

To Cite This Article: Kang, S. K. (2023). The impact of the influx of Syrian refugees on rural areas of Türkiye. *International Journal of Geography and Geography Education (IGGE)*, 50, 285-296. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32003/igge.1307204>

THE IMPACT OF THE INFLUX OF SYRIAN REFUGEES ON RURAL AREAS OF TÜRKİYE

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Abstract

The rapid and significant influx of Syrian refugees to Türkiye, has transformed rural communities in Türkiye significantly in terms of living space, social and economic aspects. This study was conducted through a time-series survey over approximately four years beginning in 2016. The study area selected for this study was Çukurkuyu town, situated within the Niğde province in the Central Anatolia region of Türkiye. We argue that over this time period, conflicts and frictions between locals and Syrian refugees changed in terms of the object and intensity of the conflicts over time. The community members in the study area experienced significant confusion and conflict in the early days following large influxes of Syrian refugees. However, as refugees gradually migrated to urban areas in large numbers, and living spaces became separated from local people, confusion and conflicts were alleviated. On the other hand, competition for employment with seasonal Turkish agricultural workers living in the same temporary residential areas and engaged in the same agricultural activities, and conflicts over wage decreases emerged.

Keywords: Syrian Refugees, Türkiye, Niğde Province, Temporary Residential Area, Seasonal Turkish Agricultural Workers

Öz

Suriyeli mültecilerin Türkiye'ye hızlı ve kitlesel bir şekilde akın etmesi, özellikle kırsal alanda yaşayanların hayatını sosyal ve ekonomik açıdan dönüşüme uğratmıştır. Çalışma alanı olarak İç Anadolu Bölgesi, Niğde İlinde yer alan Çukurkuyu Kasabası seçilmiştir. Bu çalışma, 2016 yılında başlayan ve yaklaşık dört yıl süren bir zaman serisi araştırması olarak yürütülmüştür. Bu süre zarfında, yerel halk ile Suriyeli mülteciler arasında tartışma ve sürtüşmelerin olduğu, ancak bu uyumsuzlukların nedenlerinin ve yoğunluğunun zaman içinde değiştiğini iddia etmekteyiz. Çalışma alanındaki Türk ve Suriyeli topluluk üyeleri, mültecilerin büyük göç dalgasının ilk günlerinde önemli ölçüde karışıklık ve çatışma yaşamıştır. Ancak çok sayıda mültecinin zamanla kentsel alanlara göç etmesi ve yaşam alanlarının yerel halktan ayrışmasıyla birlikte karışıklıklar ve çatışmalar hafiflemiştir. Diğer taraftan, Suriyeli mültecilerle aynı geçici yerleşim alanlarında yaşayan ve aynı tarımsal faaliyetlerle uğraşan mevsimlik Türk tarım işçileri arasında iş gücü rekabeti ve ücret düşüşü nedeniyle anlaşmazlıklar ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriyeli Mülteciler, Türkiye, Niğde İli, Geçici Yerleşim Alanı, Mevsimlik Türk Tarım İşçileri

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INTRODUCTION

Forced migration is defined as geographical displacement by which persons, families, or larger groups are forced to leave their homes and/or regions or countries due to actual or serious perceived negative threats (Barcus & Halfacree, 2018). Wood (1994), grouped various push factors into three categories that drive forced migration within three overlapping domains. Among the categories, political instability, war, and persecution were referred to as conditions usually blamed for causing refugees. Civil and cross-national wars regularly prompt sudden and massive migration flows (Barcus & Halfacree, 2018; Wood, 1994). In recent years, conflicts, civil wars, and wars have occurred around the world due to socioeconomic and political instability, which have caused many refugees to migrate across national borders.

In the decade since the Syrian civil war began in 2011, Türkiye has hosted the largest Syrian refugee population in the world. Based on the reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Turkish government, there are currently more than 3.72 million Syrian refugees registered in Türkiye, accounting for 65.7% of all Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2021b). After the initial influx of Syrian refugees into Türkiye, until early 2013 most of the Syrian refugees resided in Temporary Accommodation Centers (TACs) designed for them (İçduygu, 2015). However, currently, it is reported that less than 2% of Syrians are living in refugee camps (3RP, 2021). The background of Syrian refugees leaving the refugee camps and moving to other places in Türkiye is based on the fact that no one expected that the migration of Syrian refugees, who began to flow into Türkiye after April 2011, would continue on such a large scale for such a long period of time. By the end of 2013, Syrian refugee camps in Türkiye were full; however, the political situation in Syria continued to deteriorate and the conflict has shown no signs of abating. As a result, the number of Syrian refugees entering Türkiye has further increased. In response, the Turkish government enacted Türkiye's first-ever asylum law, the Law on Foreigners, and International Protection (No. 6458), in 2013. In addition, in 2014, the Regulations on Temporary Protection were adopted to provide basic social services for emergency and temporary protection to foreigners who were forced to leave and cannot return to their country of origin and stated their rights and obligations (Dedeoğlu and Bayraktar, 2019; Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2013; UNHCR, 2021a). As a result, until early 2013, most of the Syrian refugees lived in refugee camps; however, nearly half of them had moved out of the camps by early 2014. In addition, by the end of that year, approximately 80% of refugees who lived in the camps left and are now dispersed across Türkiye (İçduygu, 2015).

As Syrian refugees migrated out of the camps, voluntary economic activities to make a living began, and the number of Syrian refugees who began to work in the informal field reached 400,000 people. As the informal economic activity of Syrian refugees gradually increased, this caused significant socio-economic turmoil in Türkiye, so the Turkish government allowed Syrians, who are temporarily protected, the right to engage in economic activities in Türkiye under the "Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection" as of January 15, 2016. According to this regulation, Syrians who are registered as refugees and have stayed in Türkiye for at least six months can work at the request of their employer, with at least minimum wage, with an employment rate of one-tenth of the number of workers in the business (Erdoğan, 2019; Republic of Turkey, 2016). In this way, as the economic activities of Syrian refugees were legally recognized, refugees who became financially independent began to live together with family and relatives all over Türkiye. According to reports by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) and Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association (RASAS), the ratio of registered Syrians under temporary protection comprised 4.26% of the Turkish population as of December 31, 2020 (RASAS, 2021). Moreover, considering Syrians who illegally cross the Turkish border and live without registration, the proportion of the Syrian population in Türkiye is much higher. As such, people in Türkiye are experiencing a lot of confusion and conflict across society, economy, and culture as the acceptance of Syrian refugees, which began as humanitarian and temporary protection, has dramatically increased the number of refugees aiming for permanent residence along with an unexpectedly large influx of refugee populations (Erdoğan, 2019; Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015). The mentioned issues are being reported not only in Türkiye but also in Lebanon, a nation that is presently providing refuge to a significant number of Syrian refugees (Cherri et al., 2016; Christophersen et al., 2013; Government of Lebanon and United Nations, 2014; Holmes, 2015).

Agriculture is a very important sector that forms a large share of the national economy in Türkiye; it accounts for 6% of GDP, and 19% of the workforce is engaged in agriculture (Kang, 2022; OECD, 2019). However, half of the agricultural workers are

seasonal agricultural workers, and it is estimated that more than one million people make a living from seasonal agricultural work. In particular, poor rural residents in eastern and southeastern Anatolia regions, where land ownership is unbalanced, are mainly engaged in seasonal agricultural work and travel around Türkiye's agricultural-specialist regions with their families to undertake this work (Çelik et al., 2015; Kang, 2022; Öz & Bulut, 2013). However, with the recent influx of Syrian refugees, the agriculture sector has become one of the major sectors of economic activity for Syrian refugees, and as a result, the employment of Turkish seasonal agricultural workers in rural areas has begun to be replaced by Syrian refugees (Dedeoğlu & Bayraktar, 2019). In addition, as Syrian refugees began to reside in rural areas for agricultural labor, they affected not only the labor market, but also the living spaces of the local population, resulting in conflicts and friction.

Research about Syrian refugees in Türkiye to date has largely focused on refugee camps or urban areas surrounding the camps, and has mainly investigated the living environment and actual conditions of Syrian refugees, or identified and evaluated refugee policies (Azizi et al., 2021; Dedeoğlu & Bayraktar, 2019; Erdoğan, 2019; İçduygu, 2015; İçduygu & Şimşek, 2016; Kavak, 2016; Memisoglu & Ilgit, 2016; Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015; UNHCR, 2020). However, it is difficult to find a study that identifies and analyses the overall changes in a local community due to the influx of refugees in rural areas. Therefore, this study examines how the living space of a local community has been affected and changed during over time due to the influx of Syrian refugees focusing on a rural community in Türkiye.

THE STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study area selected for this study was Çukurkuyu town, situated within the Niğde province in the Central Anatolia region of Türkiye (Figure 1). The Niğde province is one of the regions that has accepted a significant number of immigrants from other countries in the past due to political, cultural, and religious reasons (Ağbaba, 2020). Moreover, it specializes in agriculture within Türkiye. Approximately 35.4% of the total land is agricultural land and 33.9% is pasture (Görü et al., 2016; Kang, 2022). The province produces the highest number of potatoes and the third-highest number of apples in Türkiye. In addition, it is a province with a very high agricultural production of vegetables and fruits such as cabbage, cherry, grapes, etc. (Görü et al., 2016; TÜİK, 2019). As of December 31, 2016, there were 3,216 Syrian refugees registered in Niğde province (Göç Politika ve Projeler Dairesi Başkanlığı, 2017). Since Niğde province is specialized in agriculture, most of the Syrian refugees who initially migrated to this province engaged in agricultural labor.

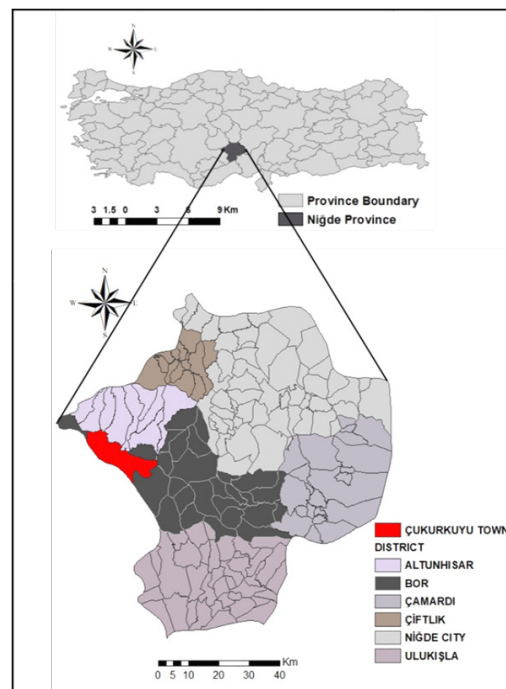


Figure 1: Location of the Study Area (Niğde Province, Türkiye).

Source: Map by the author (ArcGIS 10.2).

Çukurkuyu is a town where several Turkmen tribes immigrated and settled approximately 250-260 years ago (Kang, 2018; Şahin, 2005). The local economy is based on agriculture and livestock (Gönen, 2019). Especially for livestock, the nomadic Turkmen culture of moving livestock in summer and winter still continues in the town. The climate of this area is the typical Central Anatolia continental climate, but with the introduction of an irrigation system in 1991, it has become possible to cultivate fruit (apples, tomatoes, melons) and vegetables in large quantities (Kang, 2018). Currently, the town produces a total of 97-98 tons of apples, 10 tons of watermelon, 8 tons of melons, and 15 tons of tomatoes and peppers per year (Gönen, 2019). The total population of this town was 2,410 as of 2019. The total number of households was approximately 1,000; furthermore, 400 households live here only during the short summer period (Deveci & Gönen, 2017; Kang, 2022). As such, since the population is very small compared to the amount of agricultural production in this town, the shortage of agricultural labor is recognized as a serious social problem in this rural town. When Syrian refugees obtained work permits in 2016, the town accepted a large number of Syrian refugees as agricultural workers. In the early days of the influx of Syrian refugees, many Syrian refugees entered the town to make a living from agricultural labor. The town created a temporary residential area in the form of a camp about 1.7 km southeast of the town center to accommodate many seasonal agricultural workers who came to the town for jobs (Figure 2).

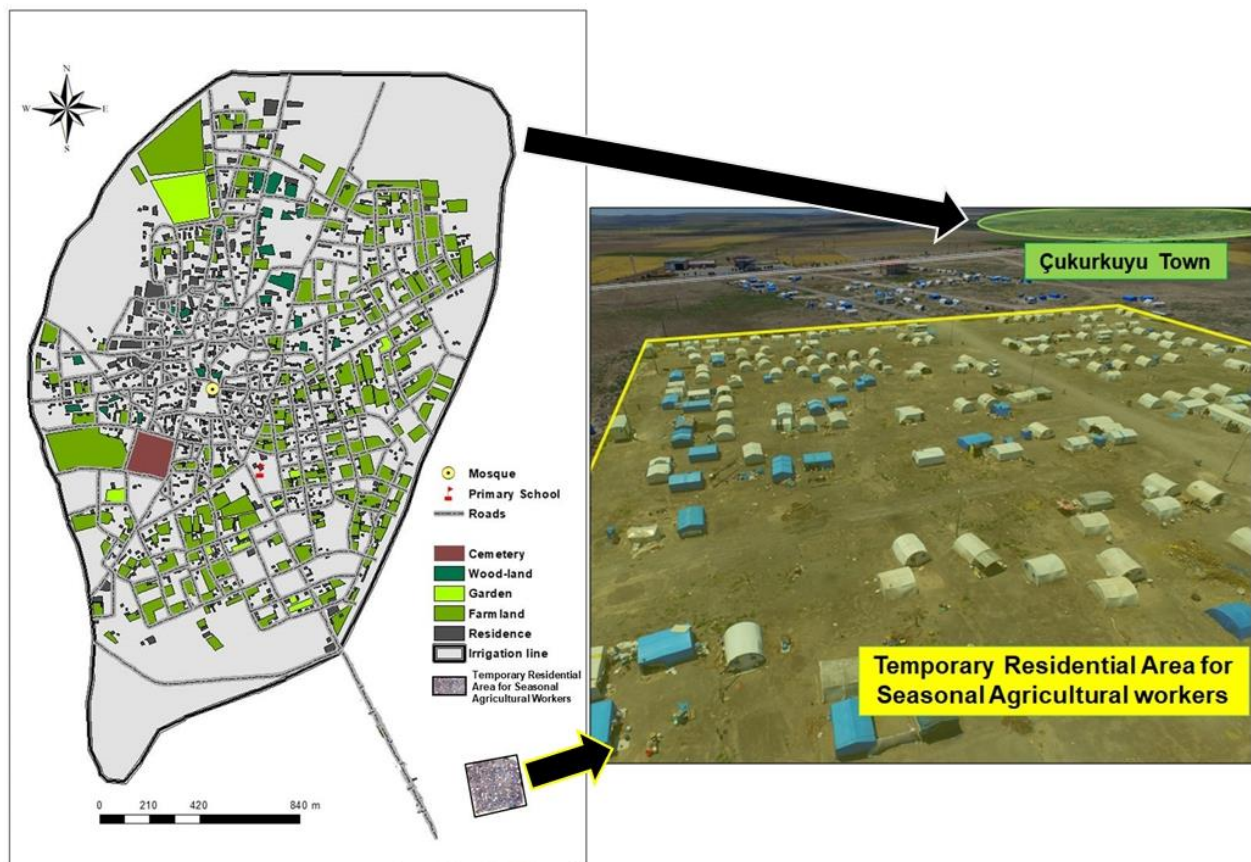


Figure 2: Location of Çukurkuyu town center and Temporary Residential Area for seasonal agricultural workers
Source: (Left) Mapping by the author (ArcGIS 10.2), (Right) Photographed by the author using a drone (June 2018).

Based on these changes, this study examines how this rural community has changed spatially, socially, and economically from October 2016 to June 2019 focusing specifically on the influx of Syrian refugees to this town as agricultural workers. The study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys and semi-structured, face to face in-depth interviews, as well as focus group interviews with Çukurkuyu town residents, Syrian refugees who migrated to the town, and Turkish seasonal agricultural workers. The interviews took approximately 30 minutes per person. In the field survey in October 2016,

the overall facts about the influx and residence of Syrian refugees and the current status of agricultural labor in the study site were examined. In September 2017, in-depth face-to-face interviews and observations with 35 Syrian refugees and 50 locals were conducted to examine changes in this community. In addition, in June 2018, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 Syrian refugees and 10 local residents. The location information of housing where Syrian refugees live in the town was obtained with Global Positioning System (GPS) measurements, and a bird's eye view of the temporary residence of seasonal agricultural workers was obtained with aerial photographs using drones. In June 2019, as the number of Syrian refugees living in this town decreased significantly, in-depth interviews were conducted with Turkish seasonal agricultural workers who live in the same temporary camp as Syrian refugees to examine the problems between them. Finally, to examine recent trends, in-depth interviews were carried out with four local residents in November 2021.

SPATIAL CHANGE IN THE TOWN

Since 2016, Syrian refugees began to enter the temporary residence area created for seasonal agricultural workers in the study area (Figure 2). At the time of the 2016 survey, approximately 100 to 120 temporary tents for Syrian seasonal agricultural workers were set up in the temporary residence area, and approximately 1,000 Syrian refugees lived there and made a living from seasonal agricultural labor. With this as an opportunity, the number of Syrian refugees began to gradually increase in this town, and between 2016 and 2017, Syrian refugees lived in dwellings in the center of town in approximately 60 households, as well as in the temporary residences (Figure 3). In this way, as refugees flowed into the center of town from the outskirts, conflict and friction began to emerge between the locals living in the town and Syrian refugees. As thefts, fights, and noises that continued until late at night caused by Syrian refugees became more frequent, the lives of the locals began to become unstable and uncomfortable, and the lives of the locals became restricted in space and time due to the refugees.

“It was fine when the refugees first came here, but after they settled in town, they began to get worse. They roam late at night, until morning. Besides, they fight a lot between themselves and with other Turkish workers in the camp. Refugees have left the neighborhood in a state with no peace.” (Male, farmer, 40's, September 2017)

“Refugees make our neighborhood very messy. Here is a very good town. Since refugees came here, the neighborhood has gotten very bad. I don't want Syrian refugees to live here.” (Male, local resident, 60's, September 2017)

“The image and security of the town have gotten very bad. Due to Syrian refugees, it is not possible to go out in the evening comfortably as before. We can't even go near where they live. This is my town, but I can't go out comfortably because of them.” (Male, local resident, 40's, September 2017)

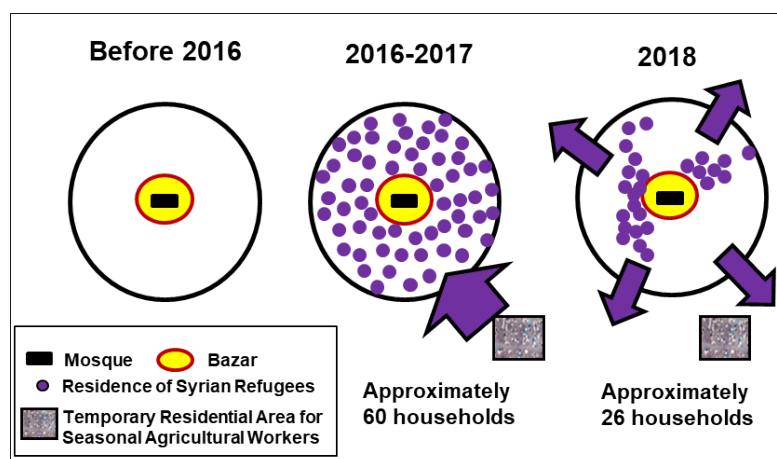


Figure 3: Interannual variability of Syrian refugee settlement in Çukurkuyu Town.

Source: Drawing by the author.

However, a field survey conducted in June 2018, a year later, showed that the response of the residents to Syrian refugees was different from the previous year. In 2018, the reaction of the locals, who had been outraged by the negative perception of Syrian refugees in the previous year, was hardly present. Many refugees had not adapted to the conservative community and migrated to urban areas to find new jobs with higher wages. At the time of the field study, only 26 households of Syrian refugees remained in the town (Figure 3).

“There are no big problems with Syrian refugees. There were many problems in the beginning, but now there are few Syrian refugees in the town. Furthermore, there is a shortage of workers, so it is fortunate that we can use them for labor.” (Male, local resident, 40’s, June 2018)

Most of the refugees engaged in seasonal agricultural work lived in the area of temporary residence geographically separated from the town. They were also like other seasonal agricultural workers in Türkiye transforming into seasonal agricultural workers who made a living by migrating to other regions looking for work. Their daily routine as seasonal agricultural workers involved a pattern of going to work on a farm in the town at 8 am and returning to their temporary residence located on the outskirts of the town at 5 pm (Figure 4). At the time of the 2018 survey, the working places and residences of the refugees were clearly separated from those of a year before. As the living space between the refugees and locals was separated, the conflict between them decreased, and the lives of locals regained stability.

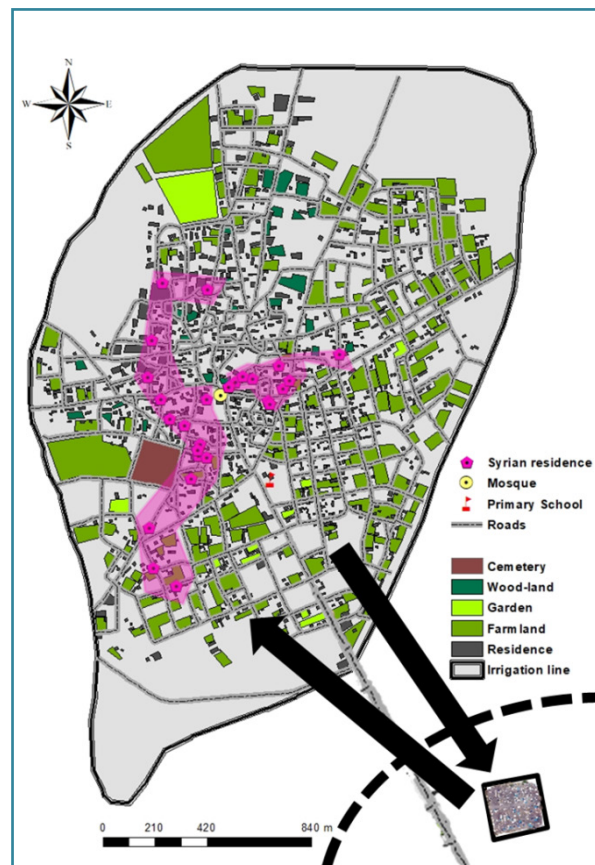


Figure 4: Daily movement pattern of refugees from the camp to the town for seasonal work.

Source: Mapping by the author (GPS, ArcGIS 10.2., Jun 2018).

A field survey in 2019 also showed that there was no significant conflict between locals and the refugees. However, the subject of conflict changed during this period. It was confirmed that the subject was conflict between the Turkish seasonal agricultural workers and the refugees living in the same temporary residential area. During the period of seasonal farming,

Turkish workers from the Southeastern Anatolia Region and the refugees live in tents in the same temporary residential area on the outskirts of the town. Turkish workers stated it was inconvenient for the refugees to live with them in the temporary housing area because the refugees played loud music late at night, frequently fought, and shouted in the temporary residential area.

ECONOMIC CHANGES IN THE TOWN

Changes in the economic sector caused by the influx of Syrian refugees into this town can be divided into two main categories. First, there were changes in the agricultural labor market. Before the influx of Syrian refugees, the seasonal agricultural labor force of this town was sourced from seasonal agricultural workers who migrated from the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Türkiye. However, after the Syrian refugees were granted work permits in 2016, farm owners in this town also began to hire Syrian refugees as seasonal agricultural workers, which significantly changed the town's agricultural labor market. At the beginning of the influx of Syrian refugees, the refugees began to do agricultural work through intermediaries called 'Çavuş', and since they worked long hours at a lower wage compared to the existing Turkish seasonal agricultural workers, many farm owners in this town replaced their seasonal agricultural workers with Syrian workers. This situation led to competition for employment with existing Turkish agricultural workers and lowered wages for seasonal agricultural work causing conflicts with Turkish workers. However, according to a field survey conducted in 2018, farm owners complained about the working behavior of Syrian refugee workers over time, despite their low wages.

"We hired Syrian refugees to harvest crops such as tomatoes and melons. When they began working, about 25 people did farm work, but now they require that 50 people need to be hired to do the same work. And, they don't even work hard. Many problems arise with our agricultural business. We cannot earn money by hiring them." (Male, farm owner, 40's, June 2018)

"There are no big problems living in the town with Syrian refugees. It is just that there is a shortage of workers here, so we have hired Syrian refugees. But they do not treat farm products carefully. So, many fruit trees get injured, which does a lot of damage. Now, we want to hire skilled Turkish workers, even though their wages are higher." (Male, farm owner, 50's, June 2018)

As such, when Syrian refugees were initially employed as agricultural workers, their inexperience led farm owners to view them as clumsy and to see their behavior at work as careless and as a cause of damage to the crops. In addition, they were seen to have insincere working attitudes and the heterogeneous language and cultural differences were negative factors for the town farmers who became reluctant to hire Syrian refugees as workers. Over time, some Syrian refugees who could not adapt to farming or who wanted to earn more money left the town and moved to the cities. As a result, the labor force also decreased significantly in this town, and employment difficulties occurred along with an increase in wages of workers. Reflecting this phenomenon, a field survey conducted in June 2019 a year later did not show much dissatisfaction with residents or farmers toward Syrian agricultural workers. However, while the locals' dissatisfaction with Syrians largely disappeared, it was confirmed that the complaints of Turkish seasonal agricultural workers who compete with them for jobs continue. They complained that after the Syrian refugees started to engage in farm work, they provided labor at very low prices, which also reduced their wages and jobs. Second, as Syrian refugees live in rural areas, it had a positive effect on the vacant house problem in this town. As mentioned above, approximately 40% of households in this town either use their houses here only during the hot summer periods, or they leave their houses without maintenance and live in other cities (Deveci & Gönen, 2017; Kang, 2022). Therefore, there were many vacant houses that were not managed in this town, which became a social problem. However, as the Syrian refugees began to migrate here, they began to rent out the vacant houses. At the time of the 2018 survey, there were 26 households of Syrian refugees living here with monthly rents of 200-300 TL (13 July 2018 currency exchange rates: € 35 ~ € 53), which played a positive role in the management of old vacant houses in this town. In terms of the rental of empty houses, most of the Syrian refugees were satisfied with the rental housing because they were able to use a large living space and even a small vegetable garden was possible in the rural area while paying a relatively low monthly rent (Photograph 1). Moreover, as

their place of residence was stabilized, the refugees began to engage not only in agriculture but also in construction and factory work which allowed them to receive higher wages.



Sources: Picture by the author (12. Jun.2018). Çukurkuyu town

Photograph 1: Houses rented by Syrian refugees.

SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE TOWN

At the time of the initial large-scale influx of Syrian refugees, the anxiety and dissatisfaction of residents in this town toward the refugees reached a peak. In a field survey in September 2017, all 50 residents interviewed answered that they did not want Syrian refugees to settle in the town.

“There are about 200 refugees living in this town, but they do things that are very shameful and dirty for men and women. We want them to leave this town.” (Male, local resident, 70’s, September 2017)

“I do not want Syrian refugees to live in my town. They make this town incredibly dirty. Even if we hire them, they don’t work hard. But our government subsidizes them and helps them live well. What do you want from us? This town was a very good place to live. I don’t want Syrians to live here.” (Male, local resident, 70’s, September 2017)

“Refugees eat as much as they want, move around, and earn money. But we are in a very difficult situation as farmers. They come to do farm work, and they don’t even work properly” (Male, local resident, 40’s, September 2017)

The EU works closely with the Turkish government to provide funding to help vulnerable refugees living in Türkiye. Since 2016, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program of the EU provides monthly cash assistance through EU-funded debit cards to help the refugees meet their daily needs. As for education, since 2017, the EU has also supported refugee families with school-aged children through bi-monthly cash transfers under the Conditional Cash Transfers for Education (CCTE) program (European Commission, 2021). In addition, Syrian refugees who have a high school diploma or have attended university can attend Turkish universities for free without entrance exams. Besides these, the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities provided scholarships, free accommodation, and university education to many Syrian students (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015). This fact was also confirmed by the Syrian refugees interviewed during the field survey in July 2018. However, these financial cash aids, education, and medical support for Syrian refugees also provided a relative sense of deprivation to vulnerable Turkish workers with similar social and economic status to these refugees.

The disparate culture, language and lifestyle of Syrian refugees in Türkiye are obstacles to promoting social integration (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015). Syrians, who account for 4.42% of the Turkish population, have a much lower level of general education

than the Turkish average; nearly half of them are either illiterate or never attended school (Erdoğan, 2019). To help these Syrian refugees adapt to Turkish society, the Turkish government and the EU CCTE program encouraged Syrian refugees to enroll in schools and provided financial and educational services (UNICEF, 2021). However, despite these efforts, a field survey conducted in September 2017 confirmed that most Syrian children do not attend school.

“There is one Syrian student at our school. But he just registers and does not come to school. It is said that last year the student came for about a semester to the school. It is said that the student didn’t come to school regularly even then, and he came when he wanted to, and didn’t come when he didn’t want to. Syrian students cannot speak Turkish. Teachers try to teach Syrian students, but because they can’t understand Turkish, it takes a lot of time to teach the student in basic Turkish, which interferes with other students’ lessons in the class. Syrian students also seem to come to play with friends rather than study. Instead of sending these Syrian students to local schools without any preparation, it is a necessity to prepare a school where Syrian students can learn basic Turkish and have teachers to teach them.” (Male, Teacher, 30’s September 2017)

As a result of examining the life of Syrian children who do not attend school in the temporary residential area, they were learning the Koran in Arabic, not Turkish, through a Syrian imam in a tent in a temporary residential area (Photograph 2).



Sources: Picture by the author (27. Jun 2018). Temporary residential area for seasonal agricultural workers located on the outskirts of Çukurkuyu town.

Photograph 2: A temporary tent school set up by a Syrian imam for Koran lessons in the temporary residential area.

During in-depth interviews with local residents conducted in November 2021 to examine recent trends, there were two major social issues related to Syrian refugees. First, the locals often see young Syrian girls being sent to other people for a bride price (*başlık parası*), which makes the local residents very uncomfortable and makes them feel resistant to Syrians. The second issue concerns the security and safety of the town. There are frequent thefts and fierce fighting by illegal immigrants who are not Syrians who have officially obtained refugee status from the Turkish government. As a result, even if theft or some accidents occur in the town, the incident cannot be resolved as personal information such as fingerprints of illegal immigrant Syrians are not registered. This is a serious threat to the safety of the town and has a negative impact.

CONCLUSIONS

Once the migrants have crossed an international border to a neighboring country, they will be re-settled or self-settle in the country. However, integration of high concentrations pose refugees into a new community is very complex and difficult issue (Barcus & Halfacree, 2018). As a result of the international political situation, Türkiye has accepted Syrian refugees, which represent approximately 4.2% of Türkiye’s population (as of December 31, 2020) (RASAS, 2021). This is the proportion of Syrian refugees who are officially registered with the Turkish government and the proportion is even higher when the numbers of Syrians who have illegally immigrated to Türkiye are taken into account. With the influx of massive numbers of refugees in

such a short period of time, people in Türkiye have experienced serious confusion and conflicts throughout society. Even in rural areas with a common cultural background and strong social interconnection among community members, changes in rural society emerged as a result of the influx of Syrian refugees.

This study investigated how the space, society, and economy of a Turkish rural community were changed and affected during a time series by the influx of Syrian refugees. The study area is a typical rural town in Türkiye, where immigrants with blood ties and tribal relations settled 250-260 years ago and formed a community based on nomadic lifestyle and agriculture. In 2016, approximately 1,000 Syrian refugees came to this town as seasonal agricultural workers. With many migrants arriving at once, frequent fights and disturbances occurred in the town, and the living space of the locals was reduced and restricted by the refugees wandering around the town until late at night with increases in theft. As such, as the living space of the locals was reduced and the safety of the locals in the town was also threatened, defense mechanisms began to work among the locals to maintain the existing local community. The locals began to drive the refugees out of their living spaces, and as a result, most of the refugees moved to a temporary residential area on the outskirts of town, and the living spaces of locals and refugees began to separate. At the same time, there was also a phenomenon of refugees in the town moving from rural to urban areas. Many refugees either did not adapt to the society, economy, and culture of the town, or they left the town and moved to cities to find better jobs. In this way, the living space between locals and refugees was separated, and only a few refugees who adapted to rural life and the community culture began to settle, and the town began to regain stability. These few refugees began to settle in vacant houses that were neglected in this town and played a positive role in managing vacant houses in the town. This also brought economic benefits from rental fees. From the perspective of the refugees, these houses were a great help in resolving their housing issues because the whole family was able to live comfortably in a large residential space with low rent, which was impossible in urban areas. Except for a few settlers, most of the Syrian refugees performed agricultural work while living in the temporary residential area in this town only during the busy harvest season, like Turkish seasonal agricultural workers, and became seasonal agricultural workers who moved to other regions after the harvest. In Türkiye, over one million Turks work in seasonal migrant agricultural work. During the seasonal agricultural work, Syrian refugees entered the temporary residential areas where the Turkish workers lived, which also caused many conflicts between Turkish workers and Syrian refugees. The conflicts can be divided into three main categories. First, there were conflicts in the living space caused by refugees who listened to loud music until late at night or frequently fought with each other. Second, there was economic conflict. Turkish workers lost their jobs as a result of the competition with refugees for employment, or because refugees worked for slightly lower wages than Turkish workers. This increased anxiety among Turkish workers. Finally, there was social conflict. Turkish seasonal agricultural workers have a vulnerable social and economic status in Türkiye. They work at the same agricultural jobs as refugees, but they do not receive any internal and external subsidies or financial support such as cash aid like Syrian refugees. This situation caused the Turkish workers to feel a sense of relative deprivation, alienation, and discrimination, and furthermore, it led to dissatisfaction with the government. Indeed, the influx of Syrian refugees employed as agricultural workers played a somewhat positive role in supplementing the agricultural labor shortage of the town. However, the refugees were unskilled, had insincere labor practices, and the heterogeneous languages and cultures are still problems to be resolved as agricultural workers. As a result, farm owners in the town tended to prefer Turkish agricultural workers to the refugee workers, even though they were able to hire the refugees at lower wages than Turkish agricultural workers. In addition, when Syrian refugees migrate to rural areas as seasonal agricultural workers, many Syrians who illegally entered Türkiye without registering as refugees also come to rural areas. As a result, until recently, crimes such as theft and fighting occurred in the town and it was confirmed that these crimes involving unregistered refugees are quite difficult to resolve. Since these social problems are directly related to national security not only in rural areas but also in the entire region of Türkiye, it remains a social issue that the Turkish government should give serious consideration to resolving in the future.

The Syrian refugees living in rural areas are also provided with financial aid, education, and medical services. Schools are the most important places for refugees to contact members of the community and can play an important role in building relationships that support social solidarity (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, the refugees do not actively participate in education. Because of their lack of education, the staff in charge of living, educational, and medical services in the local

community experienced difficulties in communicating with the refugees. This has resulted in a delay in overall services in the local community, and it was confirmed that complaints were prevalent among locals. In order for refugees to live with locals in rural areas where traditional cultures and social solidarity are strong, it is necessary to understand the characteristics and culture of the local community and make efforts to adapt to the local society. The irresponsible behaviors of refugees, who consider rural areas to be transitional places with no sense of belonging make locals uncomfortable, and hence, negative perceptions and rejection of refugees grow among the locals.

AUTHOR STATEMENT

The paper was written by a single author. I would like to thank Associate Prof. Muhammed Zeynel ÖZTÜRK of Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University, who helped me take drone photography while carrying out this study. In addition, I would like to sincerely thank Assistant Prof. Derya AĞBABA of Samsun University and the students of the department of geography at Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University in Türkiye, who actively participated in the fieldwork with me during approximately four years of this study.

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