Currently, studies tend to focus more on internal changes that occurred within the NGOs, leading to "NGOisation" (Ismail & Kamat, 2018, p. 572). This concept signifies neoliberalism's effect on the NGO field as it "led to a culture of professionalization and depolitization of NGOs" (Kamat, 2004, p. 168). NGOisation is briefly described as the change that occurs within NGOs as they become corporatized, professionalised, and specialised. A shift occurs within the intraorganizational space; economically, sociologically, and politically. These transformations within the NGOs are the result of ramping neoliberal changes, as the state retreats in the provision of services, that it did or has to provide, leading to NGOs to take over.

This new structure which has been in practice since the 1980s found its place in the Turkish context in the 1990s and predominantly in the early 2000s onwards. Despite assisting the civil society development for different causes, it generated many internal conflicts for the organizations in an economic, social and political sense. In accordance, my research question is: *How does neoliberal transformation of work leading to precarity affect NGOisation and refugee work in Turkey?*

My empirical research enables me to answer this question through three sub-questions:

What are structural factors leading to precarity in the NGO setting?

How do frontline workers experience precarity in their position and role?

How do they cope with precarity?

Through these empirical investigations, I am going to analyse how neoliberalism and precarity transpires in NGO work by focusing on the field of refugees because this is where much of the monetary flows, competitions for funding as well as dense relationships with multiple donors take place today. NGOs became “contested sites in the struggle between the interests of capital and people’s aspirations for a just and humane world” (Kamat, 2013, p. xi). The NGO field is turning into an area that creates job opportunities (Abdelrahman, 2007), specifically the NGOs that operate for refugees. Thus, while many organizations or initiatives inside the civil society had volunteer positions and a few full-time and paid job positions, this newly developed field generated a high number of paid positions, making it a new employment area that I had a chance to experience from inside.

This study aims to fill a gap in the NGO literature with regards to the lack of in-depth studies in Turkey about frontline NGO workers’ precarities due to the neoliberal labour conditions. Since the number of I/NGOs working for refugees and their services increased due to the migratory dynamics in Turkey, conducting research on the daily life of young skilled workers and their working conditions became significant. Currently, immigration is a hot topic for funding and as additional projects open or the existing ones grow, new job positions are becoming available. Young people in Turkey, under the socioeconomic atmosphere with high unemployment, found jobs in civil society as it is a ‘well-paid’ area and is a good prospect for future career (Kuzmanovic, 2010), in addition to the moral, ideological and other motivations. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the impact

coming from intraorganizational and other dynamics of this growing sector on the young skilled employees in the field. Workers' position in this newly expanding and professionalized work field will illustrate an area which speaks with the humanitarian development sector, civil society and migration domain in Turkey, young skilled employment field and accordingly precarious labour. As a policy implication, this research can further demonstrate how to improve NGO workers' working conditions.

In Turkey's context, as the state did not provide all of the services and assistances that enable a comprehensive protection of refugees, regarding both their human rights and refugee rights, these were taken on by the I/NGOs inside a project-based system which I will further discuss in the upcoming chapters. Hence, some of the state's responsibilities are transferred to NGOs due to the lack of economic capital and competent staff, and responsibilities become decentralized as states "download responsibility" (Baines et al., 2014, p. 77) to the organizations. As refugees got access to the assistance of young, educated, and ambitious individuals; although indirectly, so did the state. In that, even with little investment, the state gained an additional capacity through NGOs' specific focus on this beneficiary group. This is one of the reasons why I am presenting the neoliberal shift in the NGOs and the labour conditions by focusing on the frontline workers that are the most precarious ones in this chain.

The below diagram is a guideline both for the flow of the chapters, where they begin and lead to, but it also presents the background setting of this thesis. As it would not be possible to demonstrate the whole complexity of the neoliberal system with a single diagram, I anticipate to generate a general sense of the structure this research is built on, that holds diverse and multi-layered dynamics within.

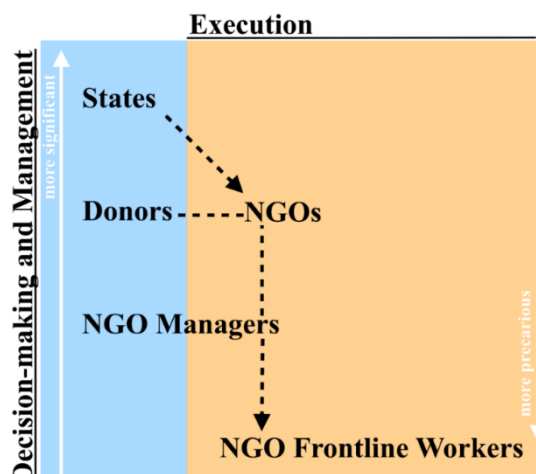


Figure 1.1: The Development Context and Position of Actors

The left half of the diagram, in blue, shows the actors that are in charge of the decision making and evaluation. Their significance on decision making and management increases as one goes up on the diagram. Right half, the orange part, consists of the executors of this system, these are the ones that are under a precarious setting. The lower on the diagram, the more precarious their position gets inside the system. However, even inside this top down structure, it is significant to emphasize NGOs hold agency to influence their conditions (Ismail & Kamat, 2018). In accordance, there is one group that takes place in both parts of the diagram, that are the NGO managers, meaning they are both decision-makers, by negotiating the projects with the donors and governing it and the organization (Jad, 2004), and executors as they implement a project which the donors fund.

In the subsequent chapter, I will briefly present the changes in NGOs due to neoliberalism and Turkey's relevant civil society dynamics, then provide a background on the development of the I/NGO scene operating for refugees, regarding Turkey's civil society and developmental context with a specific focus on the state's position. I will also provide brief information on the NGO setting, staff, and services in Turkey. Chapter 3 is on neoliberal labour market and its precarities, including the experiences in job positions that are on the frontlines. The fourth chapter is a review of the literature on the third sector and precarious labour, tracing the neoliberal transformations in the intraorganizational realm of the NGOs. I will present a detailed and reflexive methodology of the research on the fifth chapter. The following three chapters are empirical ones, I will start by examining the structural factors that generate precarity for the NGO workers, as described in the left side of the diagram painted in blue. In the subsequent chapter, I will discuss the labour inside the refugee field in detail, particularly the care labour, and present the insecurities and precarities of frontline workers by a focus on gender dynamics. The final chapter of the empirical part is on the strategies of frontline workers to cope with the precarious setting they are a part of, illustrating their agency. In the last chapter, I conclude, by discussing where this research stands and suggestions on subsequent research that might be complementary.

Chapter 2:

NGOISATION IN TURKEY: FROM DEMOCRATIZATION TO COMPETITION

The dominant paradigm in the civil society argument in Turkey, is its role in pluralism and democracy. Keyman & Koyuncu (2005) suggest, the Turkish state from republic until the 1980s is known for its strong and dominant stance in the political and economic life, yet it was not able to respond to social demands that arouse during the 1980s from the civil society (İçduygu & Keyman, 2003). Accordingly, “the strong state turned out to be too strong in its attempt to impose itself on society, and too weak in governing its society effectively” (Keyman & Koyuncu, 2005, p. 109). The 1980s was also the period when new economic and social actors emerged and their “organizational structure has been increasingly extended beyond the national and territorial borders” (Keyman & Koyuncu, 2005, p. 111). These new actors, linking local demands with local and global capital became significant in the civil society arena of Turkey.

Turkey’s candidacy to be a member of the European Union was accepted in 1999 (Ergun, 2010). In accordance, the early 2000s was a period where Turkey actively considered a full membership with the EU and a comprehensive European integration plan was on the way (Keyman & Koyuncu 2005). The EU and its related institutions began to boost the civil society development, being a major funder of Turkey’s civil society (Zihnioğlu, 2019).

The EU’s aim was to strengthen the civil society for democratization of Turkey, according to the European norms (Ergun, 2010; Göksel & Güneş, 2005; Rumelili & Boşnak, 2005). In 2003, Turkish state formed a Department of Associations under the Ministry of Interior (Rumelili & Boşnak, 2005).² In 2004, the state made a reform on its Association Law and reduced the restrictions for the associations in many respects and one aspect was on their access regulation to the external funding, albeit there were still some challenges in practice (Göksel & Güneş, 2005; Rumelili & Boşnak, 2005). Hence, there was a change in the legal environment that the civil society operates in.

² Associations were regulated under the Department of Security beforehand. One can deduct, this change illustrates a significant shift as the governance of the civil society realm is transferred to a more civil arena than securitized.

Another important point is the EU's influence on the formation of a "culture of donorship" (Göksel & Güneş, 2005, p. 67) in Turkey. The country faced an economic crisis in 2001, which Keyman & Koyuncu (2005) suggest is due to the "structural weakness of the Turkish economy" and "financial liberalization" (p. 106). Thus, Turkey was unable to adopt such donorship culture (Göksel & Güneş, 2005). As the EU only funds an organization partially, NGOs had to contact local and international private sector organizations to obtain more funds (Göksel & Güneş, 2005). Hence, along with its influence, local NGOs became more willing to reach out to the other international donors (Ergun, 2010). The EU continued to be a significant donor of Turkey's civil society with its high amount of funds (Zihnioğlu, 2019), but with an addition of new actors.

What are the effects of the EU funds on the structure of civil society organizations? The EU enhanced and strengthened the civil society in many respects but also led to a mainstreaming in and professionalization of the NGOs (Ergun, 2010; Göksel & Güneş, 2005). Through the EU's financial assistance for the capacity building of the Turkish civil society, there was an increase in the number of NGOs as they became familiar with the funding space, and established or transformed their agendas according to the areas that donors fund (Göksel & Güneş, 2005). Thus, one can deduce, NGOs began to operate with close acquaintance to the free market logic that is mainly based on competition. They began to resemble a "private firm" (Bebbington et al., p. 22) while competing for foreign funds, under a project-based structure (Ergun, 2010).

In addition, donors demand effective and visible outcomes that are achieved in short-term which directs the NGOs to follow a service-based agenda (Zihnioğlu, 2019). This causes the organizations that are, to a degree, 'depoliticized' due to democratic deficit in the country to become more so with a serving focus, this was an additional barrier for them to create political change as they do not direct their attention on rights-based activism (Zihnioğlu, 2019). Accordingly, as the organizations began to operate in the social services area, they are becoming mainly focused on the basic needs field (Silliman, 1999), which not only leads to "NGOisation" (Ismail & Kamat, 2018, p. 572) but also "depoliticisation" (Zihnioğlu, 2019, p. 503).

Professionalization, and professional staff is necessary to write the project proposals and respond to the requirements put forth by the donors (Ergun, 2010). Hence, the "CSOs, which were previously based on voluntary participation of members and supporters and funded by membership fees and modest donations, are becoming professionalized, issue-

oriented and working on a project basis” (Ergun, 2010, p. 519). One can infer, this in turn, may lead to a change in the labour conditions of civil society as recruitment criteria resembles the private sector. Accordingly, Büyükbay (2015) demonstrates civil society leaders’ views in Turkey, seeing the EU as a neoliberal actor whose aim is to bring about a political change, democratization, while mostly neglecting social change, especially developments in workers’ rights.

The EU’s political focus on funding policies in the early periods shifted to an attention to “regional development” (Zihnioğlu, 2019, p. 507) and social cohesion. One can suggest, it represents a more developmental approach and puts greater emphasis on social issues which encapsulate refugees. Especially in the last decade, the EU directed its attention to the vulnerable groups and their rights and well-being in the Turkish society (Zihnioğlu, 2019). However, since the EU’s project and funding durations for NGOs are less than 1,5 years and as it is not clear whether the project duration will be extended or another project period will follow the previous one, NGOs are unable to make long term plans (Zihnioğlu, 2019). Both Zihnioğlu’s (2019) arguments and the free market logic that was mentioned earlier became highly apparent when NGOs got into competition for funds which led to a conflictual atmosphere in civil society rather than one with solidarity (Göksel & Güneş, 2005). Mackreath & Sağdıç (2017) argue that this atmosphere provides insights on how the NGO field working for refugees in Turkey operates at present, which is in focus of this study.

2.1 NGO Response to Refugees in Turkey

Turkey, although being a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention³, did not have the national legal structure for the comprehensive implementation of the rights of refugees until 2013. Before 2013, in the drafting process of the Foreigners and International Protection Law, the state cooperated and benefitted from the expertise of several nongovernmental actors including academicians and CSOs.⁴ This process is resembling the case of environmental CSOs, where Turkish state lacked the expertise therefore

³ Turkish state also signed the following 1967 Protocol, however by putting a geographical limitation which significantly narrows its meaning and implementation.

⁴ In the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan of Directorate of Migration Management, there are several references to this kind of a cooperation emphasizing civil society actors’ advisory position. Accordingly, in case the Directorate needs their assistance, it can organize seminars and meetings and invite them to contribute.

collaborated with them⁵ for its international reputation⁶ (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2017). However, “being invited to collaborate on one issue does not guarantee future invitations” (Paker et al., 2013, p. 9).

In Turkey’s case, the EU membership motive influenced the establishment of 2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection which demonstrated a shift in the ‘strong’ state mentality, in that the refugee ‘management’ field gained a more civil ground diverging from the previous securitized approach (Memişoğlu & Ilgit, 2017). Refugees began to flee to Turkey in 2011, as the conflicts began in Syria. This was prior to the formation of Directorate General for Migration Management⁷ and publication of Foreigners and International Protection Law in 2013, and promulgation of Temporary Protection Directive in 2014.

2011 onwards, an increasing number of refugees arrived to Turkey and the country’s public institutions, and assistance and support through these institutions, were not sufficient.⁸ Thus, NGOs filled in the gap for the insufficient services and support (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017), rising to a fundamental position in the field of protection. This shift coincided with the initiation of a new approach to migration policy making in Turkey. Kirişçi (2014) suggests, the transition was not an easy one for the Turkish state as 1994 asylum legislation was highly securitized⁹ and Turkish state’s perception of the issue of refugee arrivals was more about national security¹⁰ than human rights. The Turkish state initially tried to control the refugee group coming from Syria on its own, with its accustomed and dominant camp mentality (Kirişçi, 2014). They placed most refugees in state-run camps¹¹ (Kirişçi, 2014).

⁵ The authors further declare, as Turkish state built and enhanced its institutions and expertise on the topic, CSOs’ role in the decision-making decreased.

⁶ In addition, Paker et al. (2013) suggest, in the environmental civil society field, Turkish state collaborated with some organizations to access EU funds. This is also applicable to a number of organizations in the refugee field.

⁷ Before this department was formed inside the Ministry of Interior, the state institution, which was responsible for the foreigners, including refugees, was the General Directorate of Security.

⁸ Calavita (2005) argues “newcomers” (p. 124) arrival and interaction with the systems inside the country, illustrates capacity limits of a country’s structure and services.

⁹ It was declared that the arriving refugees (who were Iraqis back then) will inhabit camps that will be built in the Turkey-Iraq border (Kirişçi, 2014), which one can deduce establishes a buffer zone mentality on the refugees.

¹⁰ One can argue, a major part of the mentioned security notion was border security, as refugees were coming from a neighbouring country.

¹¹ These were mainly built in the cities neighbouring Syria.

During the first years of Syrian refugee mobility to Turkey, the government was restrictive towards INGOs and with less actors involved there was not enough capacity for the management of the situation (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017).¹² After mid-2012 when more refugees began to arrive in Turkey, the state's capacity was not adequate to continue providing camps and facilities for incoming refugees (Kirişçi, 2014) and its self-sufficiency came into question. Even with the Turkish state's insecurities towards foreign bodies' increasing involvement in the nation-state sphere, between 2013-2015, the number of INGOs operating for refugees increased (Memişoğlu & Ilgit, 2017; Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017). Nevertheless, some big and well-known INGOs managed to register in Turkey as late as 2015 (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017).¹³ Most of the INGOs entered the assistance and service realm through establishing partnerships with local NGOs (Kirişçi, 2014; Memişoğlu & Ilgit, 2017).

The Turkish state's security-based approach, made it harder for INGOs to get registered under the legal system in Turkey (Kirişçi, 2014) and the ones that could register tend not to become affiliated with fragile topics in Turkey's context (Aras & Duman, 2018).¹⁴ In 2017, Turkish government closed down several INGOs operating in the refugee field that were working in cross-border aid delivery to Syria (Mellen & Lynch, 2017).¹⁵ This is a valuable example of the Turkish state's stance on the issue as "[s]tates tend to be open to collaboration in areas that do not fall within their "redlines" " (Kadirbeyoğlu et al., 2017, p. 1728). Accordingly, INGOs were accused of serving Kurdish people in northern Syria and instead of these INGOs, Turkish government approved the cross-border aid delivery by local NGOs of its choice (Dettmer, 2018).¹⁶

¹² One can suggest, this shows the dilemma of strength and weakness of a particular state, as the 'strong' Turkish state was unwilling to welcome foreign actors, that are INGOs, however they did due to developmental needs.

¹³ It is significant to note that in 2016, after a coup attempt in Turkey, the government declared a state of emergency and closed down more than 2000 associations and foundations (Ertan, 2018), their main operation area was not migration.

¹⁴ Such as minority issues or other political conflicts.

¹⁵ The state's insecurity also manifested itself for NGOs that are active in psychosocial support and education fields, as it monitored them through legal obligations such as duty to sign a protocol with the state and requirement to obtain a license. However, there are not only protocols, but also joint projects formed between some NGOs and the state, especially with the Ministry of National Education, Directorate General of Migration Management and Ministry of Family Labour and Social Services (Altunkaynak Vodina, 2019).

¹⁶ Which, one can argue, resurfaced border security and national security paradigm.

As the number of refugees outside of camps rose, Turkey not only permitted but also demanded assistance from international actors (Kirişçi, 2014).¹⁷ Hence, NGOs became more active and significant in the field of refugee protection in Turkey (Kirişçi, 2014; Memişoğlu & Ilgit, 2017).¹⁸ Accordingly, in the Directorate General of Migration Management's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, there are several references to cooperation with and support from the civil society organizations (Strateji Geliştirme Dairesi Başkanlığı, 2017).¹⁹ Mackreath & Sağnıç (2017) declare, “[f]or the first time since the 1999 earthquake, CSOs were necessitated in the field, and the state was forced to accept the involvement of civil society” (p. 46). The earthquake revealed the lack in capacity and development of the Turkish state, since the state and its apparatuses failed to manage the disaster process and civil society stepped in, to provide fast and adequate support (İçduygu & Keyman, 2003; Toprak & Yücel, 2018) even with their limited economic resources.²⁰ This not only increased public trust in CSOs (Toprak & Yücel, 2018) but also exposed the economic and other capacity weaknesses of the Turkish state (İçduygu & Keyman, 2003).²¹

Turkey's partnership and collaboration with the UN, and its relevant bodies, steadily increased (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017). Kirişçi (2014) suggests, the UN's increasing role in the refugee field of Turkey and partnership with the Turkish state with the establishment of the “UN system” (p. 42), directed the NGOs in Turkey to get to know and collaborate with international organizations. Not only the new NGOs are formed but also the already existing NGOs became more active and gained a significant position in the refugee protection area with establishing additional projects and services (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017). These actors filled in a major position in assistance and service provision for refugees that are not settled in the camps and that are significantly higher in number and dispersed around Turkey (Aras & Duman, 2018).

¹⁷ Kirişçi (2014) suggests, Turkish state wanted to manage the refugee issue on its own and be the sole actor determining the field, however due to its capacity it was not able to.

¹⁸ One can claim, this illustrates a weakness in the development and economic capacity of the Turkish state. Despite being a strong state and the decision-making body on the refugee topic, it demonstrated a weakness in capacity and protection provision.

¹⁹ The cooperation is especially regarding operations for people under Temporary Protection (Syrians) and International Protection (non-Syrians) regimes and support for victims of human trafficking.

²⁰ Turkish state actively supported the CSOs and their role and assistance in this emergency (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002).

²¹ Kamat (2004) suggests, it is highly difficult for neoliberal ideology and democracy to reconcile as democracy gives the state the obligation to help its citizens whereas this obligation is outsourced to non-state actors under neoliberalism.

There is a “division of labour” (Codó, 2013, p. 32), decision-making being the role of the state and sustainable continuation of asylum-seekers’ daily lives mainly being the responsibility of other actors. This is until the state, in a micro perspective, makes a refugee status determination and, in a macro perspective, a decision on new immigration and asylum policies. In this context, the ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ side of the state causes different conflicts in the civil society. The Turkish state’s perception and behaviour towards I/NGOs operating in the refugee realm is as a “passive-exclusive state” that “neither combats nor promotes civil society”, however has changing attitudes towards different civil society organizations in the realm (Sunar in Kalaycıoğlu, 2002, p. 261).²² One example is the inhibitory stance of the state, when activities of CSOs towards refugees integrate with activities focusing on minority groups and their rights (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017). However, one can claim, there might be some CSOs using this strategically, knowing the neutral or positive stance of the state towards refugee services and activities. This is, as the migration field is a more legitimized field in the eyes of the state, covering its capacity and management ‘weakness’ rather than opposing a threat to its strength. Paker et al. (2013) illustrate the importance that the Turkish state has attached to its ‘weak side’ by suggesting it was easier for environmental CSOs to collaborate with the state in topics that are not in direct relation with its economic concerns.

2.2 Understanding NGO Assistance and Services

As the capacity of the civil society domain for refugees enhanced, it led to a “marketization” (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017, p. 2) of the field and a formation of a “professional CSO sector” (p. 41). These notions illustrate how the NGO sector, working for refugees, resembles the operation of the private sector and companies. Accordingly, many scholars suggest there is a lack of coordination, cooperation and communication between the NGOs (Aras & Duman, 2018; Mackreath & Sağnıç 2017).²³ Mackreath & Sağnıç (2017) argue, this is mainly due to competition for funds and political differences

²² Plagemann (2001) also suggests that there is a suspicion by states concerning the actions of human rights organizations as they are criticizing the activities of those states. Unless their actions are not related to other states, this might lead to organizations being banned and closed down. Thus, focusing on NGOs operating for refugees, one can argue, they can be more legitimate as they work in an area which is primarily based on violations of other countries triggering people to flee.

²³ Aras & Duman (2018) claim that it has a negative effect on the efficiency of the actors as it leads to “overlapping of services” and “duplication of assistance programmes and non-optimal use of resources” (p. 11).

that were already problematic in the civil society of Turkey (Kuzmanovic, 2012).²⁴ The element of competition is also evident within comparisons of reputation and utility in the interorganizational realm. The reputation is mainly about who is leading the NGO field in migration with its capacity and service reach, and to earn this spot, NGOs share less information amongst each other (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017). In addition, the utility element is visible in the competitive discourse, as NGOs criticize one another with the improvement they make in their beneficiaries' daily lives (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017) seeing it as a legitimate evaluation mechanism.²⁵

Frontline workers in the NGOs -commonly referred as social workers, protection officers, case workers or field workers in the field- filled in the positions for providing accurate information, on regulations and rights of the refugees, and social support. "NGOs have often grown to fill gaps in the provision of services and public goods which the public sector used to, or was never able to, provide" (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013, p. 3). Codó (2013) claims, this shows the "neoliberal rationality" of the state as it "offloaded immigration information to civil society" (p. 25), in other words, there was a "neoliberal offloading of public services to civil society organizations" (p. 50).²⁶ In accordance, most of the NGOs in Turkey focused their work on the social services field (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017).

The vast part of the welfare system is assistance, aids, services and their distribution processes. Accordingly, due to neoliberal measures that reduce public spending, NGOs working for migrants and refugees took over a "quasi-public" (Codó, 2013, p. 34) institutional role as legal advice providers, which are traditionally run through the state and its institutions.

While discussing the process of NGOisation, Kamat (2013) suggests that "the weight of geopolitical imperatives is repeatedly invoked as playing a decisive role in NGO

²⁴ Polarization is evident in the internal dynamics of the field, members of organizations with different world views and operations do not recognize one another as a 'genuine' part of the civil society (Kuzmanovic, 2012).

²⁵ In this vein, Mackreath & Sağnıç (2017) indicate, many local NGOs criticize the bigger NGOs or INGOs due to them being more active in the reporting field which does not directly benefit the beneficiaries.

²⁶ Codó (2013) further indicates, by downloading this responsibility "the state is ideologically not seen as investing (too many) resources" (p. 39) on the newcomers. Accordingly, in Mackreath & Sağnıç's (2017) report, one interviewee from the civil society expressed that "municipalities do not want to alienate their voters by spending money on refugees" (p. 56). The researchers added that municipalities have changing perceptions on the issue.

promotion and the creation of an NGO comprador class” (p. ix). Some of the civil society organization members declared that civil society was becoming a “sub-contractor” (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017, p. 50) of the Turkish state. Ferguson (2009) argues, under neoliberal governmentality non-state actors became influential in social assistance and this is a “neoliberal technique” (p. 182) of the state in some incidents, rather than a neoliberal policy shift towards NGOs, as they are working together with the state to solve the current and ongoing problems. Moreover, when NGOs fill in the gaps in access to rights and provision of services for refugees, state’s authority consequently increases as it seems capable of governing the situation and related population (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017). As a consequence, it became a question within the civil society if refugees from Syria are a “public versus private responsibility” (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017, p. 9) and “whether they are performing services which should be being provided by the state” (p. 19).

In this debate, one should look at the similarities and differences between state-provided and other social services and on the access of these. Ryan (1992) and Potocky-Tripodi (2002) suggest that voluntary agencies and private agencies provide social services that are more diverse and comprehensive than social services in the state institutions. In the context of Turkey, NGOs function “where there is a lack or mismanagement of state services, or complementing state services or advocating for different services” (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017, p. 71). In this way, one can argue, NGOs fill the gaps also in areas where the state does not offer and provide service.²⁷ In addition, refugees commonly choose to follow the procedures through the assistance of NGOs that they are familiar and in contact with. Since NGOs have a rule of confidentiality and provide translation services that are usually accessible in different languages, the interactions and contacts become more frequent and refugees tend to build trust. As Harriss (2000) argues, previous positive interactions and the repetition of the “efficient and equitable” (p. 242) relationship, in time builds trust.

Immigration policies are built around the dichotomy of legality and illegality; thus, policies and services are functioning for the refugees who already are regularized (Ryan 1992; Calavita, 2005). Similarly, in Turkey’s context, NGOs are significant for refugees

²⁷ The literature mainly suggests a download of responsibility by state to NGOs, however one can argue, NGOs conceptualize their services differently from the state’s social service work as they have their own agenda and political stance. Thus, they situate themselves differently even if they provide similar services with state institutions.

who are not registered or who are registered but are unable to access some of their rights due to the language and other bureaucratic barriers. Aras & Duman (2018) claim, due to the language barrier and discriminative attitude of the personnel, refugees do not tend to seek assistance from public institutions. When registered refugees face problems accessing their rights, several I/NGOs accompany refugees for translation and other kinds of assistance. However, refugees commonly have difficulties in knowing which I/NGO provides what kinds of assistance and services and also the range of services that are under state provision, due to the lack of access to related information (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017).

Briefly, NGOs provide legal assistance, financial assistance²⁸, information on registration and other trainings²⁹ and services (Aras & Duman, 2018). For the unregistered refugees, they provide psychosocial assistance, medical support, information on registration (Aras & Duman, 2018; Şenses, 2020), their rights and the problems they might face due to their status (Codó, 2013). Furthermore, in cases that involve the decision of the state, that leaves them out of the scope of protection, such as a rejection of international protection application or a deportation decision (Aras & Duman, 2018), refugees mostly seek assistance³⁰ from NGOs (Şenses, 2020) as almost all of them are independent from the Turkish state. On the other hand, even if the NGOs collaborate with the state and/or are state funded, in practice workers can inform and assist migrants from an activist stance (Codó, 2013). In that, they can show ways to solve issues by notifying them about the loopholes of the system and ways to manoeuvre, which demonstrates the activist side of the NGOs with their ideology and agenda (Codó, 2013).

²⁸ Mackreath & Sağnıç (2017) claim, these assistance are bounded with CSOs' capacity and thus are not sufficient to meet the needs of a high number of refugees.

²⁹ Some courses, workshops and projects by the CSOs are listed in the Beyazova et al. (2019) report.

³⁰ For these kinds of decisions that require an appeal procedure, NGOs provide assistance, consultation and referral services to the Legal Aid Bureau of Bar Associations.

2.3 *Background Information on NGO Context*

NGO staff is the group that serves to construct an NGO on a daily basis with their work, providing service and assistance. Frontline workers of the NGOs interact with beneficiaries, co-workers, supervisors/managers, colleagues in other I/NGOs, the state and its institutions and with society on different levels in their daily routines. Therefore, they encounter different social groups and get into a variety of hierarchies. In addition, for them to continue operating, the donor side and funds have a significant role.

INGOs and NGOs that operate in the humanitarian aid arena in Turkey are mostly funded by different governments in Europe or EU (Aras & Duman, 2018). A member of a civil society organization in Turkey suggested that NGOs working for refugees form their agendas to attract funds (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017).³¹ In that, people observe the funds, create projects accordingly, and become members of the refugee protection field.³² An INGO worker, interviewed in the Mackreath & Sağnıç (2017) report, suggested that the new projects and services increased the workload and burden on the already existing members of local NGOs as they did not open new units or hire more staff (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017). In addition, since applying a rights-based approach would demand specialized staff, as new projects are formed or existing ones get bigger with additional funding, NGOs prefer to focus on service-based and needs-based activities such as trainings, seminars, counselling, providing information either through sessions or making brochures and so forth (Zihnioğlu, 2019).³³

On the funding side, CSOs “strive to maintain a professional image as entities that are capable and worthy of doing business with, since even the appearance of professionalism may be a prerequisite for interactions with funders” (Kadirbeyoğlu et al, 2017, p. 1725). In addition, donors choose to partner with organizations that are “moral, people-led and efficient” (Howell, 2002, p. 119), however also by the criteria of fluency in English (Ergun, 2010) and knowledge of the Western development discourse. These criteria are further applicable to Turkey’s NGO experience (Ergun, 2010) as donors are

³¹ On the other hand, one of the interviewees declared that some CSOs do not apply to donors in order to ‘protect’ their agendas and thus choose to stay smaller.

³² In the environmental civil society realm in Turkey, Paker et al. (2013) suggest, organizations employ staff to draft the projects as it is important not only for the organization’s sustainability but also for the employees’ continuity in the organization. This is also applicable for the refugee field.

³³ In accordance, Zihnioğlu (2019) states: “With EU funds, CSOs have become more service providers than claimants. This, in return contributed to their depoliticisation” (p. 513).

partnering with what Howell (2002) calls “urban elites” (p. 127). Therefore, it becomes a question whether they can represent the underprivileged. Moreover, Ertan (2018) put forth, in Turkey’s civil society, a rather smaller number of individuals form and become members of CSOs, and most management positions are run by older and educated men. Furthermore, although NGOs gain legitimacy and representation through the beneficiaries they serve, NGO workers commonly are middle-class professionals that are different from the group that they assist (De Jong, 2017; Kamat, 2004).³⁴

In the refugee field, where a high number of young and educated people choose to work in Turkey, the status gap between workers and beneficiaries becomes even wider. Accordingly Dagnino (2008) argues, NGOs’ knowledge and competence makes them actors with capacity to represent a group they know of due to their area of expertise and interest, however in most cases they do not have organic links with them.³⁵ This is applicable to the Turkish civil society context as institutionalized CSOs are mainly the big ones with large funds and they are neither established with a bottom-up understanding nor are linked to any bottom-up movements (Kadirbeyoğlu et al., 2017).³⁶

On people’s motivations to work in civil society, Abdelrahman (2007) suggests, NGOs are becoming a sector preferred by the middle-class educated people who do not want to work under high bureaucracy in public institutions and also not in the private sector due to their ideological preferences. Güner (2019) describes a similar orientation in Turkey and suggests civil society, academia, and occupations such as journalism are the fields that these people work at or are attracted to. Further on Turkey’s context, Kuzmanovic (2010) looks at the changes in members of Turkey’s civil society and argues that young and educated people choose to work in this field mainly due to unemployment and as it is a good career path for future job positions with better standards. In that, working in civil society is both a well-paid employment option and a career path with its prestige in the eyes of international organizations and Western countries (Kuzmanovic, 2010). In addition, under the labour market conditions with high unemployment, the

³⁴ There are also Syrian people and people from other refugee and migrant groups, who are from diverging socioeconomic backgrounds, who work at NGOs commonly as translators. Some also work as field workers and less commonly as social workers and in other positions.

³⁵ She further suggests, since NGOs have responsibilities towards their funders, their responsibility towards civil society in general and the group they represent is questionable. In that, in the system they work at, it is evident that they will focus on and prioritize their responsibilities towards their donors as they are the ones who have the power to monitor and evaluate their activities.

³⁶ Altunkaynak Vodina (2019) declares legal requirements for establishing an NGO and the work permit obligation prevent refugees from setting up their own NGOs.

graduates of areas such as political science, international relations, sociology, philosophy and social work³⁷ who were commonly having hard time to find jobs in the last decades found themselves an area for recruitment. Moreover, regardless of the field they studied, middle-class educated people who are unwilling to work in the public or private sectors choose to incline towards academia or civil society. Hence, it is common that people position themselves in between these two areas and there is a back and forth mobility between the two realms.

This concludes the background information regarding the refugee and civil society context that is the setting of this research. This chapter gave fundamental information on the general context that is at the background of this thesis, leading us to understand workers' position in it. I first discussed the civil society dynamics in Turkey and the EU's effects on the professionalization of it, and the competitive atmosphere it created. Then I briefly discussed the emergence of the civil society field working for refugees, their function -mainly their services and position- and the staff dynamics.

The next chapter will discuss the precarities stemming from the labour market conditions caused by the neoliberal economics. The state's withdrawal converged civil society work for refugees towards social work, therefore examining transformations in the social work setting gained importance in a research on labour conditions inside NGOs. My findings confirm that social work resembles NGO or civil society work with its moral satisfaction element. On the other hand, my research will further expose the divergence and convergences of NGO work and social work to the neoliberal labour conditions and open a space for exploring the working conditions of civil society today.

³⁷ One of my interviewees, who graduated from the department of social work, stated that although there are high number of social work graduates, state institutions employ very few people, therefore there is a very heavy workload for the ones who are employed and many social workers are not able to be employed in the public sector. One can deduce, this shows a neoliberal practice since there is a need for workers; however state institutions recruit less people which causes heavy workload for workers and, as the public sector is a common recruitment area for the profession, many social work graduates are unemployed.

Chapter 3:

THE EFFECT OF LABOUR MARKET CONDITIONS ON PRECARITIES

The NGOs, as part of the third sector, appear “as employers and providers of jobs” and have developed into being “major actors within the changing labour market” (Abdelrahman, 2007, p. 79). This research will analyse the extent to which frontline workers’ conditions in this field reflect the patterns that have been long discussed in the precarious labour literature. Hence, the initial question is whether we can consider the people working in the field as precarious labourers, based on their working conditions?

The concept of precarious employment emerged as the labour market’s dynamics changed and workers’ working conditions and safety networks diminished after the 1970s (Parker, 2018).³⁸ Accordingly, during the 1980s employers demanded a flexible employment environment to quickly adapt to the changing market conditions and most countries obtained a neoliberal agenda and made appropriate legislative changes in labour regulations (Tompá et al., 2007).

Precarious and non-standard work is not a new phenomenon, it was a common practice especially before the 20th century (Tompá et al., 2007). Yet, throughout the 20th century, with an additional influence of new social regulations following World War II, work became standardized and full-time (Tompá et al., 2007). At present, we see many full-time standardized job positions with their internal deregulation generating precarities inside, therefore the authors argue, full-time work cannot be viewed as a guarantee or as a secure work environment. In accordance, Kalleberg & Vallas (2018) claim, the newly emerged precarity in the work atmosphere is due to the loss of previously acquired rights for labour. For them, precarity meant the loss of certainty, stability and security in the work setting.

³⁸ 1980s onwards is also the period in which NGOs flourished in the western countries, opening new job positions to people next to the public and private sectors (Abdelrahman, 2007).

Bosmans et al. (2016) interpret the characteristics of precariousness through the following table:

Employment conditions
1. Employment instability Type of employment contract, threats to the continuation of employment
2. Low material rewards Low earnings, lack of fringe benefits
3. Erosion of workers' rights and social protection Paid vacation, health insurance, pension plan, etc.
4. De-standardised working time arrangements Unsustainable working times (e.g. involuntary parttime employment), intensive working times (e.g. long working hours), flexible working times
5. Limited training and employability opportunities Training provided by the employer, training about health and safety at work, opportunities for career advancement
Employment relations
6. Lack of possibilities for employee representation Availability of an employee representative, collective negotiation procedures
7. Imbalanced interpersonal relations Interpersonal power relations (with superiors, colleagues and clients), capacity to exercise rights (knowledge about rights, the possibility to obtain mandatory rights), vulnerability (fear of arbitrary dismissal, authoritarian behaviour of superiors)

Table 3.1 “Dimensions of Precariousness” (Bosmans et al., 2016, p. 4)

From a macro perspective, precarity demonstrates itself with a decrease in state provided protections and an increase in individual/employee responsibilities. Kalleberg & Vallas (2018) suggest, research on precarization is focused on macro level dynamics and argue that micro level analysis is valuable as the transformation of the labour markets “affect many non-work domains” (p. 2) with the derogation of workers’ conditions, experiences and overall health (Tompa et al., 2007).

The amount of work that people need to execute not only in the work environment but also in broader everyday life is ever-increasing. Accordingly, Smith (2010) talks about the amount of work -with networking, trainings and internships- an individual puts in to enhance their employability.³⁹ She suggests this is continuous, in that, even if a

³⁹ In the context of employability, from a macro perspective, countries provide vocational training for the unemployed for “balancing flexibility for employers and security for workers” (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018, p. 21).

person is employed they would continue working for employability to be able to attain another job when they want, or if they have to. This continuous effort illustrates the existing precarious conditions of the job market (Smith, 2010). Moreover, it demonstrates precarities due to an unstable and unpredictable employment setting. Therefore, the author argues, employability practices become a strategy for people in the labour market and portrays their agency. However, by performing these employability practices over and over, individuals also re-construct the fragile and insecure labour setting they are in (Smith, 2010).

In the micro level, workers perform their strategies, in that, they might give consent to the precarities as they try to work at that position for a duration to fulfil upcoming career goals (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). The mentioned consent of the workers can also be referred to as a performance of what the authors call loyalty, to manage their future careers. In addition, workers might comply with the standards just to be employed, especially in a context of high unemployment. On the other hand, they might choose to leave the organization or give voice to their concerns and precarities which the authors suggest generally happens in the working class, through unions and demonstrations.⁴⁰

Then the question becomes, what changed in the content of the jobs and practices when we look at the intraorganizational level? The neoliberal setting has transformed working conditions with the reorganization of labour inside organizations (Smith, 1997). Smith (1997) suggests the meanings that participation, hierarchy, division of labour, competition and responsibility encapsulate have changed and new notions arose such as flexibility and performance evaluation. In this new context, participation means more than just workforce participation, which is in quantity, but rather participating in the workforce with evolving ‘competences’ that signify quality and variety (Smith, 1997). Baines (2006) further claims that the word ‘competence’ illustrates the neoliberal effect in the realm of social work. In that, the word ‘competence’ -which is a private sector term- replaced the word ‘skills’ as skills are no longer a significant measure of qualification. Accordingly, “the focus on ‘competency’; a mentality which seeks to reduce ‘education’ to ‘training’, and critical practice to a set of procedural formulas” (Singh & Cowden,

⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Aşçı (2018) claims, there is a decrease in the status of the middle class, and they began to resemble the proletariat. In Turkey’s context, the author argues, one major reason for this is that trade union laws do not comply with the changed labour conditions. In that, middle class people cannot find a representation ground via unions and white-collar people’s working conditions and precarities are not debated through such an institutional setting.

2009, p. 9) transformed the social work practice. Moreover, this shift puts more responsibility on the individuals as competence is something they should rapidly obtain rather than skills, which one can acquire in longer durations and with mutual exchange (Baines, 2006). This is due to an environment where there is a “lack of recognition of complexity of social work roles and tasks and most importantly professions’ intellectual credentials” (Singh & Cowden, 2009, p. 10). Thus, the change in working conditions under neoliberal logic undermines the social capital (Jones, 2000).

Another concept that defines workers’ conditions in the neoliberal job environment is flexibility. It mainly signifies a change in job descriptions as they are widened, and the task boundaries are blurred. The neoliberal working conditions utilize a mentality and practice of doing more with less people in a flexible setting and establishes a control of the operations through managerialism (Jones, 2000). In a setting where competition in the labour market requires fulfilling participation requirements and making self-sacrifices to secure the job position (Smith, 1997), both competition and flexibility established a ground for employers to employ a small number of workers who work long hours. Accordingly, in order to cut the costs, organizations commonly choose to employ workers on part-time and temporary positions, therefore Smith (1997) argues, in the new order that is influenced by neoliberalism, temporariness of work evolved into being the norm and career stability became questionable. This is also the case for NGO workers as they are commonly working in project-based positions which make “secure, sustainable careers” (p. 79) in the third sector uncommon (Abdelrahman, 2007).⁴¹

The flexible job definitions also transformed the division of labour within an organization and the work put in by individual employees and their responsibilities intensified. Moreover, some of managers’ duties were transferred to employees (Smith, 1997). Thus, the additional workload includes the coordination of support and assistance (Harlow, 2003). Despite the increased demand and workload, employees commonly were not given supplementary trainings to enhance their competences and thus upward mobility inside organizations decreased (Smith, 1997). In that, Smith (1997) suggests, employees ‘acquired’ additional titles but were not promoted. In terms of hierarchy, one

⁴¹ The most explicit reason is that NGOs are externally funded, and the donors might choose to fund other areas or other NGOs in the same field. Furthermore, Abdelrahman (2007) argues, NGOs need to have moderate relations with the state for them to operate in the country and for donors to fund them. Accordingly, the author suggests, this existential struggle in an unstable economy is one of the reasons that NGOs became an economic well-being and livelihood space rather than an area for social and political change.

might expect a decrease in the atmosphere of flexible job descriptions, but there is an increase as the gap between managers and employers widened due to managers taking the control and evaluation of work and employers taking the execution and most of the responsibilities in daily practice (Smith, 1997). In such a setting, there is an “elevation of technical competence over critical thinking, the predominance of managerial over professional decision making” (Singh & Cowden, 2009, p. 3).

One can suggest, the diffusion of responsibilities from managers to employees that Smith (1997) discusses resembles the state’s diffusion of its responsibilities under neoliberalism while being dominant in the decision-making process (Dagnino, 2008). It is an example of how a macro structure, that is the state with its neoliberal behaviour, affects the structures of micro actors, the organizations. Accordingly, talking about CSOs in Turkey, Ertan (2018) indicates they “seem to operate as microcosms of larger society in which hierarchical norms and principles dominate social relations as well as decision-making processes” (p. 207).

The neoliberal shift brought a “decentered hierarchical control” (Smith, 1997, p. 326) with the role division, making employees responsible for the execution and managers for the planning. That is, the control is top down but decentered which increases the expectation of additional competences and effort from employees. Accordingly, managers “evaluate the performance of workers” (Smith, 1997, p. 325) and in social work practice managers become evaluators and decision-makers whereas workers function as implementers. Hence, workers’ workload and evaluation mechanisms increased similarly to private sector jobs. Harlow (2003) accordingly indicates that 1980’s onwards a management culture emerged. This culture changed the social work domain and organizations operating inside, as they took on management practices that were performed in the private sector. These practices increasingly formed the social work realm and the field began to be viewed through managerial concepts. In accordance, less importance was given to the areas that are not quantifiable and rational, hence “each closed case (appeared as) representing a success that can be added to the totals in the monitoring report” (Harlow, 2003, p. 35). The management practices not only determined which personnel serves, when and how but also decided on the beneficiary, so who is in need, and the level of their needs. In such a setting, social workers perform the tasks that the organization wants from them within the framework and methods of the organization (Harlow, 2003). They are operating in a limited space with directing the predetermined

resources to beneficiaries. In this transformed environment, Singh & Cowden (2009) suggest, social workers' intellectual existence and activity diminished in their daily practices. The authors state: "This situation has come about because the price paid for the present consolidation has been the ever greater domination of the profession by managerial and financially driven administrative regimes. Together these have constrained and undermined the capacity of the social worker to act in a way which bears witness to the values which brought them into the profession at first place" (Singh & Cowden, 2009, p. 11).

On a different account on workers' logic, Jones (2000) stresses the agency of human services workers in this changing realm as they perform their integrity in various ways. Their performance illustrates the transformations in the organizational realm and working conditions.⁴² The author suggests, although frontline workers comply with what is expected from them and do not put in extra effort, they still engage in assistance and support that they previously provided or that they feel is valuable, which is different from what management precisely demands and evaluates. In addition, under high workloads, they might perform their daily tasks without emotional involvement and in a sense be absent in the workplace while still operating inside it (Jones, 2000). To protect their integrity in a morally intense job, workers might suggest their character outside of work is different and their lack of emotional involvement does not represent them. However, this type of a performance of integrity, despite providing some agency to the frontline human services workers, fails to open a space for debate and improvement of their working conditions (Jones, 2000).

The social workers working with refugees also make 'sacrifices' and work over-time (Guhan & Liebling Kalifani, 2011). One can argue, this is another performance of integrity, and their sacrifice appears as a highly legitimate one due to the moral side of the work. Yet this behaviour also reconstructs the neoliberal setting and excessive demands from employees. On the other hand, with the knowledge that they are in a 'well-paid' job in an environment of high unemployment, NGO workers might be hesitant to ask for their overtime to be paid and employers might be unwilling to pay since they are aware of the country's economy, the unemployment rate, hence take advantage of the current trends (Abdelrahman, 2007). In that, in a country's worsening economic

⁴² Furthermore, the author indicates, some workers chose to quit and found similar positions in the third sector, however, the conditions of work resembled the former sector.

conjuncture, with high levels of unemployment, having a well-paid job decreases the employees' bargaining power on their working conditions and rights (Abdelrahman, 2007).

This chapter demonstrated the changes in the employment criteria and working conditions; the flexible job descriptions and the excessive amount of work these bring due to the neoliberal transformation in the labour market. Against this background, my research questions draw on the third sector literature that I critically evaluate in the next chapter.



Chapter 4:

THE THIRD SECTOR'S RELATIONSHIP TO PRECARIOUS LABOUR

There is a vast literature in social sciences on civil society and non-governmental organizations, mainly with respect to their effect on democratization and especially beginning from the 1980s on their role in development. Accordingly, NGOs stand in diverging positions and some critical studies suggest it is difficult to differentiate “whether they help state diminish its obligation to constituent welfare or if they protest against it, or even if they are indeed autonomous from governments” (Shefner & Dahms, 2012, p. 245). Among these two branches, that are democratization and development, development literature speaks extensively to my research’s topic that is on Turkey’s NGO scene operating for refugees. This critical literature addresses civil society in a context of neoliberalism characterized by retraction of the state from major social policy interventions and ‘leaving’ its role to NGOs. Since my research aims to study the condition of NGO workers, I will firstly review relevant studies in the social work literature and will refer to research on social workers in NGOs and non-profit organizations in different national contexts from a comparative perspective. Then I will focus on neoliberalism’s effect on NGOs, and mainly studies including NGO workers and their labour conditions.

In the last two decades, new perceptions flourished in social work literature with respect to the effect of changing working conditions and transformed work setting through neoliberal practices. Yet, there is still limited academic research about the third sector that specifically discusses the concept of precarious labour. In a research on non-full-time women social workers, Szczygiel (2016) investigated their discourses on their organizations and precariousness to infer about precarity’s effect on their career satisfaction. Her work mainly includes workers that are not full-time employed hence does not include the precarities of full-time workers. Baines et al. (2014) analysed the “impact of precarity” (p. 74) in the nonprofit sector through interviews with workers and managers, survey data and literature. The research focuses on short term and insufficient funding and how it affects beneficiaries, the organization, and the sector in general. The authors argue that “lack of predictability and security” (Baines et al. 2014, p.78) makes the nonprofit sector precarious and this precarity holds more layers than just employment

insecurity as there is an organization of unpaid work that keeps the organization going. In a following work, Baines et. al (2017) examined the precarious work and unpaid labour in non-profit social services, that is highly gendered. They emphasize the blurred line between the ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ work by focusing on the extension of paid work with voluntarism, not only of the volunteers but also the voluntary overtime of full-time workers.

The research on full-time workers, particularly in the migration field, Guhan & Liebling-Kalifani (2011) illustrated the difficulties and positive effects of working with refugees and needs of social workers in the United Kingdom working at refugee centres. The authors present workers’ views, as they see the psychological burden on them facilitating their personal growth especially by focusing on the moral satisfaction they acquire through their work and motivation from beneficiaries’ positive acknowledgements. Moreover, due to their heavy workload and time pressure, employees demand support mechanisms which include supervision and they cope with the demands by making sacrifices from their daily lives such as working over-time. Subsequently, Robinson (2013) made comparative research about the challenges that social workers working with refugees in state-funded NGOs face in Australia and the United Kingdom. The research reveals a picture of what frontline workers declare as their sufferings or needs, illustrating the managerial practices and the high workload on them. On the other hand, Codó (2013) claims, even with a heavy workload NGO workers’ discourses were revolving around the concept of “social good” (Codó, 2013, p. 29), which seems like compensation for any insecure job condition. Accordingly, workers try to consolidate any precarity in their labour condition with a gratitude coming from their beneficiaries which might be one of the hypotheses emerging from the literature that I will also present in my analysis.

On the complex relationship between donors, NGOs and beneficiaries, Altan-Olcay (2016) generated a picture of below and above, through in-depth interviews with NGO workers. The research further reveals the neoliberal dynamics of the NGO, by arguing that workers need to continue to perform in a monitored field. While performance evaluations are ongoing, they need to continually operate in order to be employed and make a living which shows their socioeconomic resemblance to the beneficiaries. Thus, even if there are some parts of the operation that NGO workers are not satisfied with and want to change, nevertheless they execute the tasks which illustrate their insecure and

precarious position. In a recent study, Güner (2019) interviewed 40 workers in various rights based secular civil society organizations in Istanbul and explored people's reason to work in the civil society. She claimed that workers are taking the civil society path not only for ideological reasons but also to escape the neoliberal atmosphere, that is highly competitive, in the ordinary work setting in other sectors. In the fieldwork, the author witnessed circumstances that are both diverging from and converging to neoliberal working conditions. She focused on workers' strategies and understandings of those conditions and argued that even in a seemingly neoliberal standard, civil society workers are interpreting these conditions differently from the private sector and position themselves diversely as they are satisfied with their job content. Although the research provided a comprehensive perspective on workers' perception on working in civil society, it did not analyse the changing working conditions and precarities in detail. Şahin's (2019) quantitative research on the psychological well-being of social workers, comparing those working with and without refugees in the NGOs in Istanbul, revealed that the workers that are in the organizations operating for refugees have lower levels of psychological resilience and future prospects. The author suggests, the major cause of this difference is the project-based system in the refugee realm that has career instability and insecurity.

There isn't an in-depth study on frontline workers' precarities due to their field of work and working conditions in the I/ NGOs that operate for refugees in Istanbul, with the exception of two reports that demonstrate workers' experiences, conditions and needs. These are firstly, Uyan Semerci & Yurttagüler (2018) report on the field workers' needs and experiences that reflect problems related to self-care and workers' rights, and the Müşterek Proje (2019) report that primarily portray the needs in the field through the narratives of the workers, managers and volunteers. The research is a qualitative one covering 15 NGOs in Istanbul and an additional online survey for 19 NGOs in other cities of Turkey. The data illustrates participants' perception of their organizations, working conditions and related experiences.

In the NGOisation literature the main argument is that there is a change in NGOs due to 'development' regulations which occurs in a reciprocal setting involving the positioning of states and donors. Silliman (1999) accordingly analysed the neoliberal transfer of services to NGOs, focusing on the funding and donor relations and stresses, with the incoming funding NGOs not only grew into "powerful economic entities" (p.

33) but also became the welfare providers. In Turkey's context, Bayraktar (2015) examined NGOisation, calling it neoliberalization from below, and indicates there is a move to a neoliberal perception that is development through NGOs, rather than state, which transforms the NGO structures and operations. Though not focusing on specific NGOs or individual actors inside the NGOs, he provided a picture of structural changes and stated that there is a need for field research in these areas in Turkey which is where my research stands.

There are following research that provide more insight on the change in NGOs' internal dynamics in relation to the economic setting of their national context. One example is Gupta's (2014) work that demonstrated the professionalization and bureaucratization in, what the author calls, the "non-governmental development organization (NGO) sector" (p. 121). She suggests, organizations became implementers of the development projects, serving citizens, and their major aim turned into "self-preservation" (p. 141) that is accessing the continual economic capital to operate, hence workers are trying to reach the targets that managers expect. In this setting there is an inequality between workers, a stratification between 'field workers' and 'professional workers' in the intraorganizational realm. The first research in Turkey on the intraorganizational dynamics and setting was Cengiz's (2005) work that is a case study of three CSOs with interviews of their current and ex-members and volunteers. The author focuses on hierarchy, internal democracy, plurality and participation and provides a comprehensive picture of the internal setting, though not particularly on the labour setting. Altan-Olcay & İçduygu (2012), examined the effect of the CSOs in regime transformation and political liberalization through the eyes of the people in civil societies in Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt. They suggest even though the CSOs declare that they advocate democracy, in fact, the diversity on the field is low and there is hierarchy within the organizations. In a similar vein, Abdelrahman (2007) analysed the growing NGO sector in the development field in Egypt and demonstrated that there is a lack of institutionalism, professionalism, and internal democracy. The sector creates job opportunities and attracts educated middle-class people but has an insecure setting where NGOs' operations and thus workers' careers are vulnerable due to them being dependent on a small number of donors. Regardless of the fact that the author did not detailly analyse these precarities, she stated that investigating the changing working conditions would be a valuable research, which is the focus of my study.

For my research which encapsulates workers' narratives and daily lives, the subsequent works that I will mention are significant. Accordingly, Kuzmanovic (2012) examined the individual actors inside civil society and portrayed the civil society activists observations on the realities of the civil society in Turkey.⁴³ She suggests, these individuals define and redefine the civil society realm. Both Kuzmanovic (2012) and Lewis & Mosse (2006) claim, one should analyse civil societies and development from an anthropological perspective, which I will be doing through the empirical sections. This perspective is significant as Lewis and Mosse (2006) argue, interactions between actors vary and these interactions are not necessarily between structures but individuals and microlevel actors. Furthermore, perceptions from above would not be able to grasp the hidden or unspoken realities (Kuzmanovic, 2012). Thus "an analysis of inter-organizational relationships has to include a detailed understanding of organizational hierarchies and intra-organizational relationships" (Desai, 2006, p. 189). These perceptions are highly influential in the construction of my stance, however my research will differ from Kuzmanovic's, as this study will not focus on defining the other civil society actors and the field but rather examine how frontline workers in NGOs define their own structure and standards, to illustrate their daily lives and working conditions.⁴⁴ Therefore, my work will be closer to Lewis and Mosse's (2006) research area, which is demonstrating the "real-life situations of development workers" (Lewis & Mosse, 2006, p. 3) who actively construct the "social spaces that exist between aid funders and recipients" (Lewis & Mosse, 2006, p. 13).⁴⁵ As the authors suggest, one should investigate "routines, practices, & subjectivities" with an "actor-oriented approach" (Lewis & Mosse, 2006, p. 6) and look at the actors who are in between the resource and recipient, who are intermediary.⁴⁶ Hence, in order to understand the civil society structure, one should look at the individual actors and their agency, as they are defining and constructing the civil society from below -in a more comprehensive way (Kuzmanovic, 2012).

⁴³ Nauta (2006) also suggests that, the way NGOs articulate themselves through their activities and reports does not necessarily correspond with the reality on the ground.

⁴⁴ One can claim, it also gives us an idea about the equity, justice and democracy inside an organization.

⁴⁵ The authors argue, focusing on the processes, events and relations would challenge the instrumentalization of the development area which mainly focuses on the criterion of efficiency and results.

⁴⁶ Lewis & Mosse (2006) further suggest, examining intermediary actors' problems reveal the deficiencies in the system.

Additionally, Kuzmanovic (2012) uses concepts that she defines as “front sight” and “back scheme” (p. 111) to argue that realities on the front sight might not reflect the actual realities in the field, that are in the back scheme, and the knowledge that the individual actors possess is crucial to have a more transparent view. This gives agency to the individuals and this agency makes civil society more democratic (Kuzmanovic, 2012).⁴⁷ In accordance, one can argue, NGOs can define and represent themselves in multiple ways. NGO workers can also define the content of their work and the ideology behind it, though despite them working in the ‘rights’ field, the labour conditions might not resemble this organizational stance. As Ertan (2018) claims, the democracy that civil society is envisioned to bring also has an internal democracy element for their organizational structure yet CSOs “are far from acting as schools of democracy through their inner workings” (p. 210). Therefore, looking at the labour conditions through the eyes of the frontline workers is significant, as this would illustrate the dialogue between Kuzmanovic’s (2012) ‘front sight’ and ‘back scheme’ in an intraorganizational manner which will have the power to demonstrate the effects of neoliberalism on NGO workers’ labour conditions.

My research covers the aforementioned gaps that are pointed out by Abdelrahman (2007) and Bayraktar (2015). Abdelrahman (2007) pointed to the lack of academic research regarding the area of transformed working conditions of the NGOs, while Bayraktar (2015) underlined the lack of study on NGOisation in Turkey, focusing on the NGO actors. Meaning there is a gap in research on NGO workers’ working conditions in Turkey, and their precarious setting. There is also a lack of research on the developing humanitarian sector in the country, one major actor being the I/NGOs operating for refugees. My research, additionally, covers the need for more perspective from below on the civil society realm, by a focus on the frontline workers of the I/NGOs, that are in the lowest ladders in the NGO structure.

The next chapter is a reflexive methodology that presents the fieldwork of my research, explaining the interviewees’ position as well as mine, and displaying my insights on not only their behaviours but also my stance in the research.

⁴⁷ Accordingly, Kuzmanovic (2012) argues that individuals working in the civil society discursively establish and criticize other organizations and by doing so they build their uniqueness and perhaps moral superiority.

Chapter 5:

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the fieldwork for this research, its preparations, the interview process, and the subsequent analysis period. This includes how the participants were chosen for this study; meaning their NGOs, how the individuals were contacted, their demographics and lengths in experiences on the field as well as how the interview questions were formulated; what topics they are based on and how they relate to my previous experiences in the sector and how I executed them. In addition, I will present the concerns of the interviewees, regarding the fieldwork and the challenges I faced during the interviews and in the analysis.

5.1 *Scope of the Research*

Both the research question and the research process nourished from my own biography, being once a frontline worker. Reflecting on “how our location influences the questions we ask, how we conduct our research, and how we write our research” (England, 1994, p. 87), my previous experience not only was influential in the development of this study but also provided me with an initial access to workers in the field, and some of the people that I knew through work have become gatekeepers and participants of my fieldwork.

This study depicts the experiences of those who are working as initial support and assistance providers and are in direct contact with the refugees, having an intermediary position between them and the organizations/donors. The research aims to represent the experiences from below, hence focuses on frontline workers that are in the lowest ranks within the hierarchy (commonly just above the interpreters) inside the NGOs and their perception of the organizations and working conditions.⁴⁸ Accordingly, it is an interview-based research to attain their narratives and experiences.

Before starting the interview process, I applied to Koç University Ethical Committee on Human Research on the 22nd of October 2019, to request for the ethical approval of my Human Subject Research and the project got approved on the 8th of November 2019.

⁴⁸ I acknowledge that NGO staff that are in higher-up positions are excluded due to the framework of this study and as there might be more institutional affiliation going up the ladders of hierarchy which might lead to a biased outcome.

In November 2019, I began contacting interviewees, via phone calls. The interviews were held between 13.11.2019 - 23.01.2020.

I have conducted face-to-face interviews with 10 female and 7 male frontline workers operating in NGOs and INGOs in the migration field in different parts of Istanbul.⁴⁹ The fundamental reason for data collection method to be qualitative and interview-based is to capture the complexity of people's agencies, their own self-representations and interpretations of their life conditions.

5.1.1 *Included NGOs*

Istanbul has been the city with the highest number of Syrian refugees. Even before the arrival of refugees from Syria, it had the highest number of NGOs operating for refugees (Makreath & Sağdıç, 2017). Therefore, conducting a research on civil society in Istanbul enables me to cover a wide range of experiences. Yet, despite interviewees having many similar narratives, there are other frontline workers and NGOs, not just in Istanbul but in other cities, therefore my findings are not broadly but partially representative of the NGO scene for refugees in Turkey.

The interviewees are from 15 different organizations, twelve of them being NGOs and three INGOs. Therefore, local NGOs are dominant in the research. I have included 3 interviewees from INGOs, separating the INGO scene from the NGO scene, one can claim it is less representative of the INGOs. However, the number of INGOs in Istanbul is significantly lower than the number of NGOs.

The I/NGOs included in this research are the ones that have numerous full-time paid job positions. This study acknowledges that, as Kadirbeyoğlu et al. (2017) suggest, civil society realm is much broader and diverse than particular entities, such as the NGOs, it is a space which consists of many actors, actions and movements. Nevertheless, since most of the bottom-up established and/or small sized CSOs and initiatives are voluntary-based and do not hold paid job positions, as my research question focuses on work conditions and precarity among civil society workers, I only included organizations that reveal a degree of professionalization.

⁴⁹ NGOs commonly form legal entities under the name of association (*dernek*) and foundation (*vakıf*) in Turkey (Zihnioğlu, 2019).

5.2 *The Interviewees: How I Contacted Them*

My previous job experience provided me with initial access to workers in the field, and some became participants. Accessing the interviewees through my own network was significant for their anonymity, as contacting organizations and reaching their workers through them would prevent this and if their organizations knew they were the participants, they might not have spoken as comfortably during the interviews.

I initially thought that I would be able to reach a high number of interviewees through my contacts, and they would not have hesitated to participate, however, this was not the case. Within the process there were many people who rejected to be involved for various reasons. These rejections were based on several grounds. Some candidates were shy to talk in presence of a recorder; while others were concerned with the interview's anonymity, as it might have a negative impact on them, and some did not indicate any reason. One can suggest, these concerns illustrate their insecure positions in the organizations. In addition, there was a candidate who was soon to leave their organization yet rejected to be involved in the research due to him not being in a good emotional state. Since many people rejected to be involved in the research and most of the frontline workers that I met when I was working in the field were women, I got anxious that I was not going to get as many male interviewees. Once I reached a male participant however, I was able to reach two others through him. Additionally, this research only involves secular NGOs as I was unable to reach workers in the organizations that have religious affiliations except for one, which I reached through a mediator; yet, they did not want to participate.⁵⁰ The below scheme presents how I reached the interviewees in detail.

⁵⁰ Therefore, the snowballing was limited to secular NGOs.

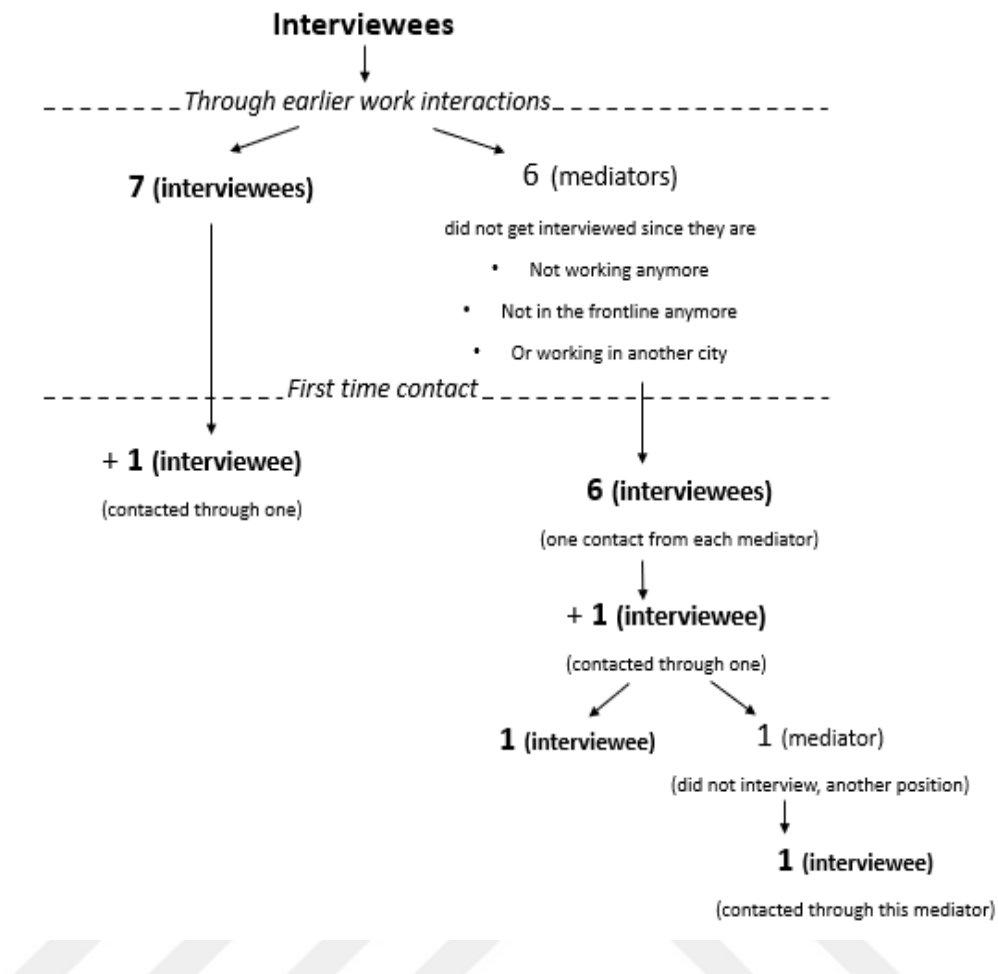


Figure 5.1: The Access Route to the Interviewees

The scheme illustrates the final image of how the interviewees participated in the study. It was commonly difficult to arrange an interview date, with the ones who agreed to participate, due to their workload. These extended the time planned for conducting the interviews and at the end I have conducted 17 interviews as opposed to 20 that I had initially targeted. In addition, there were recurrent themes that came out in all the 17 interviews, I ended the fieldwork when the data started to get repetitive with no major divergence (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al. 2018).

I have interviewed one frontline worker from each organization, except for two organizations, which I interviewed one man and one woman from each. It was not easy to reach a second frontline worker in the same organization, as interviewees either did not offer to or were not willing to ask a co-worker mainly to protect their anonymity. One interviewee was an exception, who was the only one providing me an additional contact from their organization. On the other hand, at the end of the interview, a few interviewees stated that if I were looking for additional participants, they would be willing to help, and

they put me in contact with their colleagues at other organizations. However, not all of them ended up in interviews, as most of them either declared that their colleagues did not want to participate, or they did not contact me back.

5.2.1 *Demographics and Experience of the Participants*

Except for a small portion of the participants, the interviewees have similarities in their demographics which I will present in this sub-section in detail.

NGOs became an employment field for the young skilled workers in Turkey (Kuzmanovic, 2010) and in accordance, my interviewees are between 21-35 years of age. Older workers in the field commonly tend to be in the higher-up positions which are not included due to the aforementioned reasons. Seven interviewees had a bachelor's degree, and nine interviewees were either master's students or have graduated from a master's degree with only one interviewee being an exception as they do not hold a higher education degree for the moment. It seems like their language ability as well as their access to refugee communities was the significant factor for this participant to be employed.

Most of the participants have a Turkish citizenship, a very small portion of them are immigrants/refugees, this is especially due to the work permit regulation. While talking about their past, interviewees predominantly articulated a middle-class background; many of them had advanced knowledge of one foreign language at least, did not have work experience prior to university and held diplomas from top universities in Turkey (Güner, 2019). Three interviewees indicated a lower-class background, work being a part of their child and youth life. When focusing on work experience after university graduation, prior job experience in other sectors are rare, only four of them expressed that they worked in different sectors. For others, their experience in the field is their first full-time job experience. Furthermore, six interviewees stated that they came to Istanbul after being accepted to their current job position or to search for a job.

Most of the interviewees are women. I tried to interview men as well as women to achieve an equal distribution in gender but since the field is a female-dominated one, with gendered role distributions (Baines et al., 2017), I ended up with more women

interviewees.⁵¹ This illustrates a gendered precarity, in that, in the assistance field women are preferred as they are “being viewed as more emotional, caring, and nurturing than men” (Lively, 2013, p. 224) and “[t]he gendered pattern of emotion work/labor that occurs at home is reproduced in the workplace” (p. 234). Additionally, donors prefer women employees as “the general consensus seems to be that women are more suited for development work because of their ‘compassionate and nurturing disposition’” (Abdelrahman, 2007, p. 80-81). In that, in the humanitarian aid work, women are specifically recruited in the frontline positions to assist the beneficiaries, who have intersectional vulnerabilities, with attention and care.

Regarding positions of the frontline workers, there are a few commonly used titles and most of the interviewees operated under these. Half of the interviewees are social workers (8) and other half consists of protection officers (4) and field workers (3). In addition, two interviewees had different titles, however they are operating in the frontline positions, being first-hand contact people for the refugees in their organizations. Twelve interviewees are operating with interpreters and five without them as they are fluent in their beneficiaries’ languages. Inside this group, two interviewees are foreigners. In addition, two interviewees are ex-members, with one having left their organization one month before the interview and the other one exiting theirs as we were planning the date of our interview.

Interviewees had different lengths of experiences. Nine interviewees have an experience of nine months to one and a half years in their organizations. The other eight have between one and a half to three years of experience. From these two groups, there are four interviewees that have been working in the field for a while, changing several organizations. Inside this group, three interviewees have over four years and one over two years of experience in the field. This range allowed me to accumulate various experiences from people who know the field comprehensively and were able to make comparisons through their experiences in different organizations.

⁵¹ There were also a significantly higher number of women interviewees and Turkish citizens in the Müsterek Proje (2019) report.

5.3 Formulation and Execution of the Interview Questions

Before beginning the fieldwork, I have prepared the interview questions that are semi-structured and open-ended which provides a space for the interviewees and enables me to access their experiences comprehensively (Berg, 1995). As I started conducting the interviews, some questions appeared too abstract for the interviewees. As a result, I elaborated and reframed them during the interview, then revised my questions for the following interviews based on this feedback. My previous job experience and observations in the field provided me significant insights while establishing the questions and with further research; gave me a perspective on the areas to cover by the interview questions (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Before initiating the interview period, I have revised the questions multiple times, taking my theoretical framework into account, that is precarious labour literature, and my thesis advisors' comments. Accordingly, I have removed some questions, asked some in different ways, and integrated a couple of additional questions (see Appendix for the interview questions). The main topics that my questions cover are workers' past experiences, their work life, daily life, social interactions, and future plans.

After the first two interviews, I have noticed new areas to explore through interviewees narratives. Accordingly incorporated two more questions⁵² in line with active interviewing techniques by using the first couple of interviews as a background and uncover some areas in light of them (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

5.4 The Interview Period

To create a trusting atmosphere with the interviewees, at the beginning of the interview I introduced myself and explained that I had worked in the field before but was no longer working. I found it appropriate to indicate this information before the interview, as some knew that I worked in the field, but possibly did not know that I am not working anymore, and others may have searched about me prior to the interview. Therefore, I made a "sincere attempt to reduce potential interviewees' fears and anxieties -in short, to make them feel more comfortable with the idea of being interviewed" (Berg, 1995, p. 54). One possible downside of this might have been, since the participants knew that I worked

⁵² These are: In what ways do you think it would be easier and/or harder for you to find a new job after leaving your organization? Could you talk about the changes you observed in the NGOs working for refugees, and in your organization and workload since you began working in the field?

in the field, they may have not presented some facts, thinking that I already knew them, or explain everything in more detail than is useful for my research. Accordingly, there were many incidents that interviewees used the phrase “as you already know”, mainly in explaining the work content but also in other topics. For most interviewees, knowing that I worked in the field, established a space where they feel comfortable and understood, and narrate their experiences thoroughly. However, some people were anxious that I would ask knowledge-based questions and I relaxed them by making a brief introduction and emphasizing that I am exploring their *experiences*, not their knowledge.

Despite questions having an order, as the interviewee led the conversation to a topic, I skipped to more relevant questions, changing the order, to maintain their thought process. This is by means of an active interviewing logic as “the interview cultivates meaning-making as much as it “prospects” for information” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 5) and me and the interviewee organized the meaning of the narrativity together (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

The questions were well-received in general. The interviewees answered them elaborately and comfortably with expected differences in pace and length towards questions. The questions that received the most enthusiastic and informative answers were the ones about work’s motivational and demotivational factors, its effects on daily life and interviewees’ future plans. Another question that exposed a high amount of information was whether they would recommend someone to work inside the field and their organization in particular and the reasons behind why they would and why they would not. Also, when I asked the interviewees if they had anything to add after the interview, they commonly expressed highly beneficial and lengthy narratives. Some expressed their opinions and comments on issues that interview questions may have not covered completely, while others opened up new spaces that some questions reminded them of. On the other hand, less information emerged from questions on promotion and how the organizations’ relations with the donors and the state affected them.

Both my previous job experience in the field and the institutional reputation of my graduate university, by generating trust, enabled me to access and collect the interviewees narratives that they might have hesitated to express under different circumstances. As I mentioned in the second chapter, what forms trust between NGOs and beneficiaries is their continual interaction. Despite not having any previous interaction with the majority of the interviewees, I have witnessed the positive influence of having worked in the field

and especially on the frontline, in the same or a similar position with them. In other words, even though we did not interact, experiencing the same field made the interview relationship trusting. Furthermore, the university component prevented some of the doubts about the confidentiality of the participants. Hence, I was a trusted confidante for most of the interviewees. This also has to do with the fact that I once was in the field, which makes me aware of the issues within, but not anymore, which makes me trustable. That is, I would not have a direct impact on their work-life since we would not collide professionally both with them and their organizations under current circumstances.

Although me being a previous insider explicitly helped them feel understood, having also found the interviewees by my contacts or through mediators resulted in a deeper connection, that I did not expect, which made it harder to establish a distance and manage interview relationships accordingly. What also influenced this connection is that most interviewees are females in their late 20s, which is correlated with my appearance. Male interviewees also commonly belonged to the same age-group. A couple of male interviewees who belonged to a lower socioeconomic background, were more reserved while talking about work's negative impact on them, in that, they did not provide in-depth information about their emotional exhaustion. One can suggest that this is due to the influence of being in conversation with a woman of their age group thus aiming to appear powerful. In sum, these factors made me a relatable interviewer for them both with positive and negative results. Furthermore, some stated that they related themselves to me from their own thesis periods. This shows that my "positionality and biography directly affect fieldwork and that fieldwork is a dialogical process which is structured by the researcher and the participants." (England, 1994, p. 80).

I was a 'halfie' researcher, meaning that I have professional experience and connections in their research field, not an ongoing one which would make me an insider, however I can never truly become an outsider, as my experience has become a part of my biography. Thus, "[i]t was the incongruities that I encountered as a halfie researcher that helped me look into how fieldwork can be a messy practice." (Suedi, 2006, p. 589). I struggled during the interview period due to the proximity stemming from my appearance, me being a previous insider and having set the interviews through my work contacts and mediators, but the same aspects also made the participants more open in narrating their experiences as I articulated above.

I have questioned the distance between the researcher and the interviewee, as after the interview, many interviewees asked for my views and wanted me to share my experience. Moreover, some asked what the outcomes of the interviews with other organizations were. I addressed their curiosities with general observations. I figured their motivation for asking was to situate their organization's position in the field, then understanding where other organizations might fall into. This underlines a prospect for possible future employment in the field. In addition, several interviewees thanked me for listening and 'voicing' them by being a mediator for their voices to be heard. Just under half of the interviewees, particularly expressed that it is the first time they are talking about their (work) lives out loud to someone they just met and that it was therapeutic:

As I am the one who always listens to people inside a room, I cannot stop talking when someone asks me a question, this is healing. **(Interviewee 8)**

Interviews lasted between 40 minutes to almost two hours, depending on the interviewees' pace, willingness to provide details and opening-up new spaces. My role as the interviewer affected interviewees' execution as well, as I was the one who assisted the interviewees to offer different parts of their experience and knowledge (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). One other aspect which had an influence on the interviewees, was the interview setting. Most of the interviews were held in a café and some were held in interviewees' homes. Interview setting was significant, as I have observed that people were more comfortable and conveyed their experiences in detail in an empty café or their house. There were also a few interviewees who seemed to be afraid that in the café there might be people who knew them or people in their organizations, some of them spoke very silently because of this throughout the interview and I had to remind them a couple of times that the interview is being recorded therefore they needed to speak slightly louder. This situation has caused me some difficulty, later on, while doing transcriptions.

5.5 Concerns Regarding Anonymity

The interviewees conveyed their experiences and predominantly frustrations - commonly without hesitation. As mentioned above, this might be due to my access to interviewees as they were people from my social surrounding or my contacts' surroundings. In addition, I observed that with respect to their organization's present internal dynamics, the interviewees' satisfactoriness towards the organization changes.

Their perception towards their organization and its actions are highly negative if they and/or their co-workers faced an abuse of their rights, including dismissals, especially in the recent period.

Since the NGO community is a small one, establishing anonymity was harder than it would be in most of the other areas. Therefore, at first, I was thinking to present the interviewees' gender and approximate age after their quotations such as (Interviewee #, gender, age), but I decided to present them without these attributions, as (Interviewee #) instead.

Although I reiterated the importance given to anonymity, both while arranging the interviews and at the beginnings of the interviews, declaring that this study will not include any person's or organizations' names, some interviewees nevertheless demanded me to exclude the organizations' names. This happened especially just after them indicating an organization's or person's name during the interview when the recording was on. I stated several times that I would not include the organizations' names even if they were to declare it, still some interviewees tried not to mention names or after mentioning them looked at me with anxiety, expressing that they wanted them to be left out.

These highly explicit anxieties also made me more concerned about interviewees' anonymity while presenting the data, thus making it my top priority, which directed me to exclude some experiences and data from the research. "[I]t is the researcher who ultimately chooses which quotes (and, therefore, whose "voices") to include" (England, 1994, p. 86) and I had to leave out some narratives in order to protect interviewees' anonymity as some of these indicated very specific and particular events. Thus, I ended up excluding a high number of events, despite them reflecting interviewees' experiences. At times I felt that I "even anonymize research participants against their will, so to speak, to protect them from harm that they might not necessarily anticipate" (Virtova et al., 2018, p. 454). This made me question whether I was representing them thoroughly or not, after all experiences cannot be delivered well enough having excluded some events and emotions from it but in many cases I had to. In addition, being unable to include all the matters the interviewees shared, led me to struggle and feel responsible for the exclusion of them, making it seem as if they are non-existent despite them informing the general ethos of the research.

5.6 Data Analysis: Expectations and Challenges

Most of the interviewees were explicit and non-hesitant about narrating their experiences, this might be due to their narratives on wanting to change their organizations or career path in the future. Accordingly, Virtova et al. (2018) suggest, the ones who envision themselves to continue staying in their organizations for long periods, may share lesser information or might be reluctant to participate altogether. As a result of these, many participants felt comfortable to use an acerbic and critical tone. Almost all interviewees were highly explicit in their conveyance of experiences and observations. In my case, being an ex-insider⁵³, their stories seemed so familiar at times that there were instances that I was unable to focus on how these stories would stand in my research, while also being concentrated on listening to their narratives, asking the questions, and leading the interviews. I only came across some of the well delivered sentences when I was transcribing them.

It was hard listening to some of the things that the interviewees experienced, therefore, going through these many times while transcribing and analysing was a difficult process for me personally. England (1994) accordingly expresses “[t]he researcher cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork *is* personal” (p. 85). Therefore, I was constantly self-questioning, questioning my analysis as I had a past in the field, and within this process I found myself thinking that I would use more of the data, without excessively examining if I was not a previous insider. At times I thought this conflict would not have happened if my only affiliation over the years was academia which would make me an ‘outsider’. In accordance, Subedi (2006) detailly explains “‘halfie’ researcher’s negotiation of insider and outsider identities” (p. 573). Being a halfie has its contradictions because of being accountable to several communities. In my case these communities are the academia and NGO sphere, and I was evaluating my research’s stance not only in the academic but also in the civil society realm (De Jong, 2017).

I made word for word transcriptions of the recorded interviews and analysed them. While forming the analytic chapter, I focused on the commonalities in the narratives and looked at them all together to figure out what the main points that they illustrate were. Subsequently, I analysed the content by coding them into categories of interest for this

⁵³ Being a former worker in the same sector as the interviewees.

study. As “[a]nalysis amounts to systematically grouping and summarizing the descriptions, and providing a coherent organizing framework that encapsulates and explains aspects of social world that [interviewees] portray” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 79).

I had observations on the data that came out of the field due to my own experience yet did not expect similar narratives to be as common. Hence, I was expecting to find more balanced data regarding positive and negative work experiences. I also did not expect the manager – worker division to be this deep, and that the managerial practices were significantly widespread in the field. Therefore, in the analytic chapter, I chose to reflect the data in different segmentations than I previously envisaged. The partition that I had considered making was a division as ‘frustrations’, ‘motivations’, ‘strategies’ and other headings according to data collected.

The workers have several strategies against the job conditions and insecurities, that I have not previously observed. Also, they had extensive knowledge and detailed observations about the field even within their first year of their experience, which I did not expect. One can claim, the familiarization to the field emerges rather quickly probably due to it being a highly active one and a field where networks are tight.

In this chapter I have presented the methodology of my research, the following three chapters are the empirical part, which are established from the prominent aspects that came out from the interviews. These three main focuses are on the NGO structure, its work content and workers’ strategies of dealing with the precarity of their setting.

Chapter 6:

THE PRECARITY OF THE NGO STRUCTURES

This and the upcoming two chapters are organized around the concepts of employment, job, and work insecurities as these are the predominant themes in the interviewees' narratives, exposing a precarious labour setting. The empirical part consists of three chapters, the first chapter focuses on employment and job insecurities and the subsequent one is built around work insecurity. Accordingly, Chapter 7 provides a comprehensive look at the content of frontline work for refugees, the care labour that comes with it, and its effect on the workers. The third and final chapter of the empirical section is on workers' strategies. It not only illustrates their agency and mechanisms to cope with the precarious setting but also exposes the insecure environment through an in-depth look at the methods that workers make use of, while dealing with precarity.

This chapter demonstrates the structure that frontline workers operate under; introducing their entrance to the field, and how they position themselves in it, alongside their practices that counter and comply with it. The NGO workers' setting is a precarious one with a high workload and ambiguity due to the project-based 'system'. In addition, there is structural hierarchy, containing managerial deficits and related insecurities inside.

While this study primarily focuses on labour conditions and accordingly the precarious labour literature, after analysing the data; I inferred as I/NGOs start to become NGOized and resemble private companies with the increase in funds and donor expectations, precarity emerges especially for those working at the lower ladders. In other words, precarious labour literature and NGOisation literature are speaking with one another. For this reason, the empirical section contains references from scholars working either on NGOisation or precarisation. I will explain the dialogue between these two literatures in relation to project-based working, high workload, flexible job descriptions, project endings and hierarchy of the workplace which causes additional insecurity through the administration by an unsupervised management.

6.1 *A Clash of Identities: The 'NGO identity' in Mind and Practice*

This is how I see this. I think there are two separate worlds, the corporate world and the civil society world. I guess everyone in the field would share this perception. Those in the corporate world do not know our field but many of us

here in civil society know what the corporate world looks like, because we have been there before. I used to separate these very clearly from another. That's how I saw things before I came here. **(Interviewee 8)**

This narrative is exemplary of many NGO workers who chose their field because they imagined it to be egalitarian, democratic, and filled with a social, political purpose.⁵⁴ Several of them had left the corporate world behind, while others did not even think about starting there because it represented them an insecure labour environment to them, with an organizational focus on profit maximization for the ones in the highest ladder.

All the interviewees expressed that the driving force behind entering the field was an ideological preference and/or unemployment. For most of them, it was difficult to put clear marks on their motivations as their rationale encapsulated both reasons. Two interviewees clearly stated that they were searching jobs only in civil society, therefore were unemployed for many months, another interviewee wanted to work in civil society and quit their job in the private sector after getting accepted to an organization. Three interviewees did internships for varying periods, then accepted jobs as full-time workers by the same organizations.⁵⁵ Others took it as a job opportunity after graduation, in a national setting with high levels of unemployment.⁵⁶ Yet, for most of them, in return to the sacrifice they make by choosing a sector rather than work, their expectations of an egalitarian and ethical labour environment were nowhere nearly fulfilled.

The interviewees had narratives of disillusion which revealed they were expecting their organizations to be 'ideal' CSOs, or in Lang's (2013) words "social movement organizations" (p. 66), that are egalitarian inside and have horizontal relations.⁵⁷ However, the organizations had "NGOized" (Lang, 2013, p. 63) structures; were hierarchical and governed with managerial tools, as NGOisation is a "shift from rather loosely organized, horizontally dispersed, and broadly mobilizing social movements to more professionalized, vertically structured NGOs" (Lang, 2013, p. 62). Hence, the

⁵⁴ Güner (2019) indicates similar motivations of people who choose to work in CSOs.

⁵⁵ Also, two of the interviewees did internships in NGOs operating in the migration realm, however, did not begin working at those organizations.

⁵⁶ This group mainly consists of people who know Arabic or studied social work. Accordingly, two of my interviewees spoke Arabic and graduated from social work departments.

⁵⁷ Lang (2013) suggests, social movement organizations are aiming for a social change, focusing on activism, and in their internal setting they have collective participation in decision-making, horizontal hierarchy, and cooperation. This setting was closer to what most of the interviewees envisioned their job environment to be like before entering.

frontline workers are in a conflict between the NGO identity and the NGOized one. The latter, with its corporatized and hierarchical structure, and a lack of participation, causes precarious labour settings for the workers.

The workers are experiencing a two-layered frustration. The first layer is the one that is commonly felt by young graduates who work hard to have better labour conditions by acquiring university degrees and their other related effort, yet still face highly demanding and insecure labour conditions, which unite them under a “mass disappointment” (Vatansever, 2013, p. 16). The second layer stems from the additional effort and sacrifice the interviewees made to become members of a CSO and still being unable to obtain the ‘atmosphere’ they aimed to be in. Accordingly, an interviewee expressed the discrepancy between their expectations and observations as follows:

I would say there is an implicit hierarchy. The person in front of you appears to listen to you, understand you. They may even say “you are right.” But then what you are asking for still does not happen. And there are reasons for this, reasons they think is valid, for your requests not to be fulfilled. It is a very tacit, very implicit hierarchy. I guess that’s why I am so disillusioned. [Before working in civil society] I wouldn’t have imagined this. **(Interviewee 1)**

The interviewee had a work experience in the public sector under a hierarchical structure which has no room for them to take any initiative. They resigned from their position to be able to have better labour conditions and improve themselves in many respects. Yet, they articulated a disappointment as their suggestions on possible changes on the work setting and conditions inside the NGO were not taken into consideration. The interviewee imagined that they would be a part of an inclusionary work environment in which they compose the setting with discussions and negotiations between members. However, “[t]hey are treated and are expected to behave like employees in any other organisation” (Abdelrahman, 2007, p. 83). So, what is the ‘new’ structure that they are operating under? I will explain this with its labour dynamics in the upcoming sections.

6.2 *The Project-based Structure: A New Cloth to Flexibility*

The middle-class, educated people find themselves in a labour setting under high levels of flexibility with changing job descriptions and limitless labour. Vatansever

(2013) suggests that this flexibility is actually an ambiguity. Therefore, “it is obligatory to describe precarization as an integral process covering insecurity and flexibility that have impacts on all aspects of life” (Sağıroğlu, 2013, p. 17). The precarity of frontline workers’ labour causes an ongoing frustration for them and it is primarily due to the NGOized scene that prevails with the project-based approach. This approach does not provide an “employment security” (Standing, 2011, p. 10), leading to precarisation (Güner, 2019), and even legitimizes this insecurity by its operation mechanism.

The project-based system was primarily established for the rapid and systematic production of military equipment during World War II and then was taken on by the private sector as a technique for efficiency (Bayraktar, 2017). The implementation of the project-based setting to the development field shifted the ‘production’ objectives to what Bayraktar (2017) calls a “generation of humanitarian product” (p. 113). This humanitarian product is constituted “under new private sector-like models of work organization” (Baines, 2006, p. 29) as projects are organisms that rigidly coordinate workers, budget, time, and space (Bayraktar, 2017). Accordingly, they form an efficient ground through flexibility, and put a high amount of workload on workers that should be achieved in short to mid-term durations.⁵⁸ Thus, the structure simultaneously influences the work order and establishes the labour conditions and employment relations that has “high levels of insecurity” (Baines et al., 2014).

One can expect a precarious labour in this system, as Tompa et al. (2007) indicate “dimensions of precariousness” include not having the “ability to control or influence the full range of factors that bear on the work experience such as the pace of work, organization of work flow, assignment of tasks ... hours of work including scheduling and the ability to refuse overtime, and the ability to negotiate appropriate wage increases” (p. 216). In accordance, the workload in the project-based structure is an excessive one, in that, there is a constant effort to fulfil the project targets by deadlines, and it creates additional assignments and tasks, and ever-expanding job descriptions. The workers are expected to direct their labour into many tasks in a sense for the ‘good’ of not only the organization but also the beneficiaries.

⁵⁸ The project durations of I/NGOs operating for refugees in Turkey are commonly between six months to two years, two-year projects being exceptions.

After being accepted to a job position in the I/NGOs, the workers assume they will fulfil the requirements of their position ‘title’ which is commonly what draws them to their position in the first place, due to their interest and skills. Yet, in the flexible setting, the expectation of work both in its content and amount is surpassing the ‘focus’ of their position. This is what Standing (2011) calls “functional flexibility” which dissipates “job security” (p. 52). An interviewee expressed the change in their job description and its relationship with insecurity as follows:

In the job interview, everything sounds very clear: like “this is your job description, these are the things you will be responsible for,” etc. But then you start working, you realize that there are no boundaries to your job. I have even heard people say “you should do whatever is thrown at you, there are thousands out there looking for jobs, ready to replace you.” **(Interviewee 9)**

Some of the interviewees articulated that their co-workers resent the additional demands that widely expand their job descriptions. Those who resent might draw negative attention and reactions from the managers, and this increases their likelihood of dismissal. Consequently, one can claim, questioning the job descriptions and specifying its limits might also generate employment insecurity. In addition, many interviewees stated the organizations are putting articles on flexibility inside the employment contracts and a few interviewees stated the managers stress that they should comply with the changes and demands as it is in their contracts. Moreover, some interviewees indicated, the discussion on the limits of work is met by managers with the “we are an NGO” rhetoric. That suggests, we are a non-profit and non-governmental entity with a connection of doing good for people. Therefore, workers should not distinguish between tasks and provide everything needed. Although some of the interviewees observed how this rhetoric was pragmatically used to manipulate the extra work, still they operate flexibly and execute additional responsibilities or put on additional working hours. This is, one can claim, as they do not want a problem at work or as they also attribute a value to being an NGO, thus sacrifice becomes voluntary.

Frontline workers’ voluntary work, overtime work and common conscience for the beneficiaries and their organization covers up the insufficiency in organizations’ capacity for their project requirements (Baines et al., 2017). “Funding criteria and reporting guidelines place a heavy burden on expectations on organizations which may not have

the capacity to do the administrative work associated with this, nor fit neatly into the criteria, guidelines and goals set by funders” (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013, p. 17). The workers rebuild the flexible demands of the projects and its governance in the intraorganizational realm, by meeting these demands with their daily efforts. The limits of their job are not certain and where the paid labour ends, the limitless NGO work concept comes into play, which also holds the idea of voluntarism within (Baines et al., 2017). This voluntary work is especially significant in achieving the project targets, the quantities.

The organizations regularly articulate that workers should prioritize their labour and contribution to the organization and not the financial ‘reward’ for it, as workers’ labour is in a way a “‘labour of love’” (Baines et al. 2014, p. 86). Several interviewees indicated this rhetoric in different incidents, one of them talked about their demands for wage rise receiving the following answer:

“You are partly here because you have ideals; not because you are expecting material gains” **(Interviewee 8)**

This statement shows that organizations with access to funds and growing sources, instead of focusing on the distribution of these, question the workers' voluntariness and devotion to the field, and through emphasizing this, they in a way expect ‘unpaid’ work. This is in a setting where the number of beneficiaries increase rapidly both due to project goals and the state’s practices, so the pace of work increases accordingly. All of this results in excessive work and overtime, and despite all the effort and hours they put in, workers might not voice their demands regarding wage rise and other compensations. Another interviewee indicated this stance as follows:

I guess we have all begun to take for granted that there are no fixed hours; we are likely to work when we are at home; that we cannot ask for [more] money and that it is almost inappropriate to ask for it because we are working in civil society. **(Interviewee 2)**

This is especially as the workers acknowledge that the project budgets are predetermined⁵⁹ and as they are a member of a CSO which holds an “ethos of volunteerism” (Codó, 2013, p. 29). Hence, all interviewees stated if they were to work an extra day for the scheduled events, they get to take a leave, yet cannot demand financial compensation for their extra day of work. In addition, as the interviewee expressed there is a pre-acceptance and conscience that, one can suggest, illustrate that the workers are not perceiving their job in an entirely ‘professional’ way. This generates an understanding and consent to the labour conditions. In the next sections, I will present the course of the projects that have flexible demands and a high workload, anxious and unexpected project endings; through interviewees’ narratives that expose insecurity and precarity.

6.3 Workload: Excessive Labour and a Barrier to Self-Improvement

Workload was a prominent factor in all interviewees’ narratives and is fundamental in understanding their labour setting. In this section, I will present the excessive workload on the frontlines, the additional tasks and lack of time for self-improvement and how the frontline workers situate themselves in this highly demanding structure.

The interviewees expressed they were happy in their early periods, as they had an income, while learning about the refugee field and gaining satisfaction from the moral side of their frontline work. Nine interviewees declared it was their first full-time job experience, many inside this group emphasized that they were very satisfied with their wages at the beginning because their dependency on their families decreased, however their satisfaction gradually diminished. The main reason for the decrease in income satisfaction is the effort and labour required in the field and how the financial rewards are insufficient in Istanbul’s living standards.⁶⁰

Most of the interviewees used the word worker/labourer (*işçi*) several times when talking about themselves and their position in their organization. This word especially appeared in the instances that they wanted to articulate the effects of being down in the hierarchy and not having an appropriate balance between wages in exchange for an intensive labour. This illustrates how they perceive their position in the organization.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Baines et al. (2014) presented a parallel stance by the non-profit sector workers.

⁶⁰ In addition, some emphasized the rise in the inflation rate, the uncertainties about wage rises and the decrease in general living conditions.

⁶¹ Müsterek Proje (2019) report, containing narratives of NGO workers working with Syrian refugees, presents interviewees’ discourses on the corporatization of the I/NGOs.

Thus, one can deduce, although the interviewees do not identify themselves directly with the proletariat, they identify themselves as a precarious group.⁶² They also strongly believe that their job requires various qualifications. Bierchenk et al. (2012) classified the major competences of ‘development brokers’ in four categories. First competence being language, which refers both to refining the sophisticated development language to be understood by beneficiaries and knowing and speaking beneficiaries’ language.⁶³ Second one is “organizational competence” (p. 22) which refers to managing the relations and different duties inside the organization. Third one is “scenographic competence” (p. 22) that is mainly presenting and promoting their work through reports and other manifestations. The final one is the “relational” (p. 23) competence which is about establishing good communication and relations both with beneficiaries and donors. One can suggest, most of these competences are relevant and fundamental for frontline workers working in I/NGOs in Istanbul/Turkey.

The frontline workers are usually the ones with the highest number of beneficiaries and almost always the first contact of theirs, responding to the applications. I/NGOs receive many applications not only due to the high number of refugees residing in Istanbul but also as they usually apply to several organizations on the same issue (Aras & Duman, 2018). They also commonly reach out to the organizations with several assistance and support demands regarding themselves and their families. Many interviewees not only mentioned the additional stress and burden of knowing there are many awaiting beneficiaries, waiting to be called back after their first application⁶⁴, but also stated that there are many open cases⁶⁵, waiting to be solved. For some of those cases, there are parts that are already taken care of, but other needs or assistance are still a matter of concern.

A major factor that leads to an increase in the number of applications, consequently the workload, is the government decisions regarding refugees as I/NGOs provide

⁶² Lorey (2010) emphasizes that precarisation is a context that enables a non-hierarchical perception between job titles and positions, as it establishes a common ground for many different occupations and socioeconomic groups to be in solidarity through experiencing varying precarious job settings.

⁶³ Although speaking the beneficiaries’ language is a part of the language competence, frontline workers commonly make use of translators. In accordance with the structure of their organizations, they also make use of their English language skills regularly (Güner, 2019).

⁶⁴ Since which takes a while due to the high number of applications organizations receive, an interviewee expressed that some beneficiaries’ contact numbers are no longer available when they could call the applicants back from the waiting list.

⁶⁵ Meaning the beneficiaries, as these are files in the organizations in which beneficiaries’ reasons for application, experiences and the provided assistance are accumulated.

assistance within the legal framework of the country.⁶⁶ The beneficiaries have a growing number of problems due to the changing state practices and as topics are getting harder to manage and solve, more people are approaching the I/NGOs. This enhances frontline workers' workload and at certain periods to a significant degree. In accordance, the interviewees not only talked about intraorganizational factors but also the problems emerging from macro structures, namely the burden that government policies and practices bring them; interviewee 1 accordingly stated: "There are much bigger problems at present. The problems we are dealing with are so humongous that there comes a point solving minor issues no longer makes me happy."⁶⁷ Moreover, even a closed case, a finished assistance, commonly comes back after a while with a new problem creating a perpetual process. That is, a beneficiary whose problem was solved with mutual efforts might return with the same or a new problem as a result of the state's changing practices. Four interviewees specifically talked about the cases at hand which are harder to solve or cannot be solved, accordingly they feel like their labour is being wasted. There is an increasing dysfunction in daily work, parallel with the increasing number of applicants that have issues which cannot be comprehensively assisted without macro-level advocacy. Despite workers assisting beneficiaries and applying different strategies to solve problems, nevertheless, even after long periods and many attempts they may not receive a positive result. In that, the frontline workers experience the bureaucratic violence directed to refugees⁶⁸ as more workload, stress, and frustration. Hence, frontline workers' overburden emerges from various aspects and through the influence of various structures. While talking about their organization's effectiveness an interviewee made the following statement:

When what you are trying to achieve ends up being an issue at the mercy of the state, you cannot go too far. Of course, this may be because of the nature of the project, the fact you are trying to reach an impossible number of people, so it may have to do with the organization's own policies as well. Maybe had we been

⁶⁶ Müsterek Proje (2019) report indicates, the overload from exceeding the job descriptions with an increase in frontline assistance is caused by the growing number of needs in the field.

⁶⁷ Interviewee 7 expressed that the workload has increased due to the decisions taken by the Turkish state since July 2019 and that it led to a deterioration in their mental health when one-to-one counselling numbers increased.

⁶⁸ Guhan & Liebling-Kalifani (2001) also indicated that the staff working at refugee centres in the United Kingdom "largely viewed the system oppressive and persecutory and to be the key cause of their client's difficulties" (p. 215).

doing work that targeted less numbers of people but with more focus, I would have felt like what I am doing matters, that it actually has a substantive outcome.

(Interviewee 3)

Organizations try to reach a certain number of beneficiaries to meet the targets of donors, and frontline workers are expected to have determined beneficiary numbers daily, weekly, or monthly.⁶⁹ Fulfilling these project requirements and targets is a managerial perspective on the work setting and it is imposed from above, generally through the managers, to other staff of the NGOs (Robinson, 2013; Bayraktar, 2017). Accordingly, a significant factor which increases the workload is the organizations' rising expectations from frontline workers not only in their already existing tasks but also the additional ones. There are too many stakeholders and layers of work for each and accordingly the interviewees have frontline as well as other project related responsibilities.

Workers take on administrative duties to maintain the organizations' accountability for the donors. These are mainly administrative work, paper-work that include; database work, filling out forms related to each beneficiary and their case, reporting daily work and financial expenses and for some of the interviewees writing the monthly or quarterly reports to the donors which expand their workload and limits of job descriptions. "NGOisation leads to the transformation of a cause for social change into a project with a plan, a timetable, and a limited budget, which is 'owned' for reporting and used for the purposes of accountability *vis-à-vis* the funders" (Jad, 2007, p. 627-628). Therefore, entering beneficiaries' data to databases or different systems becomes a regular part of frontline workers' workload. In fact, all paperwork and work done alongside assisting the refugees are for the reporting, which is the biggest expectation of the project-based system by the funders as they are far away from the field.

Reporting is a tool for transparency of the daily work inside the I/NGOs and establishes legitimacy by communicating the work in the field that donors require routinely in variable periods. Visibility of a project is highly significant for donor support as it not only creates an accountability for the current donor but also attracts other funders' attention (Zihnioğlu, 2019). Reports which are a major part of this visibility function "to communicate with government agencies or donors" and "are equivalent to the workshops

⁶⁹ Uyan Semerci & Yurttagüler (2018), based on the experiences of field workers, advise setting achievable targets to projects.

to communicate with” the beneficiaries (Nauta, 2006, p. 167). However, many interviewees expressed they face a dilemma between keeping the beneficiaries’ data updated and assisting them in high quality.⁷⁰ Moreover, an interviewee expressed that if the information about beneficiaries are not up to date, then their work becomes invisible to the organization.

The overburden due to the project targets become barriers against working more professionally as the success of the project and reaching the necessary numbers are the most prioritized aspects of the system. In most of the interviewees’ organizations besides the paperwork, there is not a sufficient number of frontline workers who can deal with the high number of beneficiaries comprehensively. While responding to daily visits and calls of new applicants or existing beneficiaries and working on the pending cases covers almost all working hours, frontline workers also need to enter their assistance into systems. Thus, there is a conflict in the sense that, under heavy workload, they commonly have to make a choice between assisting beneficiaries or keeping the data up to date. Additionally, they need some spare time in their daily routine for trainings and making research, both for their self-improvement and to better assist beneficiaries, as most of the interviewees underlined the increase in their workload leads to a decrease in quality of the service they provide.⁷¹ An interviewee indicated they cannot find time to make research on the relevant topics to their assistance, which would not only expand their understanding of the problem but also their knowledge on possible solutions, and accordingly stated:

At this point, it’s not that I am stressed, it is more like a crisis of conscience⁷², because I feel like we are not able to provide the quality service our beneficiaries need. **(Interviewee 16)**

⁷⁰ Baines (2006), Robinson (2013) and Baines et al. (2014) also indicated that workers experience this stressful dilemma.

⁷¹ Apart from that, some interviewees particularly stated due to workload they are informed about their co-worker’s assistance, new ways of assisting, from beneficiaries which signifies a disconnection.

⁷² The interviewee used the word “*vicdan*” in Turkish. Guhan & Liebling-Kalifani (2011) presented, in the United Kingdom, the staff working with refugees felt concerned and “emotionally affected” (p. 214) since the workload pressure was decreasing their quality of service.

Some interviewees mentioned that they had been treated more attentively, having routine meetings to discuss the ‘active cases’⁷³. However, currently, with the increase in the number of beneficiaries and due to other tasks; these are neglected. Not having case meetings not only leaves some frontline workers on their own with difficult cases but also becomes an obstacle against workers to know each other’s cases and learn about the relevant solutions for them without particularly seeking peer advice.⁷⁴ Thus, less meetings inside the organization also prohibits one’s knowledge, understanding and development.⁷⁵ Despite workers, if not in a very busy period, communicating about their cases in between themselves, they nevertheless emphasized that the absence of meetings or not having a sufficient number of them is creating deficiency. In other words, a decrease in information exchange and meetings within the organizations, not only affects the workers and beneficiaries negatively but also the organization as this will not provide a space for institutionalisation.

While the workers are under a heavy workload and are expected to fulfil many tasks, yet they are not provided a ground to develop additional competences, therefore upward mobility is rare (Smith, 1997). In accordance, many interviewees emphasized that promotion is rare in the sector⁷⁶ and they cannot participate in the decision-making and gain representation without upward mobility.⁷⁷ People who are in the upper ladders, namely the managers, hold position in the decision-making mechanisms of the organization; leaving no room for other members, the implementers, to contribute (Abdelrahman, 2007). The effect of not being a member of the decision-making process, especially regarding the dialogues between management⁷⁸ and donors, might have negative impacts on their job conditions such as an increase in their workload and

⁷³ Which refers to cases at hand, that the frontline workers are working on, through regular interactions with beneficiaries.

⁷⁴ Baines (2006) also indicated these kinds of negative effects of less supervision and meetings.

⁷⁵ In addition, many interviewees stated that the absence of this or other kinds of internal meetings caused a miscommunication with the management and they felt alone and not heard. Some interviewees further declared that they demanded meetings, but they were either constantly postponed or could not be set due to workload.

⁷⁶ Güner (2019) likewise suggested that promotion is rare in the third sector.

⁷⁷ Two interviewees specifically stated they cannot get promoted especially as they need to improve their English language skills and as they consider one needs additional education degrees to be in the higher up ladders.

⁷⁸ Lang’s (2013) examination on NGOized organizations also refers to this incident as there is a “selection of homogeneous personnel, especially at top levels” (p. 68). A few interviewees stated that there is circulation between management positions. In that, former managers of other organizations, in or outside the refugee field, are generally recruited as their managers. Thus, one can expect to see a mainstreaming in management positions.

assignment of additional tasks.⁷⁹ At the end of our interview, when I asked if they had anything to add, the interviewee made the following statement:

The donors interact only with the managers. Perhaps instead of just meeting with the managers, if they also met with those in the field, seeking their opinions, then maybe the demands and protocols could be revised. Right now, as is, the entire system functions on the basis of labour exploitation, I can easily say this.
(Interviewee 9)

Hence, many interviewees expressed that the system is constructed on labour exploitation especially of the ones that are not in the decision-making and negotiating cycles, illustrating their precarity.

Almost all the interviewees additionally stated that their workload and donors' expectations on beneficiary numbers become an obstacle for them to go to any training. Although NGOs do not have a profit motive, they still aim to acquire equal or higher funds to continue working (Gupta, 2014). Reaching the targets, both enhance the probability of the continuity of the project and establish a legitimization for organizations' demand for higher funds for the upcoming projects. This leads to a precariatization especially of frontline workers as "[p]recariatization is about loss of control over time and the development and use of one's capabilities." (Standing, 2014, p. 1). An interviewee accordingly expressed their frustration on not being able to attend to trainings and improve themselves, as follows:

So the discourse is this: "let's first complete the projects, give the donors the numbers they are expecting. Then you can go and improve yourself"-- as if this is something outside of work. **(Interviewee 3)**

Many interviewees highlighted they received one or more trainings in their early periods at the organization but afterwards they did not attend to any. An interviewee expressed they can only attend trainings regarding their position's roles which helps their

⁷⁹ Jad (2007) accordingly states: "'project logic' pushes towards upwards vertical participation and not downward horizontal participation, and can lead to further concentration of power in the hands of administrators and technocrats" (p. 627). This, in fact, causes workers not to be able to represent themselves and be subjected to decisions made by the managers that can affect them positively or negatively.

specialization yet does not serve for their comprehensive development. Three interviewees stated that their organizations or supervisors value trainings and they commonly participate in them. Another three declared that they rarely go to trainings and even if they do, those are likely to be deducted from their annual leaves. As workers' contribution becomes limited and the work becomes routine, trainings (leaving aside the initial ones that introduce frontline workers to the field) seem unnecessary to some managers. On the other hand, an interviewee emphasized not attending to trainings and meetings outside their organization is preventing them from introducing themselves to other organizations and networking. Hence, this lack of involvement becomes a barrier for any employability practice and in case they wanted to change their organization they need to make an additional effort to introduce themselves and their work.

The trainings in the realm are commonly on the refugee field and diverging vulnerabilities, and since they are mostly in the protection area and the services in the field, they may be repetitive after a couple attendances and stop providing additional information, thus becoming redundant.⁸⁰ Accordingly, those who do attend to trainings, as well as those who do not, may end up feeling a lack of self-improvement, progression or appreciation of effort, which may include a promotion or an improvement of work conditions, that are features of the precariat (Standing, 2011). An interviewee stressed that as they are in the field for the last four and a half years; it becomes highly unlikely to be accepted in another field and start over. Thus, the information and knowledge acquired through trainings and particularly by experiences in the field are not pertinent to other job positions, it remains as knowledge exclusively acquired for this area.⁸¹

The standardization of assistance and services provided in the field is another part of the interviewees' feeling of lack of development, the lack of "job security" (Standing, 2011, p. 10). Since the workers could not improve themselves and there is a heavy workload, many interviewees declared they were thinking of moving to other positions or start a graduate degree, changing their pathway to academia. Accordingly, the interviewees expressed limitations and repetition of their work. Two of them stated as follows:

⁸⁰ In Uyan Semerci & Yurttagüler (2018) report, field workers similarly expressed they demand trainings to become regular and the training material to be updated.

⁸¹ On the other hand, the interviewees specified that improving their English language and presentation skills due to requirements of work, might have a positive impact on future employment both inside and outside the sector.

You are always doing the same thing, so you do get rusty in time. After academic studies, the exposure is great. Regardless, after a while it becomes very repetitive. You become a handler of sorts. **(Interviewee 15)**

I think I am most demotivated by the feeling that I cannot see a future for myself here... that I will not learn anything new, that there is no room for career advancement. I have been made to feel the very steep hierarchies here. And, of course, every time my co-workers were fired, I have felt a deep sense of insecurity. I really do not feel like I am on solid ground. **(Interviewee 6)**

This standardization that emerges from a specific focus on the framework and goals of the project, also shape organizations' employment preferences (Bayraktar, 2017). The people who will be beneficial in achieving the project goals with their related competencies are not only the desired workers but also the desired candidates. In the national context where there are open job positions, but much more educated and qualified unemployed people, the competition between job candidates is inevitable. An interviewee stressed that since there is an increase in employment opportunities in the field and the fact that the work done inside NGOs are determinate, or within certain limits and require certain competences, workers may appear as 'dispensable' and 'replaceable' in the eyes of managers and organizations. They conveyed this as follows:

The fact that the numbers of unemployed are huge increasingly means that many civil society organizations, their directors do not care for their employees. They have the attitude that anyone is replaceable, anyone can do this job. From the perspective of the quality of the work, too, there is so much to be done. We should really be doing advocacy, but everyone is dependent on where the cash comes from so we all keep counting heads. **(Interviewee 2)**

“Precarisation, in its most general sense, can be summarized as a process that nullifies one's personal and occupational qualities and makes their future ambiguous” (Vatansever, 2013, p. 17). Accordingly, the interviewee talks about the insecurity all workers are under no matter what they personally bring to the organization. On contrary, another interviewee explained that workers are secure if they perform according to organizations' expectations:

If you perform well, if you are well trained, no one will fire you. No civil society organization wants to fire people, especially those in the field because of their experience. They do not want to lose that accumulated field experience. They invest in the training of the fieldworkers, they are the ones ensuring the continuity of the project so the organization does not want to lose them.

(Interviewee 17)

The interviewee underlines that if one knows the job and serves an adequate number of beneficiaries, the organizations do not want the worker to leave in order to secure their sustainability. Another interviewee, while talking about observations on the I/NGOs in the field, indicated even if someone is a qualified worker, the organization would choose to work with someone else if they are slower in assisting beneficiaries. In other words, the worker and what they learn and know gains value only if they provide assistance to more people. They expressed as follows:

We are not in trade, we are not after bigger revenues or anything. But there are performance indicators in civil society organizations, too. And if you do not meet these, if your performance is subpar, you can create a situation where the organization wants to cut its losses and your career comes to a dead end. I think this has to do with the neoliberal context in which they are living. Performance means everything. [They say] I am investing in you; I am doing it because I expect you to be able to conduct this many interviews and assistance.

(Interviewee 8)

Hence, the frontline workers' value is in their execution of tasks and accomplishment of targets regarding the quantities that are expected from them. This determines whether they benefit the organization or not, rather than their social capital, individual perspectives and intellectual contributions (Singh & Cowden, 2009). In accordance, one can argue, the candidates that fill the positions might only have competences that are adequate for the project and not necessarily have a specific interest and passion for the field.⁸² This increases the replaceability, and one can argue, underlines a possible change in the third sector, that is a decrease in politicization.

⁸² As the interviewee 2 above suggests, these preferences in the recruitment process is one reason that makes civil society dysfunctional in achieving a transformation in the national setting.

Apart from the organizational preferences and workload, there are also factors related to the funds and donors' preferences that cause workers' exit from the organizations, and perhaps even the field. I will present these in the upcoming section.

6.4 Ending Projects: Ambiguity and Anxiety

The ever-changing needs and necessities of the field create an additional job insecurity for the workers. The mobilization of funds varies, and they can be directed to new areas within the NGO field operating for refugees or to different partners and causes. In accordance, there is a shrinkage of the realm with respect to the areas of assistance and service and available positions. The donors define which expertise to value, and the issue focus can change with their interests (Ergun, 2010). Accordingly, the frontline workers that are commonly active in the protection area, will be affected by shrinkage and closure of the protection projects. This prevails as social cohesion and other non-protection areas become dominant in the field⁸³, and the funds for NGOs are diminishing. An interviewee, while talking about future plans, articulated that the driving factor was insecurity (*güvencesizlik*) of the field. When I asked what they meant by the insecurity, they elaborated as follows:

Let me give you a simple example. When you work in a civil society organization, the work is project based. When the project comes to an end, if the project cannot get additional funding, if the donor does not pay you again, you are done. If you cannot secure a position in another project, you are out of a job. And some of the organizations operate like cannibals, they register and de-register you with the public social security system at year-ends and this deprives you of the possibility of severance pay. Job insecurity, not being able to claim what is your right... these are aspects of working in civil society organizations. I am sure you have noticed, many organizations have closed offices, fired people. So, you go to *gelbaşla*⁸⁴ and see that many projects are on social cohesion. This tells me that the protection focus will be completely eradicated in the long run. I am thinking that the protection projects will come to an end and social cohesion ones will take over. All of these people who have worked in

⁸³ Focus of funds, of donor, on the eastern provinces and particularly on social cohesion can be found under "2019 Strategic Focus" section: <https://drc.ngo/where-we-work/middle-east/turkey>

⁸⁴ A website where open job positions of NGOs in Turkey are available.

protection will be out of a job and will not be able to find a job. The people competing for social cohesion jobs with 4 years of experience will have people 5-6 years with experience ahead of them. In this dog-eat-dog world people with no experience or with 1-2 years experience will have no chance whatsoever.

(Interviewee 11)

Therefore, workers face unemployment. This illustrates, they can be “in a status that offers no sense of career, no sense of secure occupational identity” (Standing, 2011, p. 24). In that, one can argue, the frontline workers’ unemployment becomes a precarious one, as do their qualifications, which are mainly through their trainings and specialization, might not fulfil the recruitment criteria in private sector companies and/or NGOs operating for other causes. Hence, workers are anxious⁸⁵ about this circumstance as it might establish an environment where one establishes “an occupational identity only to have it snatched away, again and again” (Standing, 2014, p. 1). This is significant while talking about the precarity of job positions, as being able to “construct a life plan is key source of happiness and subjective well-being and its absence is a source of mental stress” (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018, p. 17-18).

In the previous chapters I have briefly presented the changes in the social work profession due to the implementation of managerial tools and neoliberal logic. These led to unstable contracts with part-time employees, interns and volunteers and insecure labour conditions. Fixed term contracts, in the NGO sector, are a part of this logic. This practice is to ensure organizational flexibility. That is, organizations can recruit employees for specific short-term needs and projects and if there are cuts in funding, they can dismiss some workers at contract/project ends, herewith guarantee their ‘stability’. From a macro perspective, the neoliberal mentality behind this formation is “to turn more of the public sector into the zone of the precariat through privatization, outsourcing and casualisation. An aspect of the attack is the effort to turn over more services to civil society or non-governmental organizations (NGOs)”, “a way to obtain services on the cheap, [by] transferring activities done by professional employees to those on precarious contracts and ‘volunteers’” (Standing, 2011, p. 53).

⁸⁵ This anxiety is continuous as with all the effort they put in, they might still be unable to make a life plan or even more fundamentally, a living.

One significant factor about a fixed term contract is that its length may not be sufficient to provide a compensation right to the worker, as the contract ends may not intersect with the necessary period to gain a right to compensation if the organization would not continue working with them. Accordingly, an interviewee stated:

When the project is over, if you have not completed a year, you are not entitled to severance pay. There has to be a restructuring [that works for this field]. I mean you would expect civil society organizations to be extra attentive but they say “we are civil society organizations, the nature of the job is project based” and completely ignore this problem. **(Interviewee 1)**

The interviewee underlined, pointing out the limits of the project-based system, the organizations are “stripping exploitation from temporal and legal obstacles under the name of flexibility” (Vatansever, 2013, p. 7). In addition, another interviewee indicated that there is a subject in their employment contract which gives the employer the power to change the articles. This creates additional ambiguity on their rights and exit procedures during the project endings, resignations, and dismissals. These all mean that people who have just started to earn an income, establish a life order, all of a sudden find themselves in the anxious position of trying to find yet another new job, without even having a compensation that would have been the financial support one would need for this period of time. Moreover, earning the unemployment benefit rights in Turkey requires an uninterrupted work, that includes insurance payment, of minimum 600 days. This generates an additional precarity, as Standing (2011) indicates “state benefits” (p. 12) are important in decreasing the insecurities of the labour conditions.

Apart from that, since NGOs are commonly focused on service provision to refugees rather than doing advocacy, one can claim, they indirectly generate a circumstance where their work may become redundant. An interviewee emphasized this by stating that the number of projects might decrease, leading to many workers becoming unemployed simply with a decision taken by the state to send back the Syrian refugees. They expressed as follows:

Maybe in the long run... I mean nothing is certain in Turkey but say a year from now, they could say the Syrians will go back. If something like this happens, the funds will decrease etc. So maybe the field will shrink in size instead of

expanding. I mean I even think about these possibilities, and then ask myself why I am not thinking about my own future. **(Interviewee 14)**

Almost all interviewees stated they were thinking to move to more secure job environments whether it be the public sector, private sector, or international organizations active in the refugee field. On the other hand, most of the interviewees considered working at international organizations as an ‘assurance’ in their future plans and job applications. When I asked how they interpreted the transition to international organizations in general, an interviewee made the following statement:

Everyone is tired of local NGOs, anyway. Ok so the people, who are riding a wave in career advancement, maybe they do not have security, but there are career possibilities, they want to make use of them. People want to join [international organizations] because they have professional aspirations. And then there is the macroeconomic environment with little security anyway, people want to have the kind of positions with maximum maneuver possibility. If you work [in an international organization] your chances may expand: you can move onto other organizations, apply to international positions; find scholarships or move abroad, etc. **(Interviewee 10)**

In other words, working experience in international organizations can be preferred as a strategy to deal with economic and other instabilities and the insecure setting of the country. In addition to this, considering job opportunities at other sectors or targeting INGOs with longer project periods, better funds and labour conditions were options that the interviewees considered and aimed for, to have a more secure career and livelihood. Many interviewees suggested that working at INGOs also makes a difference in terms of general working conditions, wages, and rights. The interviewees perceived INGOs better than NGOs considering these aspects also mainly as they envision them being more professionalized and institutionalized organizations with safety networks including (anonymous) complaint and reporting mechanisms. But considering the interviewees narratives that work in INGOs, one can deduce they also have shortcomings in institutionalization.

In sum, fixed term contracts with short durations, that are shorter than they are needed to qualify for compensation and unemployment benefits, facing dismissal due to the end

of other projects and donors' preferences and Turkey's migration policies and changing practices, all raise insecurities for the workers operating in the field. Interviewee 17 underlined their precarious position and the anxiety of not being able to know whether projects will continue shaping all their short and long-term decisions. Accordingly they expressed they can empathize with their beneficiaries as the refugees are trying to form their lives under a high degree of continual ambiguity and the project-based system without employment security puts the NGO workers in a resembling ambiguous and anxious position.⁸⁶ One can suggest, particularly the experiences and narratives presented in the exit section are relevant to most -maybe all- of the workers that are in lower ladders, rather than specifically the frontline workers.

Until this point, the structural factors and the system were dominant in the presentation of the labour setting, in the next section, I will present the insecurities due to managerial practices and the chosen governance methods.

6.5 Crooked Managerialism

In this section, I will focus on the precarities emerging from management's decisions and practices which cause a significant degree of anxiety and distrust in workers. After their first couple of months to a year, as the interviewees comprehensively learned their tasks and the field, and acquired competence in their daily work, they began to observe and witness some intraorganizational problems and accordingly focus on insecurities and precarity of their position and work content.⁸⁷ Just under half of the interviewees specifically expressed this rupture.

Most of the organizations that were in the scope of this research lack institutionalism and professionalism in terms of their internal mechanisms. While factors discussed in the NGOisation literature such as bureaucratization and vertical structuring were heavily felt, the aspects related to professionalism and institutionalism were less developed. These include lack of transparency, self-improvement, safety networks, anonymous support and reporting mechanisms in the organizations and an overburden in work. On the other hand,

⁸⁶ Baines et al. (2014) indicate that workers in non-profit organizations have "in common much of the precarity of the clients they serve" (p. 83).

⁸⁷ An interviewee declared that if they volunteered or made an internship in the organization before recruitment, they probably would have observed some of the problems beforehand, whereas another interviewee indicated that during the volunteer period they were not aware of the problems within.

an institutional and professional image is constructed and sustained from an outer perspective and for an outer audience (that are the funders, interorganizational actors and the state), but do not emerge in the same extent in the intraorganizational realm as institutional mechanisms and support stay weak. Therefore, the organizations are, in a sense, ‘semi-institutionalized’ and ‘semi-professional’⁸⁸; due to their internal structures which expose a ‘crooked’ managerialism. This governance leads to an additional layer of employment and job insecurity.

The projects commonly contain a budget that is aimed to form an institutional structure and related mechanisms within the implementers, namely the I/NGOs. Yet, the ‘project success’ motivation and the competition in acquiring and sustaining not only the funds but a status in the civil society realm, directs management’s attention to an outer accountability rather than an inner one (Bayraktar, 2017) and their focus and decision-making mechanisms are motivated by managerial than professional concerns (Singh & Cowden, 2009). In that, the management disregards internal dialogue and transparency (Bayraktar, 2017), that includes the transparency of organization’s project budget and its distribution to employees (Jad, 2004), and support and complaint mechanisms that the workers take part in and make use of. An interviewee described this setting as follows:

When you are in a job with little support or little self-improvement chances, after a while it becomes a conduit for making money, regardless of how much you like the job. At least that’s how I have become lately. I love my job, but I can also see that it could have been different: I could have been less exhausted, less prone to complaining, the job could have been of a higher quality. There are many private sector jobs, for example, where the employees are protected, their rights are given, and they feel at least somewhat content and supported. I have come to realize that this is important. I didn’t know how important transparency is. Now I know how things should not be. **(Interviewee 10)**

The transparency and mechanisms that protect the workers were either non-existent or insufficient in the I/NGOs. In accordance, on the needs of field workers, Uyan Semerci & Yurttagüler (2018) articulate that humane working conditions and a legislation on the

⁸⁸ Signifying a lack of institutionalism and professionalism to some degree.

rights of field workers should be established.⁸⁹ This demand underlines a precarity and suggests a solution by constituting a legal mechanism to define and protect field workers' rights within I/NGOs. An interviewee accordingly expressed:

There is a thing called labor rights. But when you join a civil society organization, it is as if you can no longer seek your own rights because you are supposed to be advocating for the rights of others. But I am a human being and I have rights. We should also advocate for our own rights. **(Interviewee 2)**

A few interviewees suggested events that they witnessed or experienced in their organizations resemble the abuse of rights that they regularly try to overcome with their assistance to their beneficiaries. An interviewee indicated the following contradiction:

A Syrian refugee comes to me and says, "they are not paying me at work" and I go to advocate for their rights. This is part of my job, but my own organization can do the very thing that it expects me to take action against. I find this to be hypocritical. NGOs should be extra careful – this why we do what we do after all. I hope this changes, we have these problems at the administrative level. **(Interviewee 1)**

In that, workers may experience the inequalities and injustices that are commonly experienced by the people in precarious positions in the society, inside their organizations. In addition, an interviewee indicated there are incidents where the management acts without being sensitive to gender inequalities that prevail in the society. Accordingly, they expressed:

The main issue is that NGOs internally do not abide by the principles they are advocating outside. This is the biggest problem. Let me give you an example; let's say, that day the cleaning personnel is absent, the dirty dishes have piled up in the kitchen. The administrator asks a woman employee to take care of it, not

⁸⁹ This is also indicated by the interviewees in the Müşterek Proje (2019) report. Robinson (2013) similarly stated: "Increased measures of accountability such as registration with professional bodies facilitate front line workers access to training, education and support; however NGOs may sit outside these structures and workers may not have access to these resources" (p. 15).

a man. This is a small thing and maybe it's because of availability, I don't know, but you should do the advocacy inside first. **(Interviewee 1)**

This again shows that, the 'social roles' are gendered in the work setting (Lively, 2013) and the managers are "visibly reenacting the gendered division of labor within households" (Kılınçarslan & Altan-Olcay, 2019, p. 15). In that, apart from their frontline work, some tasks that are socially constructed as a part of the 'female role' were expected from women as extra labour.

One can suggest, the organizational order and management's position inside it can provide a perspective to understand the internal setting. Some interviewees underlined that they find NGOs analogous to companies. Interviewee 6 specifically stated their organization is like an "*aile şirketi*" (which translates as a family firm or family business), suggesting inequality between members, the lack of professionalism and emphasizing the lack of institutionalism and good governance (Abdelrahman, 2007). In addition, stressed another aspect of this by saying that managers did not want to receive any criticism about job conditions or services provided to beneficiaries as "they have established a very personal connection between themselves and the organization they work in and even see them as their children".

Regarding criticisms and complaints, there is not only an anxiety of direct dismissal but an anxiety about a disregard and fear of not being a 'candidate' for the next project which means an indirect dismissal. A few interviewees stated they have access to an internal complaint mechanism and used it in a situation regarding co-workers, yet they do not prefer to use it when the incident is related to people in upper positions as they do not trust its anonymity. These interviewees indicated that managers have a close relationship with each other and people who run the complaint system or other support mechanisms have close relations with them. When they articulate their problems, they appear 'disloyal', and the 'loyal' employees who witness these incidents consequently stay silent (Hirschman, 1970). Thus, using the complaint mechanisms may cause employment insecurity. Moreover, a few interviewees stated that higher-level managers have dismissed workers who had problems with the managers at their organization in the

past.⁹⁰ They accordingly observed as an interviewee expressed that “managers are a unified organism”. This illustrates, again, that there is a lack of professionalism, creating an insecure setting for the workers in lower ladders.

Workers who experience problems regarding the management tend to exit their organization when they are accepted to jobs with better labour conditions, this results in high workload due to the high employee turnover.⁹¹ Many interviewees indicated that although several frontline workers left the organization, as organization’s goals and beneficiary numbers remained the same, the previous beneficiaries alongside the incoming ones were distributed to them, intensifying their workload. Six interviewees indicated after their co-workers left, new staff was either recruited many months later or not at all, even though they regularly expressed the need. In addition to not having new co-workers, there was no financial compensation to the remaining workers for undertaking the additional workload of their former peers.

There is additional workload and anxiety close to project ends due to the lack of transparency regarding project goals which demonstrates a mismanagement. An interviewee emphasized the fluctuations in the workload and the stress it brings in these periods. These fluctuations are due to workers’ exclusion in planning and management which is also indicated in the Müsterek Proje (2019) report. The interviewee adds that the obligations of the project and the necessary planning should not be left to the managers alone. It should be presented and discussed with the employees at the beginning of the project, as they are the executors, therefore not having a say in this realm directly affects them. Accordingly, they stated:

The administrators have problems in planning. This means at the beginning you can be fairly relaxed and then at the end of the project, the workload becomes insurmountable because of the numbers you have to reach. **(Interviewee 9)**

Thus, managers determine the pace of work and especially at the project ending periods they indicate additional expectations from workers, in a short amount of time, by

⁹⁰ The interviewees expressed some chose to quit after a complaint about a manager or about their labour conditions, due to mobbing. Furthermore, some workers resigned when their demands or voices were not heard.

⁹¹ This circulation impacts beneficiaries negatively, as not only the acquired knowledge on the assistance procedures but also the established relationships with the existing beneficiaries are lost (Baines et al., 2014; Müsterek Proje, 2019).

examining how far the organization is from the project goals. These problems in governance and management become a direct burden on the workers, creating cyclical periods of excessive workload and overtime.

Another factor that leads to feelings of anxiety and insecurity, is the lack of transparency about whether the projects will continue or not. The interviewees expressed that the organizations inform the workers about an ending project only with a couple days' notice, or at most one month in advance. Some interviewees declared that when the project ends, organizations commonly dismiss people in the lower positions.⁹² In addition, many interviewees underlined that people in the upper ladders have more security, in that, their probability of dismissal is less. An interviewee conveyed the uncertainty about whether the project will end and trying to continue to serve while struggling with this dilemma. They accordingly expressed the lack of information flow during the process as follows:

It was a horrible period – no transparency whatsoever. No one is telling you anything. We keep piling interviews on, and constantly new case files are opened. And for a month we had absolutely no idea [whether the project will continue]. It was incredibly difficult – I mean should I be looking for a job, should I be thinking of myself or should I focus on the cases? I did start looking for a job, but the project continued in the end. **(Interviewee 2)**

Hence, the interviewee tried to eliminate the effects of this ambiguity, which can lead to an income and employment insecurity through actively searching for jobs. Project ends may lead to more unpredictable results as management chooses the workers that they want to proceed with, by taking into consideration all their projects. Accordingly, an interviewee stated:

In all job interviews, people emphasize that your work is project-based. You are told outright that your job is directly impacted by the project's duration, whether it comes to an end or is prolonged. But then they never tell you that other projects

⁹² Another interviewee stated at the end of the projects, the workers who are close to the management stay in the organization and the rest enter an anxious period trying to find jobs.

coming to an end can impact your job, as well. Suddenly, for no reason at all, you may be fired because of this. **(Interviewee 5)**

The interviewee indicated that after the end of one project, the organization transferred some workers under that project to one of their other projects and discharged a few people whose projects were ongoing. Thus, while the NGO is conserving its organizational balance, this practice establishes a sudden development of insecurity for the workers. These cause anxiety and distrust in workers and it apply both for the ones who leave and the ones who stay in the organizations that witness the departures and the lack of professionalism.

In this chapter I have presented the excessive load on the frontline workers and how they position themselves in a project-based and insecure structure alongside managerial deficiencies and how all these processes contribute to their precarious position in the labour market. The narratives of the interviewees did not have significant divergences from each other which suggests that their circumstances are interlocked to structural problems and mismanagement that makes them representative. They all illustrated an excitement and self-improvement at the entrance, overburden, exhaustion and frustrations caused by problems due to a lack of institutionalism and professionalism in the process, and the anxiety of a possible exit combined with a general distrust to the organizations due to the crooked managerialism. Hence, the project-based system, with the project endings and ambiguities causes insecurity and precarity, yet there is additional anxiety and distrust stemming from the lack of transparency and professionalism during these periods that I presented in this section.

In the next chapter, I will elaborate on frontline workers' challenges regarding the content of refugee work and illustrate the work insecurity and precarity emerging through practicing on the frontlines. I will demonstrate that the insecurity and precarity is not only a result of structural factors common to the humanitarian sector but also related to the actual practice of working with a vulnerable group on a daily basis.

Chapter 7:

REFUGEE WORK: SOCIAL WORK INSIDE I/NGOS

This chapter builds on the previous one that was on the structural factors and deficiencies regarding management. What is distinct is that I will present the refugee field and its work content by specifically focusing on the segments of frontline labour. The frontline work for refugees might also be referred to as ‘social work’ -and it is inherently characterized as emotional labour- because it entails provision of assistance and services. I will display how the emotional burden accumulates on the shoulders of the workers/executors at the lowest ladders, namely the frontline workers, in the hierarchy of the organizations and in the neoliberal order that transfers not only the execution responsibility but also the care labour that comes with it (Baines et al, 2014; Baines et al., 2017). The care labour does emerge due to the beneficiaries’ intersectional vulnerabilities together with the complicated and changing procedures in the country of arrival, that the refugees need to be informed on and get accustomed to. In the first sections I will explain this form of labour and dynamics of refugee work with respect to the state’s position, the work content and the gap it covers as well as its impact on the workers and the relevant demands of support from the organizations. I will subsequently present the reactions that frontline workers witness in their social interactions and their responses. These together present the continuous labour in work and non-work domains, leading to insecurities that reproduce precarity specific to the refugee field.

Most of the interviewees stated that as this is an emerging field and service, organizations were commonly less equipped and informed on their area of practice. Seven interviewees stated that there was a lack of management in the organizations they entered. Most of those organizations are the ones that were specialized on other fields and that recently opened projects related to refugees or that are newly established, just some years after the beginning of the conflicts in Syria. Some of the interviewees complained about the fact that organizations and supervisors/managers are not sufficiently informed about the migration field and its dynamics. Accordingly, when I asked about general observations on the NGO field operating for refugees, two interviewees stated:

Everyone was like fish out of water. Many organizations kept saying “we are here because there are many refugees in need of help” but the majority had no

experience whatsoever. Everyone eventually learned by doing, making mistakes and then learning from the mistakes. **(Interviewee 9)**

Our project, from the beginning, had lots of problems. Nothing was systematic, there was work overload across the board. It was like you needed 3 for each person available. The size of the team was no match for the job to be done in such a big project. **(Interviewee 4)**

In other words, as I indicated earlier, civil society became a rapidly growing sector with the increasing refugee movement that aims to arrive and stay in or cross the country for their desired destination. Although there was a lack of institutionalism in the organizations, the information and knowledge frontline workers obtained in the first months about their jobs and the field became motivating factors for them. The interviewees expressed the organizations' early and general contributions mainly by indicating how it made them learn deeply about the migration and refugee field, especially the protection area. It raised not only their knowledge but also their awareness on refugees' rights and their situation in Turkey. Bierschenk et al. (2002) suggest that 'brokers' gain competence through practice, in that there is not a preconstructed comprehensive training or method available for them to understand and educate themselves on the dynamics of the field beforehand. In accordance, the interviewees learned about their daily work as they entered in the organizations which established an intensive learning period especially in their first months.

Frontline workers inform refugees on the systems and their rights in Turkey, which is traditionally a state duty (Codó, 2013). They listen to individuals' stories, identify their needs and direct them to relevant state institutions or other organizations. Moreover, even to fulfil the requirements that are compulsory under the state's regulations, the assistance in procedures mostly operate through I/NGOs as refugees approach them in a complication. As an example, the frontline workers accompany refugees in the process of school enrolment, which is compulsory for primary and secondary education. Furthermore, they take hospital appointments since refugees, at least in their early periods, do not know the system and there are no translation services available to them. I/NGOs further support them in drafting petitions, that refugees are commonly unable to write due to language barrier or the complicated bureaucracy and procedures, especially in cases such as a necessity to change their city of registration due to security reasons or

health needs.⁹³ Two interviewees particularly reminded state's duties for the newcomers, which involve their protection in many respects. In Turkey, I/NGOs operating for refugees are heavily functioning in this realm. They mediate the application of refugees' basic rights and needs that are under states' primary duties for a meaningful 'protection'.

7.1 *Work Insecurity*

In this section I will focus on the precarities emerging from the content of work, frontline workers' labour and the burdens of the profession and the ways in which these overrun not only the work but also the non-work domains of their lives undermining "work security" (Standing, 2011, p. 10).

The difficulty of the field work, the frontline work, is mostly evaluated by its psychological burden. Standing's (2011) conceptualization of work security is through protection against and compensation for work related physical and psychological harms. This section will primarily focus on work insecurity due to the content of work, and the "caring labor" (Erickson & Stacey, 2013, p. 182) that comes with it. Accordingly, the interviewees expressed many psychological and physical challenges that occurred after they started working in the field. An interviewee revealed the psychological dynamics under the physical changes and disorders by using the term "psychosomatic"⁹⁴ symptoms, and another interviewee indicated their experience as follows:

At the beginning, everything was good – this was what I had wanted. But then the workload and stress began to soar. My hands began shaking; I could not sleep at night; I began acting aggressively in daily life. Or I felt depressed, had no energy to do anything. Our daily lives are hard enough so when the job becomes impossible, the mood goes down tremendously. **(Interviewee 3)**

The interviewee talks about health effects of their job and that these effects were not compensated by organizational practices. This causes an additional insecurity and precarity for the frontline workers in the refugee field. I will demonstrate this insecurity through emotional and care labour and explain the loss of health by focusing on the psychological load stemming from frontline workers' daily practices. This especially

⁹³ There are other services that I mentioned in the second chapter.

⁹⁴ Meaning, physiological disorders that stem from psychological experiences/reasons.

occurs as they receive a very high number of beneficiaries, higher than they could to eliminate the negative effects on their own self-protection mechanisms, and the lack of protection and support mechanisms for themselves.

Resting can be an effective self-protection or selfcare mechanism and Standing (2011) identifies having time to rest as part of work security. The interviewees expressed the lack of resting time during work hours.⁹⁵ Two interviewees declared that they do not have a lunch break, at least not in practice because their offices are always open inside the working hours. Accordingly, not only talking about beneficiaries and carrying this emotional burden in non-work domains, but also not having the time to stop and rest while at work was a significant topic brought up by almost all the interviewees.

The interviewees articulated a need for institutional support mechanisms and practices that protect them from the effects and burden of the position they work in. This would not only assist them to be more efficient but also help them in organizing a balance and boundary between their work and non-work domains. When talking about the support mechanisms, particularly psychological support⁹⁶, only one interviewee indicated that it both exists in their organization and is useful. Two interviewees expressed even when they had one, they did not trust the person, since they were a worker of the organization and underlined that ideally and ethically psychologists should be independent.⁹⁷ Interviewees who had psychological support in their organization declared it is in poor quality and dysfunctional. Within them, two interviewees also mentioned they have well-being⁹⁸ activities or receive group therapy yet not one-to-one sessions. Four interviewees stated they currently do not have any psychological support, either due to the ending of projects or psychologists quitting. However, one of them inside this group stated when the organization used to provide it, it was very useful. More than half of the interviewees indicated they never had psychological support at their organization, some mentioned they are receiving psychological support privately, but this becomes a major financial burden⁹⁹ on them.

⁹⁵ However, many interviewees stated that their organizations were tolerant about sick leaves.

⁹⁶ Müşterek Proje (2019) report emphasizes that there is a need for psychological support for the workers in the field.

⁹⁷ Robinson (2013) in accordance states: "Supervision needs to be uncoupled from management, with its aim of protecting well-being, rights and entitlements for social workers" (p. 6).

⁹⁸ Activities outside the office, organized to make employees feel better.

⁹⁹ That is, a work insecurity establishing a part of their income insecurity.

In consequence, their work security is undermined, creating a precarious labour setting. To present this lack of work security, next to the structural factors and management that generate insecurities, is significant as it would provide a space to perceive the changing civil society and humanitarian sector in Turkey. In that, it will illustrate the results of ‘frontline positions’ becoming widespread in the civil society realm and some of it turning into a space where ‘social work’ is provided to a particular group of people.

7.2 *Emotional and Care Labour*

Frontline workers are collectors of refugees’ experiences. In order to comprehend their reasons for mobility, the violence that they are subjected to, workers are listening to beneficiaries by asking relevant questions to open-up the details accumulating the necessary background information. Subsequently, they assess the story and either assist them directly or refer to necessary support inside or outside the organization. In fact, for every consultation, frontline workers should collect in-depth information about the refugee’s current situation including their recent past. However, in a significant number of the consultations, the stories cover a much broader timeframe, commonly beginning from the triggering event that led the beneficiary escaping their country of origin or even their prior experiences. To accumulate the information on these, a frontline worker listens to a beneficiary for hours in their first interaction, at times continuing to do so for days. This can take even weeks as there should be a formation of trust for people to share their experiences openly and honestly.¹⁰⁰ In other words, the number of beneficiaries that a frontline worker interacts with constitutes the number of stories they deeply listened to.

Most workers that I interviewed entered the field without much prior knowledge and emotional preparation, and the psychological burden of the work began to affect them shortly after the first days. While talking about entering the field, an interviewee stated as follows:

I was fed up with being unemployed, so I took this job offer even though the pay was miniscule. If I had known what I was getting into, if I had more experience,

¹⁰⁰ The refugees who are on the move between the state systems can often perceive that they are not sufficiently heard by the state mechanisms. Accordingly, the interviewees indicated, some beneficiaries reach to frontline workers for rehabilitation, just to be able to talk, explain and to be heard and understood.

I probably would not have done it. I did it because I did not know better – it is a very, very difficult line of work. **(Interviewee 8)**

Hence, for some, being hired at a time of great unemployment generated a consent for the existing labour conditions, with emotionally demanding work, inside the I/NGOs. Most of the frontline workers in the field do not graduate from departments that are related to emotional support, such as psychology or social work. Therefore, they did not receive a comprehensive academic or practical training/education on mechanisms of self-protection when listening to and assisting people with various vulnerabilities. Even for the interviewees who have studied social work or psychology, self-protection and self-care are problematic due to the number of beneficiaries that organizations welcome. An interviewee, who studied social work, explained their setting as follows:

Colleagues in Europe deal with 10 to 20 cases per month whereas we have to work with 40-50-60 cases. Colleagues in Europe work under less stressful circumstances, have some protection whereas we have little. The problem is that the work is at the centre of our lives. Everything else... family, social life, romantic relations, material concerns, academic pursuits... everything is secondary to work. The individual is not at the centre is what I mean. When this is what work is, my discourse will inevitably revolve around the psychological impacts. **(Interviewee 11)**

Moreover, they commonly do not receive comprehensive trainings on how to protect themselves during their entrance to the organizations. Thus, emotional baggage expands with the quantity of applicants, and the lack of self-protection mechanisms they have access to, leads to an overload.

The frontline work contains a non-quantitative form of labour that is driven by emotions and care. This labour disappears although being produced and commonly does not have a material reward. Most interviewees emphasized emotional parts of their work and the burden of these. An interviewee, when comparing their labour conditions and rights with the ones in private sector, suggested being continuously subjected to refugee stories is highly corrosive and takes somethings away from one's self, leading to a loss, and as they cannot get back to normal after work, the time after work is also taken away

from them. Therefore, the interviewee finds it analogous to have ‘overtime’ which is a practice commonly seen in the private sector. Accordingly, they stated:

This is a corrosive, spiritually backbreaking job. That’s why maybe we are on par with people who do over time. **(Interviewee 16)**

On top of the emotional effort spent listening and understanding beneficiaries, there is continuing labour, containing a high amount of care, throughout the assistance. The main divergence of this labour is that during the accumulation of experiences, despite an active listening role, the labour is rather passive but in the following procedures it becomes a highly active one. This extension of emotional burden can be expected in a setting where the language barrier, different systems in their country of arrival and their intersectional vulnerabilities turn refugees into individuals who need supplementary support, assistance, and care. An interviewee accordingly declared:

I am close to burnout. You deal with so many things for this one person. It’s like they are your child. They don’t know the language; they don’t know the system. They are like children. When that is the case, inevitably you start thinking about every issue they could possibly face. Are they hungry? When they do not know the way to a place, you take them. You have to think of everything when you are on a case and this can mean months. And of course, there are also other cases, at the same time. Or you say, “great, finally, it’s over” but the bell rings again and it starts all over again. You have to have the same level of energy and care. It’s exhausting to be the care giver all the time. I would have liked to be at the receiving end of care sometimes. **(Interviewee 15)**

All the interviewees indicated they cannot sufficiently care for themselves both during and outside of their working hours, due to the impact of work lasting on them and being full-time caregivers to others. So how does witnessing the narratives of refugees and assisting them affect and transform workers’ lives after working hours? What are the impacts of care labour on their non-work domains?

The interviewees, by suggesting their work should not be measured with quantity and by saying that the financial outcomes, wages, are less than they deserve for such labour, expressed their sense of injustice not only for the quantifiable but also the

emotional, and immaterial work they put in.¹⁰¹ This immaterial work constitutes their ‘unpaid’ labour which involves a high degree of care and is constant and exhausting (Baines et al., 2017). All interviewees used one of the following words: moral exploitation, labour exploitation, emotional fatigue, burnout and secondary trauma. They accordingly shared their related experiences. Emotional invasion¹⁰² of work life after work time was apparent in 14 of the interviewees’ discourses. Thus, they expressed the labour that they put in and the workload through aforementioned notions and by transformations in the ‘non-work’ domain of their daily lives. Most of the interviewees expressed that they cannot do ‘meaningful’ or educative things after work as they have no energy left for it.¹⁰³ Some also mentioned that they cannot watch films or news that contain violence or anything that might lead to any feelings of anxiety. On their jobs’ effect on everyday life, an interviewee stated as follows:

I have begun watching lots of TV shows, movies to relax. I can easily say I spent 3-4 months at home, in front of Netflix. It’s a horrible way to live, lots of useless time in front of the screen but that was the only way I could unwind.

(Interviewee 1)

Thus, the effects of work content actively resonate to the non-work hours. The interviewees indicated a continual thinking about the beneficiaries and the possible actions to solve their problems covering both work and non-work hours. Almost all the interviewees explained when they gather with their co-workers and colleagues after working hours, their dialogue inevitably revolves around discussing beneficiaries’ problems and consultation on possible solutions and when they spend time alone, the work content’s influence on them in the non-work domain prevails.

To sum, even if frontline workers try to put a limit to their work and its impact they can still find themselves in an emotional turbulence that decreases their ability to put an order to their life. This emerges primarily due to the content of their work and the responsibility on them. Hence, whether the interviewees experience their work content’s

¹⁰¹ Uyan Semerci & Yurttagüler (2018) report, presents the request of field workers for their wages to be adjusted with regards to the content of work.

¹⁰² Although none of the interviewees used the word ‘invasion’ when expressing this overlap, nevertheless I choose to use this term because they stated that there is a psychological part that cannot be controlled and it is in that sense, without their will.

¹⁰³ Güner’s (2019) interviewees, that are also people working in CSOs, had similar statements.

impact on non-work domains extensively or not, they demand an understanding of the dynamics of their work in the intraorganizational realm and especially by an additional support from the supervisors and managers.

7.3 *Managerialization of Frontline Work*

As the detachment between upper and lower ladders widens, workers get closer to the refugees. In that, while workers are already refugees' first contact, they become their only one through their assistance. Since technically refugees are assisted by the organizations, and not by the individual workers, workers' effort becomes somewhat invisible. Additionally, people in the upper ladders, namely the supervisors and managers, less and less understand the daily challenges frontline workers are dealing with.

Almost all the interviewees stated that their supervisors and managers are distant from the daily work in the field, the work done by the frontline workers. Harlow (2003) states this lack of concern by saying: "managerial-technicist practice is concerned with the measurable and observable outer world only. The social worker's use of self is lost from the equation if he or she is simply coordinator of services." (p. 39). Three interviewees particularly emphasized their supervisors' and managers' lack of emotional involvement, in a sense neglecting the worker (Baines et al., 2017). Another interviewee, shared their frustration on the lack of support from the managers by the following statement:

To be able to reach my manager, to know that they are aware of the problems I am having would make me feel better. But in un-institutionalized or semi-institutionalized places, this is never a priority. People think of their own administrative issues much more than the real issues. That's why it would have been nice to work with people who are more open to communication, collaboration, people who know what they are doing. **(Interviewee 13)**

There is an emotional work without an emotional support, hence what frontline workers operate under is a maladministration. The detachment between managers and workers is apparent, and most of the interviewees declared they felt alone during their work. On the other hand, the interviewees argue, the managers are commonly interested

in and focused on the outcomes of the frontline work and not the field itself, thus, perceive it more as a professional job with a particular attention to the administrative part (Gupta, 2014). This shows, professionalization displays itself not just as a dividing factor of NGOized organizations from others but inside the hierarchy of these organizations. In addition, the professionalization as specialization and a division of labour, constructs a rift between titles inside the organizations. There is a division of work between administrative staff and frontline workers and the burden of emotional work is disproportionately on the shoulders of the latter. Accordingly, some of the interviewees indicated that the managers are not disconnected only from the workers, but also the field as a whole. Accordingly, an interviewee expresses:

The disadvantage was that none of the managers have had field experience. Actually, they even thought that visiting the field was a bad thing. [There was] a complete rupture between the administration and frontline workers.
(Interviewee 2)

One can suggest, the frontline workers perceive their work not just as a professional position with its necessities and limits but as a constant concern, and for some, an area of activism. The workers who enter the organizations, by seeing the realm from inside and having direct connection with the refugees and their experiences, might become more politicized. An interviewee declared that hearing the stories of their beneficiaries and abuse of their rights canalized them to undertake a graduate degree in Human Rights Law:

I would have never imagined wanting to do an MA degree in human rights. It was the job that inspired it.¹⁰⁴ I remember actually criticizing people for applying to MA programs in Human Rights -6 or 7 people out of 10 were doing it [when I began]. (Interviewee 14)

One can argue that for some frontline workers, their interest in human rights grew due to what they have heard and witnessed in the migration field. Hence, it was commonly

¹⁰⁴ This also corresponds with my observations, while working at the field I met many people who began a graduate degree in Human Rights Law when they were doing internships or working full-time at NGOs operating for refugees. In addition, for another interviewee, who began this graduate degree before working in the migration field, not the experience in the migration field but internship experiences in other civil society organizations were the motivation.

stated in the interviews that they liked their job content and by focusing on the positive aspects of their daily work they were gaining resilience from it.

Standing (2011) highlights two sides of the experience of the precariat, the lack of a desired identity and the lack of a desired career, which position themselves different from each other according to the interviewees. The dilemma of these two sides puts NGO workers, especially the full-time and paid members, to a peculiar position within the precarious labour literature because of the contestation between the value of work, job satisfaction, and the labour conditions. While working inside CSOs has a symbolic value and constructs a desired identity for some, the internal dynamics of NGOized organizations do not generate desired, secure job settings and careers, leading to an ‘undesired’ work identity. Thus, additional precarity to the frontline workers is caused by the content of work, through them experiencing the emotional burden of their daily work, inside the flexible structure that I presented in the previous chapter.

The fact that some managers are distant or increasingly moving away from the field, may result in less understanding and empathy towards the effects of the expected targets and workload on the frontline workers. Accordingly, emphasizing the high number of beneficiaries and management’s related demands, some interviewees expressed their frustrations by statements such as “I am not working in a textile factory” or “Sometimes I feel like I am working in a call centre”. These statements demonstrate that non-quantifiable part of their work, which escalates due to the quantifiable part, that is the increase in number of beneficiaries, is disregarded. Furthermore, an interviewee declared that the stress is on the frontline workers to communicate with beneficiaries about their services and assistance they can and cannot offer¹⁰⁵ and their burden and responsibility is not comprehensively understood by the staff in other positions, they stated the following:

The real labourers are the interpreters and the social workers. Every day you deal with so much, you solve many different issues but then afterwards, it becomes just a number, like “two people visited the office that day.” Then people ask you about the numbers, “can you explain this” etc. even though what you did might have meant solving a huge issue. When people move to administrative positions,

¹⁰⁵ There are changes in services due to the project regulations, and in addition to notifying beneficiaries on the abolished services, frontline workers also respond to requests for assistance in areas where it is unclear if they fit under the organization’s services.

they don't really understand that you are personally involved, that talking to people, resolving their individual problems requires a lot of time. Say, someone asks for assistance and then your manager says we cannot provide that. But the person who has to say no and then also follow up is you. That makes it even more exhausting. **(Interviewee 15)**

Many interviewees stated that managers primarily care about beneficiary numbers and not about the emotional turbulence workers experience under this workload. Not only the beneficiaries seem objectified by looking at them as a number of applicants, but “[i]t could also be argued that forms of management that fail to take account of workers as emotional and social beings are similarly objectifying” (Harlow, 2003, p. 39). Moreover, two interviewees declared that their supervisors or managers perceive the job's emotional influence on them as a negative aspect and something they needed to improve. They particularly stated that displaying positive feelings makes them a better and more desired worker in the eyes of the management. Accordingly, one declared:

That we are adversely affected by what we are doing is not a *crime* (emphasis). You can be affected; this is an issue that has an impact on you. The fact that somebody remains untouched doesn't mean they do a better job. On the contrary, there could have been support systems in place inquiring into why we are overwhelmed, how we can be supported, etc. **(Interviewee 3)**

There are “gendered norms of emotional expression” and “both males and females tend to judge and subsequently label females as more emotional and emotionally expressive than males” (Lively, 2013, p. 225). In accordance, the interviewee talks about male co-workers who remain ‘untouched’ and consequently seem as working better. On that note, one can argue, there is an additional demand for “emotional labour” (Veldstra, 2020, p. 1), especially from female workers, to display happiness even under the influence of work and its difficulties. If not provided, it may lead to a negative reaction or even to one's dismissal. When talking about their performance evaluations, an interviewee expressed their manager's stance:

So, they told me, I “need to improve in the following areas: you are too emotional.” Who are you to say this to me? **(Interviewee 17)**

Male interviewees also indicated that they were emotionally affected, but it was the female interviewees who expressed that they receive such criticism and feedback. The society holds a gendered prejudice that women are more emotional than men and this is also evident inside the NGOs, as female workers are witnessing these discourses. This is an incident that illustrates the gendered practices. Moreover, additional care and kindness is expected especially from women frontline workers in their work, freeing men “from the more emotionally challenging aspects of the job” (Lively, 2013, p. 236), as they commonly assist SGBV (sexual and gender-based violence) cases. Hence, the organizations make use of their ‘caring’ attitude but also criticize them through their emotionality.

One can claim, the emotional engagement demonstrates the value and care that the interviewees attach to their work and questioning this part by the managers shows their alienation. In accordance, one can deduce, organizations are not taking the responsibility emerging from the inherent characteristics of the realm that they operate in, the content of the work, or the beneficiary numbers that they validate. The managers demand emotion work from the workers, but they “withhold the emotion work/emotional work” from them (Lively, 2013, p. 227). In that, instead of providing support to reduce the burden of this emotional baggage, its responsibility is put on the workers and then presented as a negative characteristic of them. Accordingly, Moore & Robinson (2016) suggest when workers display their anxieties, burnout and overwork they are expected to receive these types of reactions as “[n]eoliberalism continues to portray such problems as failure to adapt, personal psychological shortcomings or educational deficits”. However, for the authors, “[t]hey seem, rather, to be systematic effects of a particular labour process” (Moore & Robinson, 2016, p. 2786). In addition to the emotional burden of work and the lack of institutional support, workers also face challenges outside of work, in their social life, due to their work identity which I will present in the next section.

7.4 *The Response in the Social Interaction*

The workers enter the civil society realm and their field and position in an expectation of dignity and respect. However, not only inside their organizations, but also outside, they are faced with an attitude that is completely opposite to their expectations. People who assist refugees often encounter negative reactions due to prejudices and misinformation

of the society.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, incorrect and exaggerated information about public services that refugees access leads to a perception that the work done by NGOs and their workers is unnecessary. These discourses ignore the stories that frontline workers listen to, the areas of struggle, and the presence of and need for their work in general, and thus making them invisible. Furthermore, it causes people not to direct their attention to the NGO field operating to support refugees and its workers. All these result in frustration amongst workers.

For many interviewees working at an NGO is a ‘desirable identity’ which they see valuable and constitutive. They perform varying strategies to manage this identity in their social interactions. The management of this might include avoiding some interactions, not presenting information on their job, or exposing and performing their position and work identity. All the interviewees declared that this constitutes an extra burden, which led some interviewees to become less open about their job title and work life and it has become an active arena of conversation and struggle for others. Hence, there is continuous emotional labour and effort not only in the work domain but also within social life.

Lack of regard and support for the emotional aspect of the work inside the organizations furthers itself in workers’ life by society’s lack of understanding towards refugees and correspondingly their labour in the field. Hence, there are reactions in the non-work domain that emerge due to workers’ occupation which also Guhan & Liebling-Kalifani (2011) and Robinson (2013) presented as a burden on social workers working with asylum-seekers. An interviewee mentioned that since the field is specifically on refugees, it might have a negative impact while searching for a job in other sectors. Accordingly, they expressed the advantages and disadvantages of their experience in the field and in their organization in later job applications, by the following statement:

If I am to continue working in this area, this experience is an advantage, but if I decide to go into the private sector, it is completely irrelevant. It is a completely different world. In fact, when I say that this is my job, I have had people reprimand me for helping refugees stay in Turkey. The word “refugee” scares people. **(Interviewee 15)**

¹⁰⁶ As presented in the “Attitudes towards Syrians in Turkey 2017” report by Erdoğan and Uyan Semerci.

The work of assisting the refugees and the I/NGOs that support them face negative reactions from the society. This results in prejudices towards people and organizations that help the refugees which is derived from the prejudices that are directly towards the refugees themselves. Hence, causing an additional precarity for the I/NGO workers, which is not addressed in the precarious labour literature. The interviewee indicated the negative reactions and labelling of the society, and its possible effects on job applications. Thus, besides reactions to working in the I/NGOs operating for refugees that they are encountering in their daily interactions including the ones with family and friends -which the interviewees commonly struggle and aim to transform- they might also get confronted with negative results in job applications only due to prejudices towards their previous work. Another interviewee, who is in search of a new job, expressed that it is usually hard to discuss their CV as it involves experiences related to the refugee field and particularly the protection realm, and did not directly attract private sector organizations or even NGOs specialized on other causes.

This chapter revealed difficulties of keeping up with an emotionally demanding work environment where institutional support is weak and professionalization is selectively implemented, and the frontline workers' struggle with their work identity and engagement both in their work and non-work domains. In the next chapter I will present the frontline workers' strategies and mechanisms in dealing with the structure, its labour dynamics and precarity.

Chapter 8:

THE STRATEGIES: THE AGENCY AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS

So far, I have presented the structural, managerial factors and insecurities due to the content of work that establish the work setting and conditions of frontline workers. Now, I will focus on their strategies in dealing with the aforementioned dynamics. These are workers' mechanisms against NGOisation, precarisation and the crooked managerialism they operate under, that is prominent in the national context. An interviewee accordingly stated:

Workers have started demanding more support. I hear this from my own co-workers, or from people who work in other NGOs. We need support, we need psychological support. We need people who hire us to hear us more, to have more transparency. People have become more conscious I think over time. Of course, there are no concrete steps I can speak of, but at least people have started talking about these issues. It's just an observation. **(Interviewee 3)**

To understand organizations' deficits, one can examine its members' actions that involve confrontation with or withdrawal from the setting and there is a constant interplay between what Hirschman (1970) calls their performance of "voice", "exit", and "loyalty". In accordance, the interviewee underlined that the workers are increasingly voicing their concerns which, according to Hirschman (1970), would lead them exiting their organizations if they do not achieve any transformation in the conditions or they might perform loyalty if the exit options, the other alternatives, are not engaging.

In this chapter I will present the mechanisms of frontline workers in dealing with the structures and content of work. Their strategies can be categorized as *acquiescing* practices, *coping* and *exit* mechanisms. These performances not only unfold the agency of the workers but also illustrate how they are reconstructing the NGO scene with 'good intentions'. There are differences between interviewees considering the prominent mechanisms they choose in dealing with the conditions and labour setting; however, it is significant to indicate that most of the interviewees make use of several mechanisms together. In that, an interviewee might acquiesce to some topics while actively using coping mechanisms to deal with other dynamics and simultaneously build exit mechanisms. Therefore, it would be incorrect to suggest that some interviewees give

‘consent’ whereas others make use of more transformative strategies since almost all the interviewees perform a combination of both. I will present their relevant narratives inside concepts that came out extensively in the interviews; that are *family, self-respect and reputation, conscience, gossip, and empathy*. What they all have in common is a performance of dignity within, which I will constantly raise and return to. There is an interplay between these concepts as the workers are gaining self-respect from being a member of the civil society realm, but to cope with the inner structure they establish an internal criticism through the family discourse and to protect themselves they acquiesce under a cover of conscience. In addition, they form their exit projections with the information they attain through the networks of gossip. This, together with the role of empathy in frontline interactions build up strategies for them to cope and exit.

8.1 Self-respect and Reputation: Being a Member of the Field

Working in civil society and the refugee field distinguishes the workers from most of the society (Skeggs, 1997) and this was implicit within the interviewees’ narratives. Accordingly, the aim to acquire a reputation was significant for most of the interviewees, in their entrance to the realm and for all the interviewees during their stay at the organizations and inside the field. In other words, this generates a consent towards NGOs, and the workers remain inside despite the problems related to intraorganizational dynamics as they make use of the NGOs’ symbolic value for the “subjective construction” (Skeggs, 1997, p. 3) of their own identities. Working at an NGO, especially in a frontline position, constructs a reputation and this was evident in most interviewees’ discourses in different parts of the interview. An interviewee presented their observations on people’s motivations to be a member of the field as follows:

I think some people are here for the money, some people have absolutely no idea. I am sure it’s the same everywhere, but what gets me is the fact that it is happening in the realm of civil society. For some others, these jobs represent some kind of prestige. I am sure, at times, my job has been a source of pride for me, too. I have felt like I realized myself here – so in this sense, I am sure for many working in civil society, the job is an identity. **(Interviewee 10)**

The interviewee not only distinguished themselves and criticized other people’s motivations to begin working in the realm but also indicated a separation between

themselves and the rest of the society by having the rarely acquired identity of being a CSO member. In that, they talked about the dignity of being a member of CSOs and some people strive to make it a part of their identity. Three other interviewees also underlined that their job never contradicted their values and character, which is a moral gain for them and also a prestige.¹⁰⁷

The reputation element continues after the entry and adaptation to the realm. It was a major part of the interviewees' narrativity especially regarding promotion or a change in position/title. In accordance, some interviewees made statements such as "I want to stay on the frontline" and differentiate themselves from other frontline workers by saying "I chose to stay in the field while others were promoted or aimed for a promotion". These expressions illustrate how frontline workers construct their dignity and precedence with the difficulty of their work content, the related effort, especially through being the ones having direct contact with the refugees/beneficiaries. One can argue, they partially acquired an 'authentic CSO' atmosphere through their position on the frontlines within NGOized organizations.

As presented in the previous chapter, the workers perceive the dialogues in daily encounters and family discussions on refugees as an extra effort and load, which at times exhausts them due to the continuous nature of their struggle. They are in a way 'defending' the refugees or commonly functioning as 'spreaders of true information', in the virtue of their experiences and knowledge. By their work as 'knowledgeable representatives', workers are establishing "the maintenance of coherent representations of social realities and in the shaping of their own identities" (Lewis & Mosse, 2006, p. 16). Thus, despite all hardship, the refugee work emerges as a space in which they are constructing themselves through an action with integrity and nourish their motivation to work inside the field. One can argue, it can serve as a coping mechanism for the labour conditions in the work domain. This is especially so, for some, as they were disappointed to find out that the activist and advocate arena, they aimed to attain inside the NGOs, did not fulfil their expectations. An interviewee emphasized their resilience in doing advocacy in the social interactions as follows:

¹⁰⁷ The civil society organizations also develop a pride and a desire to protect their reputation, it is visible not only in their discourses about themselves and their actions, but also through their criticism of other organizations and their stance in the realm (Kuzmanovic, 2012).

I have this determination, for what, I don't know. But I like talking about what happens in the field to anyone, if I see a light in them. I have even developed a language that works with ordinary people. I mean it makes me happy to be able to correct a few misconceptions, at the very least. So I ride a bus, I talk with people on the bus. I ride something else, I talk with people there. When someone asks a question, I am sure they regret having done so because I can talk for hours. I try explaining the legal framework; I try to build up empathy and I end up feeling a bit relieved. But then of course I am sure there are many who have absolutely no idea what I am doing. **(Interviewee 10)**

The interviewee expressed their excitement in doing advocacy and creating a change. This is by spreading the information on the field, as middle-class individuals (De Jong, 2017), with a conversation style that will make sense to the 'masses'. In that, they are not only making distinction between themselves and the society (Skeggs, 1997) but also aim to generate a transformation in their audience. The small changes workers achieve in the non-work domains become a reward and create a sense of accomplishment and self-realization in addition to their achievements inside the work domain. These are spaces where frontline workers build their integrity and dignity. One can argue, despite being additional work and labour, it is a driving force for them to stay in the field.

8.2 *Managerial Deficiencies & The 'Family' Rhetoric Generating an Exit Strategy*

The concept of family was brought about by several interviewees and it seems like it is used by the managers in order to 'cover up' the NGOized structure of the organizations. Hence, the organizations are different than bottom up established CSOs, which, one can suggest are more akin to a family, community, or a solidarity group. However, the managers are suggesting it is a secure environment and that there is an unbreakable internal solidarity by articulating that the NGO staff is like a family. One can argue, the flexible job setting was legitimized under the cover of a communal commitment, yet the workers were not protected by mechanisms that are likely to operate inside a community (Kılınçarslan & Altan-Olcay, 2019). An interviewee challenged the presentation of their organization through the rhetoric of managers as follows:

It's like "it all stays in the family, the family knows what's best for you"... They claim they want what's good for you (*laughs*), but with no enforcement whatsoever. **(Interviewee 2)**

One can suggest, the fact that managers choose these words while defining their organizations in the intraorganizational realm (and perhaps also outside), serves to create a facade. However, as I demonstrated in the previous chapters, in fact, their inner workings are not as such. The notion of 'family' in the rhetoric of managers, constructs a sense of solidarity, in frontline workers' narratives however, it is deconstructed and becomes an apparatus to question the hierarchy, and lack of institutionalism and professionalism within their organizations. In that, the NGO managers, by regularly emphasizing they are a family, open up grounds for workers to develop a frustration when they see practices that are contradictory or against such a notion. Accordingly, an interviewee declared that they are soon aiming to change their organization by saying:

I think I have done whatever I could do in this organization. Having seen the injustices committed against others, it's not just a feeling of insecurity I guess. I am disillusioned by family discourses, like "we are family, we do everything together, there is no discrimination here," etc. **(Interviewee 5)**

The interviewee decided to leave the organization after observing the injustices within the 'family' in order to protect their dignity. What nourishes the interviewee's expression was an exit projection.

When I asked about the interviewees' future plans, three of them expressed they observed the defects in the organizations and imagined how they could improve them. One can argue, their experiences and frustrations due to the deficiencies in institutional decision-making and support mechanisms as well as the lack of complaint mechanisms surface as plans and transformative ideas in their exit projection. While this advanced some interviewees' knowledge on the I/NGO structures, it has turned into plans of future projects for others and an interviewee made the following statement:

I can see what needs to change at work. In that sense all the mistakes I have witnessed have helped me professionally. I mean I know what I would do differently were I to initiate a civil society organization. At least I know what

not to do when communicating with and supporting the employees.
(Interviewee 3)

The interviewee makes a claim of their dignity by suggesting they, in a way, learned the system and can establish their own and 'better' projects in terms of support mechanisms for workers and transparency. Accordingly, suggests, they can form better NGOs or be better managers, and with acquiring the decision-making apparatus create a coping strategy for NGOisation. There are some, who temporarily take hold of the decision-making mechanism through deciding to move to other organizations and choosing a 'new order'. They stated their accumulation of expertise strengthens their hand in being accepted to their new path. In accordance, many interviewees indicated that it may be easy to move to other organizations, as they consider themselves experienced and knowledgeable about most of the assistance and services in the field.¹⁰⁸ They seem like they are using mobility inside the sector as a coping strategy but at the same time they are giving consent to the NGOized setting. An interviewee criticizes the unequal position of the managers in the organization by referencing to the dynamics of a family structure. They make an analogy on the fact that the managers are not present during the day but when the employees are not present, they are asked for an account¹⁰⁹:

You know how in families you are expected to do what your parents tell you but not repeat what they do. It's like that. You do what they tell you to do, but not what they do. There is that kind of power, that kind of hierarchy. **(Interviewee 12)**

Interviewee 12 is an example of a worker who has observed the crooked structure and was acquiescent to it due to not having a chance to exit, thus, makes an analysis and humour out of the structure. The intraorganizational observations next to the notions of 'family' and equality, leads workers to uncover the presentation of the intraorganizational structure. For the ones who do not relocate their expectations accordingly, it accelerates

¹⁰⁸ Analogous to the interviewees' motivations on being a member of the CSOs, these narratives also involved a reputation element.

¹⁰⁹ The interviewee further explains that the organization has a degree of tolerance towards workers who are coming late to the office due to their inability to provide a satisfactory wage.

disenchantment and composes a desire to exit, next to other accumulated frustrations, providing legitimacy to any exit strategy and “disloyalty” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 82).

8.3 Conscience as a Coping Mechanism

There is a difference, as interviewees articulated, between the additional work demanded by management and workers expanding their work by their choice. For some of the interviewees, going beyond the definitions and duties of their job renders their job content effective and with that they feel they are assisting beneficiaries comprehensively which makes their efforts meaningful. In this extra work put in by frontline workers with their own wish, the notion of “doing good” (De Jong, 2017, p. 53) and the concept of conscience and dignity come into play. The difference this time from their labour being unnoticed, and invisible with a lack of appreciation; is that they are practicing this labour ‘invisibly’ by their own will and decision. Thus, while not holding the decision-making mechanisms or having a representation in them, they establish a space where they make their own decisions and practice them. An interviewee accordingly stated:

I have often done things beyond my job description because I have felt like I should, because circumstances made it necessary: for me to have any real positive impact, to strengthen my bond with the beneficiary. I did it without asking anyone or without getting permission. **(Interviewee 5)**

Hence, this can be a coping mechanism against the top-down structure and regulations and enhance the satisfaction they gain from their job. In accordance, the interviewees particularly emphasized their will to do more is for the frontline work, not the paper-work and other administrative tasks. The workers, while decreasing their emotional involvement in tasks that are expected from them, are forming an area for their relief inside the labour structure with performing tasks that they believe are significant (Jones, 2000).

When focusing on the flexible structure with high workload, one can claim, managers are framing the work conditions within the I/NGOs; yet workers are also actively reconstructing these conditions. So, how do the workers reconstruct the system, under values of integrity and self-respect? An interviewee made a self-criticism by expressing that they were executing the frontline tasks with more responsibility and care than the

organization expects and even thinking that they will do a better job than other frontline workers with the following statement:

I remember, at one point, I was overwhelmed – like oh my goodness, I have to do this, I have to do that... What will these people do without my help? ¹¹⁰ I was constantly punishing myself. Then when I really began to hurt, I said to myself everyone does their best, why are you putting the job on such a pedestal? I mean I was putting the job and myself on a pedestal but I was also hurting myself simultaneously, because I was trying to do too much. **(Interviewee 14)**

People “who see themselves in terms of a good, powerful, active identity are effectively motivated to meet these [gendered] behavioral and emotional expectations” (Lively, 2013, p. 238) that are “placed on them by themselves and others” (p. 239). The interviewee demonstrates that the care labour towards the refugees is analogous to the one that is inside a family. One can suggest, this is a critical portrayal of the concept of family and the gender and power relations within. Accordingly, some frontline workers put in additional effort and take on more work, reconstructing their precarious setting. Moreover, some are acquiescent to excessive workload and perhaps an exploitation of themselves by not reacting to a possible uneven and unequal distribution of work, even legitimizing it. There were seven interviewees who declared they receive more work compared to their co-workers and almost all are women. They expressed that the work distribution is made top-down and is commonly unequal. The work is not distributed by an institutional mechanism or a professional perspective and extra work is expected from workers, especially the ones with a high performance.¹¹¹ They indicated, there is no appreciation for their additional effort, or any recognition of the extra load given to them. As presented in the earlier chapters, one can claim, organizations prioritize assisting beneficiaries and reaching the determined project targets, rather than establishing an equality in workload among those who execute the assistance. An interviewee stated as follows:

¹¹⁰ Robinson (2013) suggests, this is a symptom of secondary trauma; that is “becoming overly involved and needing to ‘rescue’ the service user” (p. 6)

¹¹¹ As exceptions, two interviewees stated that the cases were evenly distributed and that their organizations are sensitive to the equality of workload amongst frontline staff.

I have another co-worker whose work load is similar to mine. We both work too much – my sense is that when you work well, people give you more work. Those who don't work at all, no one gives them anything and they have absolutely no remorse, either.¹¹² But then, at the same time, no one shows any appreciation for the work we do, there is no respect, there is no gratitude, there is no monetary compensation. Just more work. That person over there does 2 things, you finish 6 or 7. **(Interviewee 17)**

There is an “institutionalisation of unpaid care work” (Baines et al., 2017, p. 639). Accordingly, while emphasizing that the distribution of workload should be equal, there are workers, commonly women, who actively take on the additional workload given to them (Baines, 2006) with a conscience towards the beneficiaries and an expectation of appreciation for such a ‘sacrifice’ from the part of the organization. They describe their exploitation through an immeasurable and unpaid emotional labour and that there is no credit for their care labour that is taken for granted (Lively, 2013) as “open-ended caring and sacrifice on behalf of others is assumed to be an inherent part of femininity and is widely expected of the majority-female staff” (Baines et al., 2017, p. 627). Another woman interviewee was critical about high workload on themselves upon entry but could not express this to the managers because of a feeling of conscience towards the workplace as they were paying more for the interviewee's insurance due to the work permit regulation for the foreigners.¹¹³ The fact that their organization applied and they obtained a work permit¹¹⁴, which is what they need to do if they are recruiting foreign staff, created a security for the interviewee. Therefore, they articulated an appreciation towards the organization which establishes an acquiescence to the excessive workload.

¹¹² A few interviewees criticized their co-workers in the same position for such reasons. In addition, a larger number of the interviewees addressed the unequal workload and labour conditions between them and staff in different positions inside the organization. Whereas a few interviewees declared all members of the organization have a very high workload and there is not a significant difference between positions.

¹¹³ Not all the organizations are obtaining work permits, the problems regarding this and the exploitation of foreigners was emphasized in the Uyan Semerci & Yurttagüler (2018) report. In addition, many organizations are preferring Turkish citizens even for the translator positions in order not to get into the bureaucracy and additional cost of the work permit application and regulation.

¹¹⁴ The reason that this conscience emerges is mainly due to the practice of organizations not applying to the work permit, and as the interviewee found an organization that acts according to the regulation, they are appreciative of their organization. Another interviewee also indicated that it is rare that the organizations apply for the permit therefore they are in a good position.

The workers try to manage the excessive workload on the frontlines and the interviewees commonly expressed that they take this topic to supervisors and managers to find a solution. However, almost all the discussions stay unanswered. As a possible coping strategy in this setting, a few interviewees -who were all female- stated that they could work at a slower pace in another job, but in the refugee field it makes them feel bad because of their work's direct impact on the beneficiaries. Therefore, they are unwilling to use such a tactic. Hence, a notion of conscience comes into place. On contrary, a male interviewee indicated that they have strategically slowed down work in order to receive feedback about it, aiming to reopen the discussion on workload with managers to decrease the excessive burden. In that, since approaching the managers did not solve the problem, the interviewee used this as their second strategy where the concept of conscience is pushed back.

Some interviewees indicated that since they knew this type of conversations did not work before, they do not even try discussing them with a 'learned helplessness' and accordingly, stay silent. For some, the reason behind this is that they do not want to draw negative attention from the management and risk their chances to take part in the following projects, therefore their silence is generated mainly from the precarious structure. Another interviewee declared that they are constantly expressing the high workload, still there was an adjustment and reduction in the number of beneficiaries per person only after a co-worker resigned due to this reason. Thus, one can argue, even though the requests stay unanswered, the exits of individuals might have a transformative effect when they are simultaneous with demands of change in labour conditions both from the ones who leave and the ones who stay.¹¹⁵ Implementation of exit and voice together as a group resulted in an improvement of workers' labour conditions (Hirschman, 1970).

The consent given by the workers can also be an illusionary one. As I indicated in the methodology chapter, almost all interviewees wanted to be sure that their organizations' names or any hint about them were left out from the research. A major reason for this was to secure their own anonymity, but one can argue another reason, for some, is the conscience they felt for their organizations as they are in the civil society realm. Thus, for many, managers' and organizations' entities were discrete factors. One can argue, by this perception they are also protecting their dignity for being a member of

¹¹⁵ As an exception, an interviewee declared before the initiation of the projects, they commonly have a chance to express their concerns on their targets and it might lead to a slight reduction.

the organization and their work in general. With many dismissals in the organization, an interviewee was not highly critical on their organization to secure its reputation and expressed this as follows:

After all, it is not the organization but the managers that do these bad things. There are several things I would rather not talk about because if I did, it would come off as an unwarranted critique of the organization. **(Interviewee 9)**

Another interviewee declared that they experience the outcomes of crooked managerialism first-hand, accordingly, expressed their anger with themselves for not approaching the job more professionally and searching for jobs, formulating an exit strategy, as they observe and face the problems. The interviewee explained why they could not implement an exit strategy as follows:

It is so hard to prove the existence of mobbing. Friends tell me “print out a copy of the e-mails.” When people tell me this, it sounds reasonable, but I never do it. The problem is when you are in civil society, our job is about rights, laws etc... that’s what we talk about all the time, that’s what we want to believe in and that’s precisely why we don’t practice it. Then you stop for a second and think: “look at the way I have been treated for months, do this to protect yourself.” But I don’t, I forget in the rush of the day. The other thing is I am usually a very upfront person. When something is wrong, I communicate it immediately. It feels, somehow, wrong to collect documentation of wrongdoing, on the side. It feels kind of sneaky. I don’t know. Maybe it has to be done. **(Interviewee 14)**

The interviewee indicated they were not able to prioritize their motivation to protect themselves because of a feeling of emotional bond with work, one can argue, this is again where conscience towards the organization as well as a dignity performance themselves come into play. However, interviewee 9 and 14’s narratives comprise a consent within, therefore these perceptions and practices, one can claim, decrease the chance of intraorganizational transformations.

What appears as a conscience, also, might be silence due to employment insecurity. Accordingly, workers might come across as acquiescing to cope with the precarity of their position. In that, they might strategically try not to face employment insecurity therefore

stay silent to the violation of their or their co-workers' labour rights. There were several interviewees who emphasized that a legal procedure that one initiates can cause problems considering their mobility inside the sector. An interviewee talks about co-workers who were discharged without their rights, such as unfair dismissal or not acquiring their right of compensation, and stated that doing something that would disrepute the organization would result in their exclusion from the whole sector. This would prohibit the worker from seeking a job in the sector they are specialized in. Therefore, even though some exit the organization, they might still give consent to the organization's labour setting by not actively seeking to earn their vested (labour) rights. Accordingly, an interviewee made the following statement on workers who faced dismissal:

You can sue people, but then you risk making a name for yourself as this person who sued this NGO. And you want to continue being in this field. If you become known as that person, all doors will be closed to you. No one will call you for job interviews. That's how people think. So you leave quietly. You don't get the satisfaction of justice served. And those who remain behind are left with the thought "who's next?" (**Interviewee 8**)

These remarks firstly present a lack of professionalism exists in the field, consisting of numerous I/NGOs and secondly illustrate that the workers who stay are bystanders with an ever-increasing development of anxiety and insecurity. Almost all the interviewees emphasized this factor of being a witness, and one can claim this is a significant trigger in their transition to the exit strategy, their search for jobs, and seek another path. This 'inevitable' conscience becomes a strategy to deal with unprofessionalism and gossip in the upper ladders. When the gossip and information flow occur between higher ladders, mainly the managers, through their "community networks" (Kılınçarslan & Altan-Olcay, 2019, p. 12), it might establish a barrier to employment in the field and lead to an exit and even exclusion. In accordance, two ex-member interviewees articulated a precarity, in that, they declared that civil society organizations are a small community and almost everyone, especially the managers know each other which means a negative reference might cause employment insecurity.¹¹⁶ It seems like

¹¹⁶ A few of the interviewees knew the organizations and managers that are close to each other, and they may choose not to apply to these organizations when seeking a new job. However, this makes it harder for them to be employed with fewer options and job positions.

“word of mouth” (Abdelrahman, 2007, p. 81) is critical for not only someone’s entry but also their stay in the field.

8.4 *Solidarity and Gossip as Coping, Exit and Employability Practices*

As I presented in the “Ending Projects: Ambiguity and Anxiety” section of the 6th chapter, the job positions are shifting and decreasing, therefore, the ones that are experienced in the field or acquired competences and information that is needed for the field are more likely to stay and continue being a member. Therefore, to continue working in the field, apart from employability practices that are individual oriented such as building experience, competence and information; there are also social ones, such as networking, that are as significant. Gossip and information flow, from below, on the organizations, their donors and labour conditions give frontline workers the necessary information on employment, job and work security, for them to strategize and decide on their future steps. The major factors that cause workers losing their jobs are deductions in funds due to various reasons, one being donors’ everchanging interest areas and projects not being renewed. Workers are trying to obtain information on the donors as the funds ensure continuity and determine the duration of their contracts and the projects. Accordingly, an interviewee expressed:

When I first began, I had no idea about how funding worked. I think no one did. I am sure the managers did talk about funds, but people at my level did not know how funding operated, how projects worked, what our rights were... Our lack of knowledge brought us so many problems and we also heard so much from others’ (co-workers’ and colleagues’) experiences that now everyone knows, because we want to protect ourselves. Now for example, when we attend a meeting with other NGO workers, after I introduce myself the first question they ask is who our (organization’s) funder is. **(Interviewee 10)**

Interviewer: So, why do you think this is the case?

I think people are trying to determine where you fit among the civil society organizations. It’s like they are trying to assess how they should act with you. I might have become more devious over time, I think everyone is constantly calculating how they will act with one another. As projects come to an end and

people don't know what will happen to them, this is like research for the job opportunities, as well.¹¹⁷ **(Interviewee 10)**

One can argue, gossip and information flow functions both as a coping mechanism and an exit strategy. In the discourses of the interviewees, strategies to manage with uncertainty and insecurity was highly apparent. Furthermore, except from three interviewees, all of them wanted to change their organizations and obtaining information and gossip on other organizations shows a “loss of loyalty” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 40). Their reasons were mainly the managerial problems and the semi-institutionalized setting in their organizations rather than a preference solely by careerist motives, as their expectation of institutionalism does not exist in the civil society realm of the country. One major reason for the ones who do not want to change their organization is the information they obtained on different organizations and their working conditions. These were spreading through NGO workers, resulting in some interviewees to perceive their conditions are not amongst the worst, thus staying and giving consent to their existing setting. Another significant part of the acquiescing stems from the labour market setting, as their job and labour conditions appear better next to other options. An interviewee expressed that they believe the most remediable sector is the civil society as, it is neither the public nor private sector which have practices and dynamics within, that run deep.

There is a reciprocal flow of information both from and for those who are outside and who do not thoroughly know the inner dynamics and conditions of the field. A few interviewees indicated they would advise people considering to be a member of the field to use it as a stepping stone, that is to enter an organization and learn the work and the field then aim to transfer to another organization that is more institutionalized with better conditions. It seemed like most of the interviewees were offering coping strategies rather than expressing whether they would advise people to enter the field or not. Hence, there are strategies from below that are transmitted beyond the NGO realm. These are commonly warnings for the ones who consider getting in, providing an information flow and gossip on the structure and labour conditions by exposing the below experience.

¹¹⁷ In other words, the interviewee underlined, in addition to learning about the stability of other organizations, some workers also perceive the workers in organizations with large and stable funds more reputable.

8.4.1 *Gossip, Social Network and Resilience*

As frontline workers come across a high number of varying cases, the interviewees expressed when there is a new problem, they are commonly using their networks both inside and outside of their organizations, to find solutions and a path for assistance. Thus, social networks function as coping mechanisms, the inner circle being the co-workers and the outer one the colleagues in other organizations. This multilayered system is the main support network that the frontline workers interact with on a daily basis. That is, they are brainstorming with their co-workers and consulting colleagues at other I/NGOs to establish a strategy for efficient assistance. At times, this consultation is on their own circumstance and well-being, hence goes beyond what can be done for the case to how they are coping with this case in general both strategically and emotionally.

Most interviewees expressed their contact, conversations and at times gossip with their co-workers gave them energy and motivation. Some stated that they enjoy working and talking with their co-workers as they are people who have similar beliefs or a common minimum. Focusing on emotional support, for some interviewees, chatting with their co-workers in the morning or in a small break during the day at common areas; having tea, coffee or cigarette with them creates an immediate relief. If they cannot find the time for a break or have the energy for it, meeting up and gossiping with co-workers and colleagues after working hours is a regeneration. Hence, together they are a part of a social group and this commonality and network opens up spaces that can function as coping mechanisms.

In the previous chapter I illustrated the frontline workers' conditions in an ever-expanding work domain, and their impact on non-work areas that demonstrate elements of work insecurity. In this setting, the workers have mentioned a lack of recognition and care for the emotional baggage these bring. Accordingly, while being 'caregivers' there, they do not receive sufficient amounts of care from their organization themselves, whether it be the recognition of their emotional suffering or psychological support. However, solving the problems of their beneficiaries or hearing that they are somehow solved gave them satisfaction and motivation. Therefore, despite these not being long term or structural solutions, workers nevertheless do nourish themselves especially by the

motivation they gain from benefitting beneficiaries.¹¹⁸ In addition, it is also highly significant to mention that frontline workers are building their own care systems. Some interviewees stated that they began getting psychological therapy, meditating, working out or attending courses to learn new things. They expressed these are beneficial for their well-being. In fact, enrolling in distance education or to a graduate degree can also be a ‘self-care’ activity for some, as it allows them to divert their attention to a different direction. Moreover, it makes them feel that they continue improving themselves, by a practice that might enhance their “employability” (Smith, 2010, p. 279), even with all the extra work these bring. This employability practice is both useful if they stay inside the field or exit to academia or another job and sector. It serves as a step on an exit path and a strategy to eliminate the insecurity of working under a project-based system and its internal dynamics.

Looking inside the intraorganizational realm, gossiping creates a sense of togetherness and not only functions as a coping mechanism but also establishes a strategy grounded on solidarity. Almost all interviewees stated if a co-worker always brought up a specific subject for discussion, they would face a reactionary attitude from managers. Thus, the interviewees expressed this paved the way for their co-workers to leave the organization willingly or unwillingly. For this reason, an interviewee declared that they use a strategy in which the workers, before attending a meeting with the management, agree on the problems they want to discuss within themselves. Thus, not only will they be more powerful with solidarity but also only one worker is less likely to attract negative reactions. This can be considered as a strategy set by co-workers as a group against the practice of mobbing and dismissal.

8.5 Empathy as a Coping Mechanism

Empathy towards beneficiaries plays a significant part in frontline workers’ everyday work. The frontline workers mainly feel this due to their content of work which, as discussed in the previous chapters, involves listening to many life stories and traumatic events. This commonly generates a degree of empathy. The workers, at times, find a part

¹¹⁸ For most of the interviewees this satisfaction did not directly stem from a good result. In that, although in certain instances or periods they are not able to help beneficiaries and therefore face their frustrations, dissatisfactions and at times anger; they nevertheless hold on to their good intentions and effort, with the knowledge of obstacles to their services that are either due to the limits of organizations’ projects or the Turkish state’s regulations and their changing implementations.

of their own past experiences inside beneficiaries' stories or they might be in similar ages, have the same gender, or there might be other aspects which makes them identify more with the beneficiaries. This makes empathy an element of their daily work; for some it occurs less for others it is more prominent, and it can be a coping mechanism as it fortifies the satisfactory elements of frontline work. However, empathy can be a factor which establishes a ground for exit, after a while, as the caring labour enhances and becomes unendurable. Accordingly, some interviewees expressed that even though they like the work content of the frontline position, still they believe that they (or anyone) cannot practice this work for long periods of time. A few interviewees wanted to move away from the frontline positions at least for a while, due to burnout, and a few declared that they would like to continue in frontline positions but in other organizations.

As a conclusion I would like to indicate that some interviewees, especially the ones who are less likely to leave the sector or the ones who already exited, expressed an expectation from my research to transform the labour conditions by representing and voicing them. In other words, those who are unlikely to change the sector or positions, or those who have already left the field, wished for this thesis to create change. One can suggest, the 'gossip' which is the information that interviewees gave me throughout the interviews, and the fact that I once was a frontline worker -which makes me a person who is likely to have more 'empathy'- generated a sense of hope for a transformative effect of my research. One can argue, discussions workers are unable to have or changes they are unable to achieve demonstrate the precarity of their position, and accordingly, the value they attach to my research.

In this chapter, I demonstrated how the workers perform their agency and what strategies they use to try and make it easier for them to stay in the field or leave. Understanding and analysing the labour setting and precarity of the realm is possible through looking at the workers' working conditions, as explained in the previous two chapters in detail, but it is also possible through examining their strategies and mechanisms. One can suggest, these strategies are not only significant for illustrating the agency of the workers and the relations in the intraorganizational realm but also the interorganizational dynamics of the field.

Chapter 9:

CONCLUSION

Previous research on the NGOs in Turkey involve a wide range of perspectives that cover the experience of NGO representatives. However, there is limited research that focuses on the internal dynamics of the NGO members, including the daily experiences of frontline workers. The contribution of my research is that it sheds light on the civil society in the migration field which expanded in Turkey after the country started to receive an unprecedented number of refugees from Syria in the post-2011 period. Accordingly, as a methodological contribution, this research presents perspectives and experiences from below. Furthermore, while examining the civil society organizations working for the refugees in Turkey, this study brings labour and NGOisation literatures together. By doing so, it opens up avenues to discuss workers' experiences and conditions in a sector that is not prominently discussed in the precarisation literature.

In the NGOisation literature, there is a lack of fieldwork on NGOs operating for refugees and this research stands in this area, illustrating a newly expanding field that works for and assists the non-citizens. The literature argues that there is a downloading of responsibility from the state to NGOs. My research reveals that there is a top down transfer of responsibility within the NGOs. Accordingly, it displays the downward transfer of responsibility and exposes the accumulation of emotional responsibility and work insecurity on the lower ladders. There is an accumulation of emotion on the frontline workers and this emerges as there is an insufficiency in the state provided assistance and services, as well as barriers in refugees' access to their rights due to the changing state rationale on the issue, which are compensated by the projects funded by donors and implemented by the civil society actors. The workers not only undertake the lack of sufficient assistance and care labour but also cover up their organizations' lack of capacity to fulfil donors' expectations by their daily efforts. The frontline workers' narratives revealed emotion, dignity, conscience, empathy, and sacrifice which are left to them to take on by actors in the upper ladders, many of whom have material, technicist and neoliberal agenda and rationale.

The main findings illustrate, as the NGOs took on the role of social service providers and their primary work became 'social work', the work insecurity emerged as a fundamental problem for the frontline workers. The current structure mostly provides

project-based employment options. This structure, when it is interlinked with crooked managerialism, causes an additional insecurity. Accordingly, workers are highly anxious not only due to the employment and job insecurity caused by the project-based system but also the managerial practices that intensify these insecurities in a nontransparent and undemocratic setting that lacks institutionalism and professionalism. In that, there are structural and organizational parts of job anxiety, and the project-based management reproduces not only the precarity but also the consent to the ongoing labour setting. My thesis findings demonstrate how precarity is experienced and how all these insecurities cause a multi-layered precarity and negatively affect workers in their everyday lives.

The findings contribute to the literature on precarity with conceptual additions. That is, in the literature, the anxiety and stress of the workers are commonly attached to the subjective and objective possibility of dismissal and job loss. This research presented these anxieties; however, it also demonstrated another type of constant anxiety and emotional turbulence that is due to the job content in the frontline positions. Hence, if there are not adequate institutional protection mechanisms safeguarding the workers, the mentioned anxiety becomes a significant insecurity, deeply affecting the work and non-work domain of the employees. In accordance, almost all the interviewees indicated they are experiencing secondary trauma, burnout and are highly exhausted. Many interviewees stated that they do not have the energy to continue yet cannot quit their jobs because of their conscience or the lack of jobs or not having the adequate time and energy to look for one. Even if they find a new job, some of them expressed they would need comprehensive rehabilitation and sufficient resting time before starting.

The workers face a dilemma between a desired identity and a desired labour setting. The identity they acquired through working at an NGO drives them not to exit but the labour conditions direct them to seek an exit. Thus, identification with a 'good' cause and the related job content can reproduce the precarity and when examining the NGO field this emerges as a fundamental element. In addition, as frontline workers have direct contact with the refugees and their actions create a 'good' for them, this generates the NGO feeling that they seek. They assist the beneficiaries with an idealist, emotional and responsible manner and by doing so they are also differentiating themselves from the NGO staff that are in the administrative positions and other actors that are in higher up positions in the structure.

The interviewees' narratives displayed that there should be structural changes in order for them to work in their position for longer durations without experiencing burnout. They might leave the field not only because of the mentioned fatigue but from a "value crisis" (Bayraktar, 2017, p. 134) they experience in the NGOized setting. An interviewee who recently quit her job accordingly stated that she will, from now onwards, continue her work for the refugees outside a 'job environment', in that way at least she can be involved in activism which she considers necessary.

This research has several limitations, as I could only interview I/NGOs in Istanbul, and charity-based institutions and organizations with religious affiliations were not included. Accordingly, to get a more diverse profile of respondents and for the research to be more generalizable; more interviews should be conducted including the frontline workers working in the I/NGOs in different cities and affiliations. Moreover, as the study is solely on the I/NGOs operating for refugees, it would be also enlightening if similar research is conducted on the I/NGOs working for other causes. On the other hand, the research that reveals pressures on the managers and analyses both the workers' and their positions comparatively would be beneficial to generate a comprehensive picture of the intraorganizational setting. While managers are distant from the workers and do not understand or respond to most of their concerns, the workers also -inside the nontransparent and hierarchical setting- may not completely grasp the structure that managers operate under and their related anxieties. In addition, it would be significant to conduct a similar study on the interpreters in the field as their precarity is highly apparent, which was underlined by several interviewees. Nevertheless, they appear to be the most precarious, especially considering the non-citizen interpreters who often work for a daily salary, with no work permit or insurance. On the other hand, although this study presented that the expectations from male and female workers as well as their criticism by the managers are gendered and are different from each other, further research focusing primarily on the gendered and unpaid labour, by comparing the positioning of the male and female workers in the field, would be supplementary.

Last, but not least, all interviewees expressed that the benefit they provide to the refugees to be palliative and far from providing long term solutions. Therefore, research that examine why the I/NGOs in the sector are unable to achieve a more comprehensive change that might mitigate the precarities of frontline workers, with a focus on the donors and the state, would be significant.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1) Demografik Bilgiler, Kişisel ve Profesyonel Geçmiş

Göç alanında bir STK'da çalışmaya başlama hikâyenizi merak ediyorum, bana biraz kendinizden, önceki deneyimlerinizden ve bu işe başlayış sürecinizden bahsedebilir misiniz?

Daha önce bu veya başka bir kurumda farklı bir pozisyonda çalışmış mıydınız, şu anki pozisyonunuzdan hangi yönlerle farklıydı?

Başka sektörlerde çalışan yaşıtlarınızla çalışma ortamınızı ve haklarınızı nasıl karşılaştırırsınız?

2) Gündelik Çalışma Hayatı Süreçleri

Giriş:

Biraz iş hayatınız hakkında konuşalım. İş yerinde neler yapıyorsunuz? Pozisyonunuz, görevleriniz ve sorumluluklarınızdan biraz bahsedebilir misiniz?

İşin içeriği:

Yaptığınız işin süreçlerinden biraz bahsedebilir misiniz? Anladığım kadarı ile vakalar geliyor, peki gelen vakalar nasıl ve kimler arasında dağıtılıyor?

Vakaların genel dağılımı nasıl? Genelde neler yapıyorsunuz dosyalar dağıtıldıktan sonra?

Peki, danışanlara nasıl bir yönlendirme yapılacağına nasıl karar veriliyor? (Süpervizörler ne tarz destekler sunuyor ve ne sıklıkla süpervizyon veriliyor?)

Hiç çözülmemeyen vakaları, zorlu veya uzun süren dosya süreçlerini nasıl yürütüyorsunuz?

Danışanların beklentilerini karşıladığınızı düşünüyor musunuz?

İş yeri içi ve diğer ilişkiler:

Sivil toplum alanını düşündüğünüzde, kurumunuzun devletle ve donörlerle ilişkileri nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Sizce nasıl olmalı? Kurumun ilişkileri sizin ilişkilene şeklinizi nasıl etkiliyor?

Çalışma hayatında hangi devlet kurumlarıyla temas halindesiniz? Onların mültecilere ve dolayısıyla çalıştığınız alana ve sizlere bakışları nasıl?

İş yerinizdeki düzenle ilgili birkaç soru sormak istiyorum. İş ortamınız ve çalışma arkadaşlarınızla, yönetici ve süpervizörlerinizle ilişkileriniz nasıl, mesela bir sorun olduğunda nasıl çözülüyor?

Kurumda sizinle aynı pozisyondaki ve başka pozisyonlardaki insanlarla dosya yükünüzü ve çalışma yoğunluğunuzu karşılaştırabilir misiniz biraz?

İş yerinizde sizin için stres kaynağı olan faktörler neler, biraz bahsedebilir misiniz?

Peki, sizin için işte güzel geçen bir gün ne demek, kötü geçen bir gün ne demek? Yaptığınız işin sizi motive ve demotive eden tarafları neler?

Kurumun sizce sizin profesyonel ya da bireysel gelişiminize yaptığı katkılar var mı, neler?

Kurum içi veya kurum dışı eğitimler hangi sıklıkla veriliyor?

Kurumun sağladığı ek tatil günleri veya başka motivasyon artırıcı etkinlikler var mı?

Süreçleri biraz daha anlamak istiyorum. Yaptığınız işin değerlendirmesi nasıl/neye göre yapılıyor? Ne sıklıkla geri bildirim alıyorsunuz?

Peki, kurumda yükselebileceğiniz ara pozisyonlar var mı? Daha üst bir pozisyona yükseltileceğinizi düşünüyor musunuz?

Sizi maddi ve manevi anlamda tatmin eden şeyler neler, zorlayan şeyler neler?

3) Toplumsal Etkileşimler

Peki, bu alanda/kurumda çalışmaya başlamanızı aileniz ve çevrendekiler nasıl karşıladı?

Günlük hayattaki karşılaşmalarında işinizi söyleyince nasıl tepkiler alıyorsunuz? Tepkilere nasıl cevap veriyorsunuz?

4) Günlük Hayat

İş dışında kalan hayatınızı biraz anlatır mısınız?

İkincil Travma:

Yaptığınız iş günlük hayatınızı nasıl etkiliyor?

İşe girdiğinizden beri kendinizde nasıl fiziksel ve psikolojik değişimler gözlemlediniz, biraz anlatabilir misiniz?

Kurumda psikolojik destek imkanınız var mı veya dışarıdan talep edeceğiniz bir destekte maddi imkan sağlanıyor mu?

5) Gelecek Hayalleri

Bu işe giriş nedenleriniz nelerdi, işe girerken bekledikleriniz gerçekleşti mi?

Yaptığınız iş sizce hangi noktalarda yarar sağlıyor? Değiştirmek veya eklemek istediğiniz yönler var mı?

Bu kadar süredir bu kurumda deneyim edindiniz, işe ilk girdiğinizden şu ana mültecilerle çalışan STK alanında, kurumunuzda ve iş yükünüzde meydana gelen değişimlerden biraz bahsedebilir misiniz?

Kurumdaki süreciniz gelecek planlarınızı nasıl şekillendirdi? (Bu organizasyonda veya alanda çalışmaya devam etmek istiyor musun? Hangi nedenlerle?)

Bu kurumdan çıktıktan sonra başka bir kurumda iş bulmanın hangi yönlerle kolay hangi yönlerle zor olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

Peki, son olarak, bu kurumda ya da alanda çalışmayı başkalarına ne gibi yönlerle tavsiye edersiniz ve ne gibi nedenlerle tavsiye etmezsiniz?

Paylaşmak istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı?

Teşekkürler.

