Syrian Women in Lebanon and Turkey

Assessing the Impact of Conflict and Identity on Civic Participation

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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of war and displacement on the civic participation and feminist activism of Syrian women. Relying on feminist methodologies that prioritize women's experiences and perspectives and theories of intersectionality and multiple critique (Cooke 2001), combined with Derrida's notion of hostipitality (2000), it demonstrates the intersectional diversity of civically engaged Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey during the period (2011-2018). Additionally, it reveals how these women challenge various political and social limitations placed on their civic activism by host societies and their own communities. In doing so, this thesis critically addresses the homogenizing and victimizing narratives that have dominated post-2011 research on Syrian refugee women, and opens up possibilities to reframe perceptions of them in the post war context, showcasing their strength and resilience rather than portraying them as mere victims in conflict situations.

The thesis employs ethnographic methods to conduct 80 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Syrian women, men, and experts in Lebanon and Turkey in 2018. Using a comparative case study approach, it examines the differing official policy responses of the Lebanese and Turkish governments to the Syrian refugee crisis and assesses their impact on the civic engagement of Syrian women. The analysis reveals an overall increase in civic participation among interviewed Syrian women after the war, along with a more nuanced understanding of civil society organizations (CSOs) and their roles. Additionally, the intersectional lens identifies several key social categories that shape the civic participation of Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey. These categories include gender, marital status, ethnic or national identity, socioeconomic status, education, religion, residency status, and urban or rural background. Importantly, these categories were not predetermined; they emerged through an inductive analysis of the collected data.

Despite their diverse identities and varying circumstances of displacement in different host environments, this thesis clarifies how these contexts interact with Syrian women's identities in distinct ways, resulting in different forms of civic activism. For example, in Lebanon, higher levels of host 'hostipitality' led to a more restricted and elitist form of activism, primarily driven by displaced Syrian women from educated, urban, upper socioeconomic backgrounds who had the resources to navigate the limitations they faced. In contrast, Turkey, which provided a less hostile environment

for Syrians and Islamic organisations, fostered a more grassroots form of Syrian activism, prominently featuring young women from less privileged backgrounds as well as Islamist Syrian women.

The narratives of the interviewed Syrian women presented in the thesis illustrate how their civic activism since 2011 has empowered them, positively impacting their private lives and providing them with opportunities to challenge the discrimination they face from their hosts. Furthermore, findings presented in this thesis on the growth and diversity of Syrian women's feminist activism and awareness since 2011 provide a valuable context for understanding current local debates regarding Syrian women's roles following Syria's recent liberation from over 50 years of Asad rule and Baathist policies which placed limitations on feminist activism in Syria. Another key contribution of this thesis is its theoretical framework and combined use of hostipitality, intersectionality, and multiple critique. The analysis demonstrates that combining these concepts is particularly beneficial when studying Arab women in conflict and hosting contexts, as collectively they provide a more comprehensive understanding of identity. Together, these concepts not only emphasise the significance of identity in shaping host policies and influencing the experiences of refugees in hosting contexts. They also allow us to move from a more passive understanding of Arab women's intersectional identities to a more dynamic one that captures acts of resistance.

Keywords: Conflict, gender, civil activism, feminist theory, multiple critique, intersectionality, hostipitality, refugee policies, forced migration, Syrian women, Arab women.

Kurzfassung

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Auswirkungen von Krieg und Vertreibung auf die zivilgesellschaftliche Partizipation und den feministischen Aktivismus syrischer Frauen. Gestützt auf feministische Methoden, die die Erfahrungen und Perspektiven von Frauen in den Vordergrund stellen, sowie auf Theorien der Intersektionalität und der „multiple critique" multiplen Kritik (Cooke 2001), kombiniert mit Derridas Begriff der „hostipitality" (2000), zeigt sie die Vielfalt der zivilgesellschaftlich engagierten syrischen Frauen im Libanon und in der Türkei während des Zeitraums (2011-2018). Darüber hinaus wird aufgezeigt, wie diese Frauen verschiedene politische und soziale Einschränkungen herausfordern, die ihrem zivilgesellschaftlichen Engagement sowohl von der Aufnahmegesellschaft als auch von ihren eigenen Gemeinschaften (Familien, religiöse Gemeinschaften und die syrische Gemeinschaft) auferlegt werden. Damit setzt sich diese Arbeit kritisch mit den homogenisierenden und viktimisierenden Narrativen auseinander, die die Forschung über syrische Flüchtlingsfrauen nach 2011 dominiert haben, und eröffnet Möglichkeiten, die Wahrnehmung dieser Frauen nach 2011 neu zu gestalten, indem sie ihre Stärke und Widerstandsfähigkeit hervorhebt, anstatt sie als bloße Opfer in Konfliktsituationen darzustellen.

Diese Arbeit nutzt ethnografische Methoden, um 80 ausführliche, halbstrukturierte Interviews mit syrischen Frauen, Männern und Experten im Libanon und der Türkei im Jahr 2018 zu führen. Mithilfe eines vergleichenden Fallstudienansatzes werden die unterschiedlichen offiziellen politischen Reaktionen der libanesischen und türkischen Regierungen auf die syrische Flüchtlingskrise untersucht und ihre Auswirkungen auf das bürgerschaftliche Engagement syrischer Frauen bewertet. Die Analyse zeigt, dass die befragten syrischen Frauen nach dem Krieg insgesamt stärker an der Zivilgesellschaft teilgenommen haben und ein differenzierteres Verständnis von zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen (CSOs) und ihrer Rolle entwickelt haben, als in der bisherigen Forschung angenommen wurde. Darüber hinaus identifiziert die intersektionale Sichtweise mehrere soziale Schlüsselkategorien, die die Bürgerbeteiligung syrischer Frauen im Libanon und in der Türkei beeinflussen. Zu diesen Kategorien gehören Geschlecht, Familienstand, ethnische oder nationale Identität, sozioökonomischer Status, Bildung, Religion, Aufenthaltsstatus und städtischer oder ländlicher Hintergrund. Wichtig ist, dass diese Kategorien nicht im

Voraus festgelegt wurden; sie ergaben sich aus einer induktiven Analyse der gesammelten Daten.

Trotz der verschiedenen Identitäten und der unterschiedlichen Umstände der Vertreibung wird in dieser Arbeit deutlich, wie diese Kontexte auf unterschiedliche Weise mit den Identitäten der syrischen Frauen interagieren, was zu verschiedenen Formen des bürgerschaftlichen Engagements in den Aufnahmeländern führt. Im Libanon beispielsweise führte ein höheres Maß an „hostipitality“ (Derridas 2000), zu einer eingeschränkteren und elitären Form des Aktivismus, der vor allem von vertriebenen syrischen Frauen aus gebildeten, städtischen und gehobenen sozioökonomischen Verhältnissen vorangetrieben wurde, die über die nötigen Ressourcen verfügten, um die ihnen auferlegten Einschränkungen zu überwinden. Im Gegensatz dazu förderte die Türkei, die ein weniger feindseliges Umfeld für Syrer bot, eine basisorientiertere Form des syrischen Aktivismus, an der vor allem junge Frauen aus benachteiligten Verhältnissen sowie islamistische syrische Frauen beteiligt waren.

Die Erzählungen der interviewten syrischen Frauen, die in dieser Arbeit vorgestellt werden, veranschaulichen, wie zivilgesellschaftlicher Aktivismus sie seit 2011 stärkt, sich positiv auf ihr Privatleben auswirkt und ihnen die Möglichkeit gibt die Diskriminierung durch ihre Gastgeber zu bekämpfen. Darüber hinaus bieten die in dieser Arbeit präsentierten Ergebnisse über das Wachstum und die Vielfalt des feministischen Aktivismus syrischer Frauen seit 2011 einen wertvollen Kontext für das Verständnis der aktuellen lokalen Debatten in Syrien über die Rolle der syrischen Frauen nach der jüngsten Befreiung Syriens von der über 50-jährigen Asad-Herrschaft und der Baath-Politik, die den feministischen Aktivismus in Syrien einschränkte. Ein weiterer wichtiger Beitrag dieser Arbeit ist ihr theoretischer Rahmen und die kombinierte Verwendung von „hostipitality“ (Derridas 2000), Intersektionalität und „multiple critique“ (Cooke 2001). Die Analyse zeigt, dass die Kombination dieser Konzepte besonders bei der Untersuchung arabischer Frauen in Konflikt- und Aufnahmekontexten von Vorteil ist, da sie zusammen ein umfassenderes Verständnis von Identität ermöglichen. Gemeinsam unterstreichen diese Konzepte nicht nur die Bedeutung der Identität für die Gestaltung der Aufnahmepolitik und die Beeinflussung der Erfahrungen von Flüchtlingen in Aufnahmekontexten, sie ermöglichen es uns auch, von einem eher passiven Verständnis der intersektionalen Identitäten

arabischer Frauen zu einem dynamischeren Verständnis überzugehen, das die Akte des Widerstands erfasst.

Stichworte: Konflikt, Gender, Zivilgesellschaft, feministischer Aktivismus, Intersektionalität, hostipitality, multiple critique, Flüchtlingspolitik, Zwangsmigration, syrische Frauen, arabische Frauen.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Bashar Hassan Almounajjed (1952–2023). The man who taught me how to fall in love with Syria and its people, to be proud of my heritage and who I am, to believe that I could achieve anything I set my mind to, to remain steadfast during a storm, and most importantly, the most loving and supportive father a daughter could wish for.

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Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
GO-NGOs	Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organisations
HTS	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JCI	Junior Chamber International
MoPH	Lebanese Ministry of Public Health
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
SCSOs	Syrian Civil Society Organisations
SEBC	Syrian Enterprise and Business Center
SLC	Syrian League for Citizenship
UN	The United Nations
UNHCR	The UN Refugee Agency
The Union	The General Union of Syrian Women
UNRWA	The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.
UN Women	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

List of Arabic Terms

Al-mojtamaa al-ahli	'Native/Kinship Society': an alternative form of voluntary association found in Arab countries that is based on familial or tribal ties. Members of these groups can be relatives, or belong to the same village or neighbourhood; they share a common identity, relation, or kinship that is a prerequisite for being part of the group; they are therefore identity-based entities, for example, religious charity organisations.
Al-mojtamaa al-madani	'Civil Society': individual choice, not identity, is the basis for belonging to these groups; they are secular; and are made of up citizens with different religious beliefs, origins, ages, genders etc.[1]
Hijab	A form of dress worn by Muslim women that typically covers the head and hair, but not the face.
Jameiyat	A term used to refer to registered associations in Syria and Lebanon.
Kafeel	A sponsor: In Lebanon, it refers to a sponsorship system in which Lebanese citizens sign a pledge of responsibility for migrant workers and vouching for them during their stay (Linn 2020).
Nakba	Catastrophe
Shia	Branch of Islam
Sunni	Branch of Islam

[1] The definitions for Al-mojtamaa al-ahli and Al-mojtamaa al-madani are based on definitions found in the 2016 first edition of the 'Citizenship Handbook: "Theoretical Section" edited by the Syrian League for Citizenship.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

More than a decade has passed since the Arab Spring's anti-governmental protests swept across several Arab countries reaching Syria on March 15th, 2011. What began as peaceful protests demanding regime change in the city of Daraa in Southern Syria quickly aggravated into a full-fledged civil war fuelled by the violent response of the Syrian government to the protests and the direct involvement of other countries including Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States. By 2022, the ongoing violence had claimed an estimated 306,887 civilian Syrian lives (UN Human Rights 2023) and an additional 130,000 Syrians are still missing (International Committee of the Red Cross 2023). More devastatingly, the civil conflict led to one of the largest global displacement crises worldwide, with more than half of the Syrian population being forced to leave their homes, seeking refuge internally in other Syrian cities or abroad. In addition to Germany, which is home to approximately 850,000 Syrian refugees, the majority of externally displaced[2] Syrians fled to neighbouring countries including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (UNHCR 2024b). An estimated 3.3 million Syrians live in Turkey, making it the top country in the world for hosting the greatest number of Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2024b). Lebanon ranks second with an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2024a).

Findings presented in this thesis are based on research conducted in 2018 when the ruling Asad regime was still in power. However, a few weeks before the final submission, an unexpected turn of events led to the fall of Bashar al Asad and the conclusion of fourteen years of civil war. Beginning on November 27, 2024, a coalition of Syrian opposition forces led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), based in the city of Idlib, initiated an offensive against government forces. Within a few days, these forces successfully captured the city of Aleppo, followed by Hama and Homs. Ultimately, the opposition troops reached the capital, Damascus, and declared Syria liberated from

[2] This thesis uses the term 'displaced' to refer to cross-border displacement due to armed conflict and its consequences and not to internal displacement. It is used to refer to any Syrian who fled from Syria after 2011 because of conflict, and headed to neighbouring Lebanon or Turkey regardless of their official status in these host countries. As such, 'Displaced Syrians' is used to describe Syrians who are 'refugees' according to the 1951 United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees which defines a refugee as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (p.3), and to 'temporarily displaced persons', 'guests', migrant workers, tourists and illegal migrants or unregistered Syrian refugees in Lebanon or Turkey.

53 years of Asad family rule on December 8, 2024. They encountered minimal resistance from government forces, as Bashar al Asad and his family had fled to Moscow before their arrival, where they were granted political asylum. Since then, global news report on the thousands of Syrian refugees making their way back home from Lebanon and Turkey despite the uncertainty of Syria's political future after the takeover, and the numerous socioeconomic and political challenges that await them in a country wrecked by war (Aljazeera 2024a; Durgham 2024).

By putting an end to the ongoing conflict, these recent events have not only altered the political situation in Syria, but also the relevance of findings presented in this thesis which focuses on examining the experiences of civically active[3] displaced Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey after 2011. Based on qualitative methods and research conducted in 2018 in Lebanon and Turkey, this thesis attempts to understand how conflict and displacement experiences have shaped and altered Syrian women's civic engagement after 2011. It focuses on Syrian women who were involved in various forms of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including Lebanese, Turkish, and Syrian Civil Society Organisations (SCSOs), and also INGOs operating in these host countries with projects supporting Syrian refugees. Living in displacement, Syrians not only benefited from support provided by various CSOs and INGOs but also formed their own organisations to support their community. Certainly, the numbers and activities of civil organisations in the host countries grew to meet the needs of the rapidly growing refugee populations after 2011, the majority of whom settled in urban areas of Lebanon and Turkey after 2011 (Yassin 2019).

While this research uses the term 'Syrian women' in defining its focus group[4], it adopts a critical stance towards essentialist representations of displaced Syrian women after 2011 that overlook their diversity and homogenise them into a single group of 'Syrian women refugees', or tend to victimise them because of their gender (Couldrey and Peebles 2018; Yamaner 2021), or both (Syrian Center for Policy Research 2023; Muhanna-Matar 2022; Nasser-Eddin and Mhaissen 2020). The fact that displaced

[3] 'Civically active' is used to describe interview participants who when interviewed were participating consistently for at least six months as volunteers, employees or founders of various forms of local (Lebanese/Turkish), Syrian, or International Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).
[4] During the interviews, 'Syrian women' was the term used by the majority of participants to refer to their themselves and their group while describing overall conditions in displacement, which is why I have chosen to use it in this thesis.

Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey, rather than men, are primarily responsible for visiting humanitarian organizations to seek aid reinforces the perception of these women as victims of war and cements the image of the refugee Syrian woman seeking 'charity' for her family (Özden & Ramadan, 2019). While women in conflict and refuge situations can be exposed to a number of gender-related risks – such as increased exposure to violence, rape, early marriage, and human trafficking (Mazurana and Proctor 2013), and highlighting these risks is important to ensure that sufficient measures are in place to protect women in conflict situations, focusing only on their vulnerability can deny their agency in such situations. Originating from an Arab and predominantly Islamic country, Syrian women face the additional bias of being regarded as powerless objects that are victims of various entities and structures including male dominance/patriarchy, colonialism, religion, and familial structures (Mohanty 1984). Furthermore, as their displacement continues in Lebanon and Turkey, they are subjected to increasing stigmatisation in various discourses from both host contexts, being variously described as backward, unhygienic, or a threat to family unity (Yamaner 2021).

Instead, findings presented in this thesis emphasise the individuality of experience of the women in its sample by using intersectional perspectives to analyse their experiences and to uncover how multiple social markers that make up their identities interacted with their host country contexts to shape their civic participation. In describing their civic participation, findings also demonstrate the many ways in which displaced Syrian women resist exclusion and discrimination in host contexts. These findings open up possibilities for revisioning Syrian women in the post-2011 context, and for research that does not victimise them but instead demonstrates their strength, resilience, and how their conflict experiences have empowered them in different ways.

In 2018, 80 in-depth interviews were conducted by myself in Lebanon and Turkey. Interview participants were purposefully selected, and included primarily Syrian women and a smaller number of Syrian men who were involved in various forms of Syrian and host CSOs as volunteers, staff, or founders (sample details are provided in Chapter 4 on Research Design and Methods). As the sample included host CSOs, interviews with Turkish and Lebanese nationals were also interviewed to collect host perspectives on the participation of Syrian women within their organisations and the challenges they faced. Expert interviews with government officials and researchers

from research institutes and universities in Lebanon and Turkey were also conducted to elucidate refugee policies.

In conducting the analysis, this thesis adopts a comparative case study approach to examine Lebanon and Turkey's responses to the Syrian refugee crisis, considering political, economic, and social dimensions, and how these combine to influence the civic participation of the sampled Syrian women in each context vary greatly in terms of their political and demographic structures. Chapter Two of this thesis demonstrates how the political histories of Syria with its neighbours Lebanon and Turkey, along with each host country's position towards refugee rights, have shaped their official responses to the Syrian refugee crisis that began in 2011. Thus, a comparative approach is particularly interesting because it reveals the impacts of different refugee policies and host living conditions on refugee women escaping the same conflict during the same period. Both Lebanon and Turkey do not acknowledge the status of Syrian refugees according to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, however, each chose to adopt very different policy approaches when responding to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011. The Turkish government chose to follow a 'top-down' approach, assuming primary responsibility for the refugees, building camps along the Turkish border, welcoming them as 'guests', and as the crisis prolonged placing emphasis on integration policies. Lebanon, on the other hand, shifted responsibility for Syrian refugees to INGOs and the civil society sector, refused to set up camps to shelter them, and was quick to create policies to limit the number of Syrian refugees by making it harder for them to enter the country or remain. By 2018, social, political, and economic conditions in both countries were rather hostile or inhospitable towards Syrian refugees.

In constructing its theoretical framework, this thesis draws on theories of 'hostipitality' (Derrida 2000; O'Gorman 2006) to form a comparative understanding of the inhospitable or exclusionary practices in host environments and structures towards 'guests' or persons seeking refuge from the violence of conflict; and feminist postcolonial theories and intersectional methodologies (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 2000; Collins and Bilge 2016; Lykke 2010; Mohanty 1984) to understand how the identities of the sampled Syrian women interact with host contexts to shape their civic participation. As stated above, this research is not only concerned with capturing the identity-based exclusion, or social and political hostility, against civically active Syrian

women in host contexts. It is also concerned with countering representations of the powerlessness of Syrian refugee women by underlining their responses to host hostility and the strategies they use to contest marginalization. As such, in this thesis, intersectionality is used not only to uncover experiences of identity-based discrimination among the sampled women but also instances where their identities were a source of power or advantage, enabling their civic participation. The use of intersectional frameworks is augmented by Cooke's (2000) notion of multiple critique to capture the acts of resistance by different Syrian women in host countries when they attempt to contest and overcome discrimination, criticise host communities, and even form strategic alliances that may seem contradictory (Cooke 2000). In a hosting and refuge context, like the one under consideration in this study, these different theoretical approaches combine to present a more holistic framing of identity and the role it plays in constructing exclusionary host practices, in shaping refugee experiences in host contexts, and in refugee acts of resistance or responses to exclusion.

Central Research Questions & Contributions

This thesis combines the above-mentioned theoretical underpinnings to answer the following main question: How has conflict and consequential displacement to Lebanon and Turkey shaped Syrian women's civic engagement in these host countries during the period 2011-2018?

It is guided by the following specific research questions:

- Is there evidence of change in the overall civic participation of sampled Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey compared to before 2011?
- What role do refugee policies, social attitudes, and civic environments in each host country play in shaping displaced Syrian women's civic participation? How do these interact with the identities of displaced Syrian women to shape their civic participation differently in Lebanon and Turkey?
- How do different Syrian women from this sample resist and contest the exclusionary practices that confront them in host contexts?

Postconstructionist feminist understandings of 'feminist objectivity' and a feminist critical realist ontology guide the analysis of interviews. They are used to comprehend how displaced Syrian women navigate different host contexts, overcome legal

challenges and xenophobic attitudes that limit their civic engagement, and make use of new opportunities in host countries that were not available to them in Syria. The study uses several qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and field diary notes kept by the researcher, who herself is a Syrian woman displaced from Damascus in 2011. These methods were chosen as they prioritize women's experiences and perspectives, and allow for capturing differences in their experiences. In addition, the study places great importance on the perspectives of Syrian women, as reflected in the use of participant quotes in the following chapters.[5]

By sharing their stories, this research shows how interviewed Syrian women actively sought to counter patriarchal forces and social pressures, and negotiate a growing space for themselves in public life through their participation in civil society. It adds to research that explores Arab women's agency in conditions of conflict and displacement and contributes to the growing body of post-2011 intersectional research on Syrian women (Ayoub 2017; Knappert et al. 2018; Yamaner 2021; Bartels et al. 2021; Linn 2020; Nasser-Eddin and Mhaissen 2020). This research also contributes to the limited number of studies that have focused on the participation of Syrian women in civil society since the outbreak of war in 2010 (Al Munajed 2020; Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2019; Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 2017), and demonstrates how gender, marital status, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, religion, residency status, urban/rural background and age influence the civic participation of sampled Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey. The social identity markers identified in this research were not predetermined; they emerged from an inductive analysis of the collected data which identified them as the key social categories influencing civic participation in host contexts. By following this method of analysis, the research was able to examine intersections among a wider range of social categories than previous studies, and highlight neglected categories like 'urban/rural background' in studies of

[5] The individuals who were interviewed for this thesis have been protected by anonymizing their identities through the use of pseudonyms. However, one exception was made with Sabah Hallak, who is a lifelong feminist activist from Syria and was interviewed in Lebanon. She gave me permission to disclose her identity in this thesis. To assist the readers in understanding the context of the responses, Appendix VII contains a table with additional information on the quoted interviewees.

Syrian women. The influence of these categories and their relevance in each country context are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Chapter Overview

Having outlined the purpose of this thesis and its main research questions, this final section of the introduction provides an abridged summary of the chapters that follow that can be broadly divided into two parts.

The first part (Chapters Two to Four) begins by presenting a summary of key political histories between Syria and neighbouring Turkey and Lebanon with the purpose of demonstrating how these histories influenced each host country's political and social responses to the Syrian refugee crisis of 2011, and also to clarify the influence of different identity markers, like ethnicity, nationality and residency status in each context. Tracking changes in policy over the period 2011-2018 in both Lebanon and Turkey, Chapter 2 also demonstrates how policies became increasingly restrictive and hostile towards Syrian refugees during this period, while social hostility and discrimination by host communities also rose. Chapter Three outlines the main theoretical underpinnings of the research. Derrida's concept of hostipitality (2000), intersectionality, and Cooke's (2001) notion of multiple critique are combined to theorise relationships between the intersectional identities of civically engaged displaced Syrian women and their host contexts. Chapter Four details the research design and qualitative methods used to answer the research questions. Together these three chapters theoretically and historically contextualise the empirical findings of this research that are presented in the chapters that follow.

The second part of this thesis (Chapters Five to Seven) presents the main empirical findings of this research and demonstrates changes in Syrian women's civic engagement in displacement contexts during 2011-2018. The voices of Syrian women from the sample are prominently featured in these chapters, and are supported by an extensive literature review of studies conducted on Syrian refugees and Syrian women in both contexts during the same period. Chapter 5 on the Civil Society Context (2000-2018) compares the experiences of displaced civically active Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey, and allows us to better understand how different host policies are shaping the civic engagement of displaced Syrian women in these contexts. Chapter 6 focuses on demonstrating changes in Syrian women's feminist

consciousness and activism, connecting these changes to their identities and gender norms in each context. Chapter 7 re-engages with the main theoretical concepts used in this thesis - hostipitality, intersectionality, and multiple critique - to present cross-cutting themes from the empirical evidence presented in Chapters 2, 5, and 6. Finally, the Conclusion chapter highlights the main contributions of this research and its usefulness for future research on Arab or Islamic women in forced displacement contexts.

Chapter 2: Seeking Refuge among Neighbours: Political Histories (1918-2010) & Policy Responses to the Syrian Refugee Crisis (2011-2020)

After fourteen years after the onset of conflict, the Syrian refugee crisis remains the world's largest. Out of the estimated 22 million Syrians living in Syria in 2011, over 14 million were forcibly displaced inside and outside Syrian borders (UNHCR 2024b). In early 2011, when the violence of civil conflict intensified, thousands of Syrians began crossing borders to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Today, an estimated five million Syrians live in neighbouring Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon (UNHCR 2024c). Combined, Lebanon and Turkey - the countries considered in this research, host almost 80 percent of displaced Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. With an estimated 3.2 million Syrian refugees spread across its large territories, Turkey hosts the greatest number of Syrian refugees globally (UNHCR 2024c). Lebanon which shares borders with the states of Israel and Syria, hosts an estimated 775,000 Syrian refugees after the 2011 Syrian refugee crisis (UNHCR 2024c), in addition to already hosting an additional half a million Palestinian refugees (UNRWA 2022). Women and children constituted the vast majority (81%) of registered displaced Syrians at the UNHCR in Lebanon (Yassin 2018, 23). Geographically a relatively small country, Lebanon was still recovering from the mass destruction of a 15-year civil war (1975-1990) when large numbers of Syrian refugees crossed over, and felt the impact on its infrastructure and socioeconomic resources much more compared to Turkey.

The pressure of providing for large numbers of refugees, in addition to long and complicated political histories with neighbouring Syria, shaped each host country's policy response towards the sudden arrival of large numbers of Syrian refugees in 2011. The following sections provide an overview of key events from Syrian/Lebanese and Syrian/Turkish political histories. Besides describing the living context of displaced Syrians in Lebanon and Turkey during the period 2011-2018, they highlight connections between political history and the differing Syrian refugee policy responses adopted in each of these hosting contexts after 2011. Moreover, applying an intersectional approach to examine Syrian women's civic participation in host countries necessitates first forming an understanding of the social construction of displaced Syrian women vis-à-vis their host communities. Common political histories help us understand how Lebanese and Turkish host and refugee populations construct

differences in identity, and how each host uses identity to 'other' or exclude Syrian refugees in its political and social structures. As will be discussed in detail in the following theoretical chapter, this research uses Derrida's notion of 'hostipitality' - the inevitable hostility that exists in any hosting or hospitality situation (Derrida 2000) to theorise host exclusion and discrimination in Lebanon and Turkey towards displaced Syrians.

Syria and Lebanon (1918-2010)

Historically, Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey were all part of the Ottoman Empire for almost four centuries. During the Ottoman period, the geographical areas of modern-day Syria and Lebanon were part of the region of 'Syria' or 'Greater Syria' (modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and occupied Palestine) (Chaitani 2007). Historian Albert Hourani, describes the inhabitants of Ottoman Syria as "in some sense a single people" (Hourani 1946, 4). However, Greater Syria would cease to exist after 1918 when the Ottoman Empire fell at the end of the First World War. After a brief period of Arab rule under King Faysal Ibn Husayn, Britain and France partitioned Greater Syria in 1920 among themselves, placing the southern regions of Palestine and Transjordan under British Mandate and the northern region under French Mandate. France further divided the northern region into *Les fitats du Levant* (The Levant States) during the period 1925-1936, including: the States of Syria, Greater Lebanon, and the Governments of Latakia and Jebel Druze (Hourani 1946). Local resistance in the Levant States rose against the French Mandate, successfully ending French occupation in 1946 when the last French troops withdrew (Olmert 1996) from the newly formed Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic.

The Syrian Arab Republic chose to adopt a pan-Arab and socialist political outlook. Chaitani (2007) describes post-independence Syria as "ultra-nationalistic, and intensely anti-French" (XII). The Lebanese Republic on the other hand, "was deeply penetrated by the French language and European ways of living" (XIII). In contrast to its socialist neighbour, Lebanon chose to follow a laissez-faire economic system that relied heavily on tourism. Another major difference between the two newly formed states was their confessional compositions. Unlike the Syrian population which had a clear Muslim Sunni majority, Lebanon's population was composed of smaller religious sects without a leading majority. This was rooted in the country's long history of being a refuge for persecuted peoples in the Mediterranean region including Jewish,

Maronite, Druze and Muslim communities (Cooke 1988). A census conducted in 1932 during the French Mandate period identified 17 major religious sects, which acted as the basis for the 1943 National Pact that allocated political representation according to confessional group size. In the Pact, presidency was given to the Maronite sect, premiership to the Muslim Sunnis, and Speaker of the House to the Muslim Shiites (Cooke 1988).

The survival of that religious identity-based system of political representation depended on religious groups preserving their population distributions. That's why when a large influx of Palestinian refugees who were expelled from Jordan came and settled in Lebanon in 1970, Lebanon's delicate confessional balance was threatened. In particular, the Lebanese Maronite sect felt threatened by the Palestinian presence that greatly bolstered the numbers of Muslim Sunnis in the country, while the majority of Lebanese Muslims and some Eastern Orthodox Christians supported the Palestinians. Eventually, a confrontation between Maronites and Palestinians in 1975 would spark civil war among various religious sects in Lebanon (Cooke 1988).

Meanwhile, a clear religious majority did not free newly independent Syria from political turmoil. The country witnessed almost two decades of political instability and repeated coups. This phase would end when Hafiz al Asad, of the Baath Party, seized power in 1970 from leftist factions within the party, in what became known as his *haraka tashihiya*, or Corrective Movement (Cooke 2007, 7). With strong secular and socialist views, Baathists "extolled the Arab nation, regardless of ethnicity, religion, and language, and called for its baath, or revival." (Cooke 2007, 5). Syrian Alawites[6], including Hafiz al Asad, were attracted to Baathist secularism and joined the party ranks. As a religious minority, the Syrian Alawites who lived in rural areas were oppressed by the Sunni majority and exploited as sharecropper workers. Under the French mandate, large numbers of Syrian Alawites were recruited into the army. In 1963, young Baathists deposed the President Nazim al-Qudsi in a military coup, and declared martial law and Baath Party rule in Syria. In 1966 Hafiz al Asad became Minister of Defence and Salah Jadid became the Syrian President, shifting the balance

[6] Alawites belong to the Nusayri religious sect which appeared in the mid-9th century. Nusayris are a Shiite Islamic offshoot, which was condemned in the 14th century as heretic (Cooke 2007, 5).

of power for the first time away from the hands of Damascene Sunni Muslims to rural Alawites (Cooke 2007, 5–6).

Hafiz al Asad held on to power as the President of Syria from 1970 until his death in the year 2000. He was succeeded by his 34 year-old son Bashar al Asad, making Syria one of the few countries, besides Togo and Gabon, which witnessed a direct transferral of power from father to son in a republic (Heydemann, 2020). Soon after assuming power he announced his intentions to modernize Syria both socially and economically, and to transition the country from socialism towards a social market economy (Heydemann 2020). The new President's promises were met with optimism by the Syrian people (Hinnebusch 2012). The economy became more open as Syria reduced tariffs on imports, joined the World Trade Organisation in 2001, and allowed private banks to operate again after being banned for forty years. With an average annual real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 4.3% (2000-2010), Syria was ranked among the fast growing lower-middle-income countries in the world (World Bank 2017). Bashar al Asad also headed the Syrian Computer Society, and pushed for the introduction of internet and mobile phones in Syria to support the modernization of Syrian economy (Hinnebusch 2012). In the early 2000s these became available to those Syrians who could afford them. Benefits of economic growth however concentrated in the hands of a few, namely supporters of the regime and family members, such as the Makhloufs, relatives of the al Asad family, who controlled some 65% of the Syrian economy (Heydemann 2020) including Syria's two privately-owned telecommunications companies. Bashar al Asad was in power when civil conflict erupted in Syria in 2010. In order to understand changes in Syrian women's civic participation in displacement contexts, Chapters 5 and 6 discuss key aspects of civic activity and women's rights in Syria under his rule (2000-2010) and compare them to differences in each host country context.

Accepting the full independence of neighbouring Lebanon was always a challenge for the Syrian Republic. With the Syrian capital Damascus a mere 20 kilometres away from Lebanon's borders, the Syrian government continued to fear for its security against hostile attacks should Israel enter Lebanon and attack it from there (Chaitani 2007). In 1976, following a request from Lebanese President Suleiman Frangieh to intervene, 12,000 Syrian troops entered Lebanon and became involved in the Lebanese civil war. They fought to support the Maronite militias against the Palestinian

Liberation Organisation (PLO) and later fought against Israeli forces that invaded Lebanon in 1982. Eventually the fighting came to an end with the Taif Agreement in 1989 which formalised Syrian armed presence and interference in Lebanese affairs for many years to come. The result was, and still is, a complex and stressed relationship between both countries. The following quote by Chaitani (2007) captures to a great extent the various complexities in the relationship between these two neighbouring countries and their peoples:

> Of all the Arab world's political relationships, none displays such a tormented combination of attraction and repulsion, of love and hate, as that between Syria and Lebanon. Although indispensable to each other, they have often found coexistence onerous and troublesome. […] A permanent estrangement is indeed unthinkable. For one thing, ties across the common border of family and friendship, of commerce and strategic interest, are so dense as to rule out the possibility of divorce.
>
> (Chaitani 2007, IX)

Over the period 1989 to 2005 the Syrian government effectively directed Lebanese politics, supporting its allies among Lebanese confessional groups (Kabbanji & Kabbanji, 2018). Syrian direct influence ended following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005. The Syrian government was accused of being behind the assassination and the Syrian army driven out of Lebanon. However, friction between pro-Syrian and anti-Syrian regime alliances in Lebanon continued even after the Syrian forces withdrew from Lebanon in 2005 (Kabbanji and Kabbanji 2018). The Taif Agreement necessitated the maintenance of a delicate balance of power among sects for the Lebanese government to function. Thus, after the outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2010, when confronted with large numbers of Syrian refugees crossing Lebanese borders, the Lebanese government, a coalition of pro- and anti-Syrian parties, opted for a neutral response and allowed Syrian refugees to enter with six-month visas as per existing agreements between the two countries (Kabbanji and Kabbanji 2018).

The Lebanese Hosting Experience (2011-2018):

The first waves of Syrians fleeing to Lebanon in 2011 were hopeful that common ties of language, culture, family and history would make it a safe and welcoming place for

them to escape escalating conflict. Noor, one of the Syrian women in this research sample that co-founded a Syrian Civil Society Organisation (SCSO) in Beirut after 2011, spoke of these common ties while explaining the rationale behind choosing Beirut to establish her CSO. At the time the interview was conducted, Noor was 48 years old, and was married with two children. She belongs to the Christian Syrian community living in Damascus, and has an upper socioeconomic background. Noor is highly educated and speaks several languages including English and French. She was already working in the culture and contemporary arts sector before 2011, but had never been formally involved in any CSO activities before the war. According to Noor:

> Lebanon and Syria are one country, Lebanon was established several decades ago, before there was no Lebanon, so it's all one land. The Christian presence in Lebanon and Syria, and the support from European churches for Lebanese Christians is substantial, which in turn also supports the Christian church in Syria, this they don't talk about a lot usually but it's there. The banks, and the Lebanese banking system is supported by Syrians, a lot of Syrian capital has always been in Lebanon, there is trust in the Lebanese banks. Lebanon is also very easy to access for Syrians from the capital Damascus, Allepan Syrians also love Lebanon. The people of Trablus and Homs, their accents are very similar to the Lebanese anyway. There is a very strong geographical tie between these two countries, there are also very strong political ties, famous politicians in Lebanon and their families typically either come from Syrian families or are married to Syrians. At the same time, a common culture connects them in language, food, songs, and love for Fairuz [a famous Lebanese singer]. It's like a natural continuity for the Syrian voice if you wish. With the Turks all of this is less, there was always this relationship between the occupied and occupier.
>
> (Noor, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 17.11.2018)

However, as the conflict in Syria dragged on, and the numbers of Syrians escaping to Lebanon continued to rise, Lebanon became a particularly unwelcoming and hostile host towards Syrian refugees. In addition to hosting more than 479,000 Palestinian refugees (UNRWA 2022) from refugee influxes in 1948 and 1967 (Shamieh 2015), Lebanon hosts an estimated 800,000 officially registered Syrian refugees since the

crisis began in 2011 (UNHCR 2024c), while other estimates point to an additional 500,000 Syrians that are unregistered (Keith and Shawaf 2018). Prior to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011, Lebanon was still recovering economically and politically from the repercussions of its fifteen-year civil war. With its “fragile governance system and sub-standard infrastructure” (Yassin et al. 2015, 14), the country was hardly equipped to cope with the arrival of large numbers of refugees and the added pressure on infrastructure and services. The Syrian refugee crisis worsened Lebanon’s fiscal deficit, and stretched the country’s electricity, water and housing supplies, in addition to further stretching its education and health services (Achilli et al. 2017; Mattes 2018).

Described as a “weak state” (Watenpaugh et al. 2014, 14), security provision in Lebanon is “linked to sectarian affiliations” and is carried out by “multiple state and non-state stakeholders that jostle for power” (Linn 2020, 87). Several non-state actors, in particular Hezbollah (an armed political/social movement composed of members from the Lebanese Shiite community) are capable in some areas of exerting more influence in the country than state institutions. Hezbollah receives considerable financial and military backing from its state sponsor Iran, which supports Hezbollah’s military operations against Israel on the southern Lebanese border. Iran claims to support Shiite non-state actors due to its “status as the self-appointed champion of Shia Muslims, who suffer from discrimination and oppression at the hands of Sunni governments” (DeVore 2012, 90). However, as a Persian Shiite majority state, this support also enables Iran to influence regional affairs in Arab Sunni majority countries under the guise of interfering in the Arab/Israeli conflict (DeVore 2012). The ongoing conflict in Syria aggravated political tensions between various sects in Lebanon, leading to “increased militarisation and securitisation of state and non-state actors” in the country (Linn 2020, 87).

Besides Hezbollah, various religious communities in Lebanon organize in non-state parliamentary organisations or political movements that are also powerful (Watenpaugh et al. 2014). According to Watenpaugh et al. (2014), Lebanese citizens tend to “view social problems, politics, and security issues through the lens of sectarian communal identification, while abstract notions of common Lebanese citizenship or human rights have little currency” (Watenpaugh et al. 2014, 14). Thus, when the Syrian refugee crisis began in 2011, Lebanon experienced long periods of political deadlock without an elected President and delayed parliamentary elections (Janmyr 2016). The

leadership of the various non-state actors were divided in their position towards the Syrian conflict, with some groups like Hezbollah adopting pro-Syrian government positions and others supporting the Syrian opposition (Diker and Ragab 2019). During the early period of the crisis, various government bodies issued contradictory statements and responses creating a situation of overall confusion in the country (Yassin et al. 2015, 18).

Political stalemate and the absence of consensus on a national response to the Syrian refugee crisis among Lebanese sectarian political parties led the Lebanese Prime Minister Naguib Miqati to announce a “dis-association policy” in mid-2012, meaning that the government of Lebanon would adopt a neutral stance towards conflict events in Syria and the Syrian government (Janmyr 2016, 60). The lack of a national policy to manage the refugee crisis meant that local municipalities, Lebanese civic organisations and INGOs were left to manage the refugee crisis and provide assistance (Janmyr 2016; Achilli et al. 2017; Fourn 2017). Officially, refugee issues are managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) in Lebanon, which coordinates with the UNHCR and other INGOs in the country to support refugees (Yassin et al. 2015). The UNHCR and UNRWA were responsible for registering and documenting Syrian refugees and handling their refugee status determination - however this was still subject to the Lebanese government’s approval (Janmyr 2016). According to Linn (2020), the support offered to Syrian refugees by the UNHCR “regarding their legality, work opportunities, food vouchers, medical care, shelter options and importantly, an opportunity for third country re-settlement” was rather limited and did not meet the expectations (Linn 2020, 135). Instead, UNHCR support was more accessible to displaced Syrian women “who were middle-class and educated, understood how best to utilise the humanitarian infrastructure in place” (Linn 2020, 136).

The Lebanese government refused to acknowledge the refugee status of Syrian refugees, referring to them as ‘displaced’ persons (Janmyr 2016, 59), and ‘visitors’ or de facto refugees (Linn 2020, 95). Lebanon’s stance towards refugees has its roots in fears of the naturalization of Palestinian refugees which would result in major confessional demographic change (Shamieh 2015). Such fears have driven the state to avoid becoming a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention which gives refugees rights including the right to become citizens. Instead, Lebanon considers itself a country of transit for refugees rather than asylum (Janmyr 2016). The following quote

from a Lebanese government official demonstrates the impact of the Palestinian refugee experience on policies towards Syrian refugees:

> We had Palestinian refugees who were supposed to stay here for a month in 1948, and now they are a population of 500,000. And we went through a 15-year civil war where the Palestinians were a large player.
>
> (Yassin et al. 2015, 53).

The need to maintain the country's fragile confessional balance drives Lebanese policymakers to create conditions that exclude and expel large numbers of unwanted refugees that would otherwise bolster the Sunni Muslim population. The Christian community in Lebanon is particularly unwelcoming to the majority of Syrians, because of their Muslim religious identity, which they believe to be "incompatible with values of equality and justice" (Munoz Alonso 2018, 50), and there are reports of displaced Syrian women being asked to remove their hijab before working in shops in Beirut (Linn 2020). When discussing the impacts of religious identity on Muslim women in this research, their degree of orthodoxy matters. Not all interviewed Syrian women who identified as Muslim wore the Islamic veil or 'hijab'. Several held more liberal Islamic beliefs that did not regard wearing the hijab as an obligation. This research finds that for Syrian women who were veiled, wearing the hijab influenced their civic participation in each context in different ways. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 which focuses on their civic participation in Lebanon and Turkey. However, in trying to understand its impact on everyday life in Lebanon, both the national and religious identity of a veiled Syrian women is difficult to hide in public spaces making them more vulnerable to discrimination in Lebanese and Turkish contexts. Their national identity, as Syrians, and even their socioeconomic status and urban/rural identities can sometimes be revealed from the type of veil/Islamic dress that they wear. Different Islamic countries have different veiling styles that distinguish them, within a country regional differences also exist. In Syria, for example, "hijabi girls from Damascus typically wear the two-piece white hijab, while women from Aleppo wear the black hijab secured with pins" (Hamoud 2024, para.1). These styles differ from typical Hijab styles worn by Sunni or Shiite Muslim women in Lebanon and Turkey. There are even reports of Syrian women in Turkey who have resorted to wearing Turkish-style hijabs to stand out less and avoid discrimination (Hamoud 2024).

Official forms of exclusion and discrimination are evident in government statements which “stress that ‘Lebanon is neither a country of asylum, not a final destination for refugees, let alone a country of resettlement’ (LCRP, 2015)” (Linn 2020, 95), and in policies that are intentionally designed to pressure Syrian refugees and drive them out of Lebanon, even if their return to Syria is non-voluntary (Keith and Shawaf 2018, 62). The Lebanese government’s hostile position towards hosting Syrian refugees which ignores their internationally recognised rights was also reflected in the interviews conducted in this research in 2018. The following quote comes from an interview with a Programme Manager of a leading INGO in Lebanon who was working on a project to create platforms for local CSOs to engage with each other and influence national policymaking. During the interview he confirmed the Lebanese government’s policy of working to create conditions to exclude and repatriate Syrian refugees:

> Refugees and questions of participation are difficult wherever you go. Lebanon’s government simply doesn’t want them, they want to repatriate them in Syria, so they make sure they are not involved in progress to promote decision-making of these communities in Lebanon.
>
> (Mike, Beirut, Lebanon. 28.11.2018)

Examples of institutionalised pressure or ‘hostipitalities’ (Derrida 2000) can be seen in the government’s refusal to providing better shelter conditions for Syrian refugees by prohibiting UNHCR and other INGOs from establishing formal refugee camps for Syrian refugees (Chatty 2016; Yassin 2019). The outcome of such policies is that the majority of Syrian refugees (83%) live in poor shelter conditions outside formal camps and pay rent for these shelters in urban, semi-urban, or rural areas across Lebanon (Yassin et al. 2015). These substandard shelters include informal settlements established by Syrian refugees who rent agricultural lands across Lebanon from Lebanese owners and set up temporary tents (Yassin et al. 2015). A more recent 2018 survey found that their shelter conditions were worsening with time and that 35% of Syrian refugees were living in shelters considered substandard (Yassin 2019).

The first waves of Syrian refugees were able to enter Lebanon as per the existing 1993 bilateral agreement for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination. As the

number of Syrian refugees continued to rise, the government applied further residency restrictions to make it harder for them to legally remain in the country. In October 2014, the Lebanese government issued a comprehensive policy for Syrian refugees that introduced new residency permit requirements for Syrian nationals that wished to enter or renew their residency permits in Lebanon (Janmyr 2016, 78). Furthermore, in 2015 Syrian refugees were allowed to obtain work residency permits only within certain sectors, and only if they had a Lebanese sponsor (a *kafeel*) who signed a "pledge of responsibility" and agreed to be "held accountable for the Syrians' legal (and thus, criminal) acts" (Jagarnathsingh 2016, 13). In practice, Syrian refugees with sponsors are subject to exploitation by being forced to work for free, or to pay a fee sometimes as high as 1000 USD in a black market for the sale of sponsorships (Keith and Shawaf 2018; Janmyr 2016). Officially, Syrians are only allowed to work in a limited number of occupations, for instance as low skilled manual workers or agricultural labourers[7], and they are paid up to 40% less than Lebanese workers (Yassin et al. 2015).

Besides obtaining work residency permits, Syrian refugees can also remain in Lebanon legally if they are registered at UNHCR (Jagarnathsingh 2016). Their registration is conditional on them pledging not to work, for which they are compensated by receiving monthly food vouchers which vary from 13.5 – 27 USD per person (Jagarnathsingh 2016). In addition, 17% of registered Syrian refugees receive a monthly multi-purpose cash assistance of 177 USD per household (Jagarnathsingh 2016). The inadequacy of financial support provided by international donors and agencies means that refugees that want to work to improve their situation have to deregister from UNHCR and lose their access to UNHCR "healthcare, protection, and livelihood" services (Jagarnathsingh 2016, 15). Such services are important to refugees who cannot access state healthcare services in Lebanon and receive healthcare mainly from private healthcare providers or collaborations between Lebanese Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and INGOs (Saleh et al. 2022). According to Saleh et al. (2022) "economic factors, such as the cost of consultation and laboratory tests remain a significant barrier for many refugees despite the help provided by the NGO's. Additionally, access to secondary and tertiary care remains a

[7] Decree No. 29/1 dated 15/02/2018 Ministry of Labour, Lebanon, see www.labor.gov.lb/Temp/ Files/74a11682-051a-4d83- a8fe-905a54b3968f.pdf. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020

growing challenge for the Syrian refugees in Lebanon." (4). However, even registering at UNHCR became impossible after 2015 when, as their numbers approached one million, the Lebanese government ordered UNHCR to stop registering additional Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2022). This policy resulted in considerable numbers of unregistered refugees who are denied access to valid residency permits, basic health and education services, and live in conditions of increased poverty (Shamieh 2015). An estimated 80% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon lack any kind of legal status or official residency permits (Keith and Shawaf 2018). Of these displaced Syrians, women are ten times more likely to lack legal status compared to men (Mhaissen and Hodges 2019).

This research uses the category 'residency status' to refer to the various residency statuses of displaced Syrians in Lebanon and Turkey. In Lebanon, these include displaced Syrians registered as 'displaced persons' at the UNHCR, those with working residency permits, Syrians with dual citizenships, and unregistered Syrians that have no legal status in the country. Residency statuses in Turkey and their impacts are discussed in the upcoming section on the Turkish context. As the paragraph above demonstrates, the residency status of displaced Syrians in Lebanon influences their right to remain in the country, to access aid and basic health and education services, and their right to work. Such restrictions that are based on residency status also impact the ability of displaced Syrian women to participate in CSOs. These are explained at length in Chapter 5 which addresses the civil society context in each host country and how identity markers like the residency status of displaced Syrians influences their ability to form CSOs or work in them.

As a result of these discriminatory policies, the majority of Syrian refugees in Lebanon live in conditions of poverty, indebtedness, as well as food and housing insecurity (Achilli et al. 2017). To survive, many Syrian refugees accept informal working conditions which entail lower incomes, poor working conditions and the lack of social security (Shamieh 2015; Mattes 2018). This is especially the case for displaced Syrians that came from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds before the war. Their lack of financial resources made it harder for them to secure a legal residency status in Lebanon which in turn eliminates their chances of formal employment and forces them to accept "work in the informal sector for poor pay and under poor work conditions"

(Linn 2020:167). And, to living in fear that “they could be caught and deported, while they were also being exploited and defrauded by employers” (Linn 2020:167).

Syrian informal settlements are prone to violent attacks and evictions by Lebanese authorities and even military operations by Hezbollah and the Lebanese Armed Forces (Zapater 2018). Syrian refugees are also subject to illegal arbitrary curfews by Lebanese municipality police and vigilantes, who restrict their freedom of movement at numerous checkpoints spread throughout the country (Janmyr 2016; Chatty 2016; Achilli et al. 2017). In Lebanon according to Linn (2020), “Gender and class both have a strong role to play in negotiating checkpoints and security providers” (224). Poor Syrian males are most likely to be suspected of violence and required to show their identity documentation at checkpoints. By contrast, Syrian families with financial means are more likely to be able to pay their way out of being arrested at checkpoints, or of being deported if they are discovered to have no legal residency documents (Linn 2020).

Eminent poverty and a lack of security drive some families to adopt negative coping strategies such as child labour or early marriage (Achilli et al. 2017; DeJong et al. 2017; Mattes 2018). An intersectional research study by Bartels et al. (2021) on the incidence of child marriage in displaced Syrian communities in Lebanon, finds that immigration status, lack of safety, poverty, and gender intersect to increase the vulnerability of young Syrian girls to child marriage. In particular, they demonstrate that displacement and the resulting immigration status (Residency Status) of displaced Syrians in Lebanon reinforce their poverty and lack of security (exposure to violence by host communities) which drives some families to resort to child marriage.

Another intersectional study on displaced Syrian women’s experiences of security in Lebanon and Jordan finds that “Their Syrian identity, gender, and socio-economic standing coupled with their lack of status create a ‘black hole’ of lack of protection and vulnerability” (Linn 2020:169), referring to their exposure to physical and verbal sexual harassment and discrimination when seeking employment or engaging in the public space in Lebanon (Linn 2020, 191). Nasser-Eddin and Mhaissen (2020) add that “Syrian women face intersecting systems of oppressions” (23) in Lebanon due to intersections in “their gender, and marital and legal status” (Nasser-Eddin and Mhaissen 2020:28). These increase their exposure to sexual and verbal harassment,

bullying, lack of mobility if they do not possess legal documentation, and labour exploitation (Nasser-Eddin and Mhaissen 2020). Marital status is deemed to be an important determinant of discriminatory experiences. In Lebanon, displaced Syrian "Women 'without' husbands, or male 'guardians', whether divorced, single or widowed, […] are perceived as 'weak' and 'cheap' at the same time" (Nasser-Eddin and Mhaissen 2020:24).

This research's combined use of intersectionality and multiple critique in its analytical framework, adds new insights to our understanding of the impacts of gender and marital status for women in civil society settings. This approach transcends dominant perspectives of these factors solely as contributors to increased vulnerability and exclusion, as observed in the studies mentioned above. A more in-depth discussion will be provided in Chapter 5, but briefly, the analysis reveals that married women who came from conservative families that did not allow them to work before the war were practicing multiple critiques and leveraging the decline in household income to challenge restrictions imposed by their husbands or families and working in civil society organizations (CSOs). This is particularly relevant in gender-segregated CSOs, which are perceived as safer work environments for women that men cannot object to. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the experience of managing a double burden—rather than marital status alone— influences women's ability to participate civically and sustain their involvement in the sector. In contexts of displacement, disrupted social networks that previously offered support for displaced Syrian women with childcare exacerbate these challenges, particularly for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who may struggle to afford assistance. In the sample. women who were able to manage their care duties were not only able to engage civically but generally expressed the desire to continue to work and assume greater responsibilities in the sector. For example, a divorced Syrian woman from the sample, who had access to childcare support from her mother, was able to go to work in a Syrian CSO in Istanbul. Her work demanded traveling to remote places, and during the interview, she stated that she was not afraid of sexual harassment in public spaces in Turkey because she had learned Turkish and could easily call the Police in such a situation. She also had ambitions to continue developing her skills and progress in the

sector[8]. In contrast, a married 53-year-old Syrian woman from the sample with childcare and household responsibilities and no support in her new displacement context in Istanbul was struggling to manage both her civic engagement and caring for her husband and children. During her interview, she explained how her health was beginning to suffer from the pressure, and how she would like to stop working but could not because her husband was unemployed.[9]

Recent major events like the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the major explosion of Lebanon's main port in Beirut in August 2020 only exacerbated the country's "continuously deteriorating economic, financial, political, health and humanitarian crisis." (Diab 2022:2). Economically, rising unemployment and significant losses in the value of the Lebanese pound have increased overall poverty among refugee and non-refugee communities (Diab 2022). Several interviewees spoke of the rising difficulties confronting them in Lebanon in 2018 which included increasingly restrictive policies and worsening economic conditions that were making it harder for displaced Syrians to remain. The following quote is from Lima, a Syrian/German citizen who worked in Damascus in the civil society sector when conflict erupted in 2011. She fled to Lebanon in 2012 and found a job in an INGO based in Beirut. Unlike displaced Syrians who reside in Lebanon as registered refugees, unregistered refugees, or Syrian nationals with working permits, Lima's German citizenship allows her to obtain permission to formally work in CSOs in Lebanon. During the interview, she acknowledges her privilege which comes from her nationality and consequently her residency status in Lebanon, and spoke of the rising difficulties that Syrian friends were facing in Beirut:

> But Lebanon has become impossible, the procedures for visas, for licencing, the expensive living costs, you can't establish anything [CSOs]. There are no salaries that allow you to live in dignity. In 2013/2014 we used to walk in the streets of Beirut and see many Syrians, now you hardly see anyone.
>
> (Lima, Beirut, Lebanon. 04.11.2018)

Studies of displaced Syrians in Lebanon also find that the majority report feeling unsafe, fearing deportation, arrest, and detention (Keith and Shawaf 2018),

[8] (Amani, Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 19.11.2018)
[9] (Nada, Interview. Istanbul. Turkey 19.09.2018)

experiencing humiliation and loss of dignity (Mansour 2018; Jagarnathsingh 2016), and rising xenophobia and social discriminatory attitudes (Chatty 2016; El-Masri et al. 2013; Fourn 2017). Xenophobic sentiments are even expressed in official political discourses, such as in the 2018 Lebanese parliamentary election campaigns, where Syrian refugees were publicly blamed for worsening living conditions and the spreading of disease (Geha and Talhouk 2018). An interview with a Lebanese legal expert who specialises in CSO establishment revealed how identity-based discrimination was connected to restrictive refugee policies for Syrians in Lebanon. During the interview, he explained legal restrictions that prevent Syrian nationals from establishing their own CSOs in Lebanon or even from working in Lebanese CSOs due to their nationality:

> Also, the racist mentality against the refugees, they [the Lebanese Government] don't want organisations to improve their [Syrian refugees] conditions. The Syrian is a foreigner on Lebanese soil [due to nationality]. They are treated as such in the labour law, social security law and trade unions.
>
> (Fouad, Beirut, Lebanon. 29.11.18)

To conclude**,** Syrians displaced in Lebanon find themselves in a particularly inhospitable environment that exposes them to different forms of political, social, and economic exclusion. A weak state, recovering from civil war itself, politically divided and ruled by multiple confessional groups, its response to the Syrian refugee crisis of 2011 was initially to adopt a neutral stance and then to systematically introduce exclusionary policies that made it increasingly difficult for displaced Syrians to remain. In terms of identity, their nationality (being Syrian) and the religious identity of the majority (Sunni Muslims) intersect to form a basis for official discriminatory host policies that aim to drive Syrians out of Lebanon as soon as possible to prevent their naturalisation and protect the country's confessional balance which is central to its political stability. Such policies make it harder for Syrians to survive with dignity in the country and also place limitations on their ability to engage civically. Social discrimination shows itself in denying Syrians housing opportunities, charging them higher rents, denying them job opportunities, or subjecting them to verbal abuse. The

history of Syrian interventions in Lebanese politics further exacerbates hostilities towards Syrian nationals by Lebanese sects that suffered from those interventions.

The intersectional marginalisation of Syrians in Lebanon has been described as ‘dynamic’, because they experience "a moving intersectionality, since they become different subjects as they change time and location" (Munoz Alonso 2018, 48–49). Especially for Muslim Syrians, their religious identity increases their risk of discrimination by Christian host communities that regard them as inferior. For displaced Syrian women, their gender places them at a higher risk of economic exploitation, verbal and sexual harassment, and religious discrimination if they wear a hijab. Educated and wealthier Syrians on the other hand, have more resources at their disposal to secure official residency permits in Lebanon and afford rents in better neighbourhoods which significantly improves their living conditions and reduces exposure to discrimination.

The interviews conducted in this research in 2018 show that despite these restrictions, many Syrian men and women in Lebanon still found ways to civically engage and even establish their own organisations. Resources linked to their identities, like having substantial financial resources due to their socioeconomic status, or dual citizenships which gave them an advantageous residency status, helped some displaced Syrians to bypass policy restrictions. These will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

The following section moves on to the case of displaced Syrians in Turkey. It begins with a brief overview of Syrian/Turkish political histories during the period (1918-2010) and demonstrates how these histories shaped the Turkish government’s initial response to the Syrian refugee policy which, despite being conditional, was far more welcoming compared to that of Lebanon. It also reveals how with time; the welcome Syrian refugees had received in Turkey gave way to xenophobic attitudes that were based to a large extent on perceived ethnic differences between Syrian Arabs and Turks.

Syria and Turkey (1918-2010)

Historically, as part of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire, peoples of Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab ethnicities coexisted peacefully for centuries (Taspinar 2008). Syria had been part of the Ottoman Empire for over 400 years. Many Ottoman families settled in Syria for good and became Syrian nationals after independence. Familial blood ties

between Ottoman and Syrian families were common, as is the case in my own family from the side of my mother whose grandmother was Ottoman. However, during the First World War, the Arabs grew tired of Ottoman rule and wanted independence. In their efforts to achieve this, they collaborated with the British against the Ottomans during the war. This was perceived as an act of betrayal by the Ottomans who blamed the Arabs for contributing to the fall of the empire (Aras and Köni 2002).

The Kemalist Turkish Republic which rose after the Ottoman Empire in 1923 constructed a new Turkish identity that was based on secularism and modernization. Ottoman cultural, bureaucratic, and political heritage was restructured to eliminate the influence of Islam in the public and political spheres and form an ethnic Turkish nationalism that was "exclusively based on Turkishness" (Aras and Köni 2002:48). Negative images of the Arabs first began to appear in Ottoman literature after the mid-1910s. In addition to resentment over the Arab alliance with British forces during the First World War, early Turkish nationalists blamed the state of Turkey's backwardness on "Turks" accepting Islam, which came through the teachings of Arabs" (Aras and Köni 2002:50). As part of the modernisation of the Turkish Republic that was based on the Western model, the Arabic alphabet used in the Ottoman script for almost a thousand years was banned in 1928 and replaced with the Latin alphabet, erasing what remained of a shared linguistic heritage between Arabs and Ottomans. (Taspinar 2008) elaborates on the meaning of the new Turkish identity in Kemalist Turkey:

> "Turkishness" came to be defined as a common national, linguistic, and territorial identity. Taking France as its model again, the Kemalist regime rejected the concept of multiculturalism; no communal structure would stand between the republic and its citizens.
>
> (Taspinar 2008:5)

As a result of the formation of Turkey's new national identity during the 1920s and 1930s in the early republican era, Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria became one of 'conscious alienation' (Aras and Köni 2002:48).

From the Syrian side, a strong resentment existed over Turkey's forceful annexation in the 1930s of a piece of Syrian territory, the Sanjak in Alexandretta, along the Turkish-Syrian border, known today as the Turkish vilayet of Hattay (Taspinar 2008). In defining Turkey's borders after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the 1923 Treaty of

Lausanne had left the Sanjak in Alexandretta in Syria under French Mandatory authorities who “made it amply clear that the district was an integral part of Syria” (Sanjian 1956:379). During the French mandate period, the Sanjak was autonomously governed as per the 'Franklin-Bouillon Agreement' of 1921 between Turkey and France. Identity-wise, The Sanjak was inhabited by over 200,000 inhabitants that were “a conglomeration of races, religions and languages” (Sanjian 1956:380). Besides Turks and Sunni Arabs, they included Alawites, Armenians, Kurds, Greek Orthodox and other Christian sects, Circassians, and Jews. In 1936 the Franco-Syrian Treaty of Alliance guaranteed Syrian independence within three years. The Turkish government began to raise concerns over the security of Turkish populations living in the Sanjak, claiming that they were the majority of the inhabitants. It exploited France’s political weakness at the time and demanded that France cede the territory. According to French statistics, however, Turkish populations were not the majority of the Sanjak’s population, rather the Arabs and other non-Turkish speaking inhabitants like the Armenians and Kurds were the majority. Despite France’s action going against its duties under its Mandate to protect Syrian lands, the advent of World War II prevented the League of Nations from questioning France’s actions. The newly independent Syrian government resented having lost the Sanjak to Turkey (Sanjian 1956).

During the Cold War, the two countries found themselves on conflicting sides when Syria chose to align itself with the Soviet Union and Turkey with NATO (Galariotis and Ifantis 2017). In the following decades, political tensions between the two states rose even further, reaching a peak in October 1998 when Turkey dispatched 10,000 troops to the Syrian border and the Syrian government responded by pointing Scud-C missiles at the Turkish frontier. The escalation came after the Turkish government accused the Syrian government of supporting the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkerana Kurdistan, PKK) whose separatist demands were considered an existential threat to Turkey’s national unity. At the same time, the Syrian government claimed that Turkey was endangering water security by overexploiting the water of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Recognizing the imbalance in power in the favour of Turkey, the Syrian government agreed to sever connections with the PKK, expelling its leader Abdullah Oclan from Damascus, and creating a surveillance network to prevent Kurdish militants from penetrating Turkish borders (Taspinar 2008).

Soon after these events, the arrival of new leaders in both countries led to a dramatic shift in Turkish-Syrian relations over the decade preceding the Syrian civil war. During this period, relations improved and a number of economic and large-scale investment bilateral agreements were made that soon developed into military and security agreements (Lawson 2009). In Syria in the year 2000, Bashar al Asad took over from his father Hafez al Asad. By 2004, his government needed a new trading partner to drive economic development after losing its position as the primary outlet for Iraqi oil, following the fall of Saddam Hussein (Lawson 2014). On the Turkish side, the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet Ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) in 2002 brought with it a reversal of Kemalist secularism (Galariotis and Ifantis 2017). A new policy founded on 'Neo-Ottomanism'[10] surfaced, which aimed to expand Turkey's influence in the Middle East. In practice, this was achieved through creating greater economic interdependence and exerting efforts to establish peace and stability in the region (ISPI 2019).

In January 2004, President Bashar al Asad made a historic visit to Turkey as the first Syrian President to visit since the formation of the Syrian Arab Republic. During his visit, he signed documents fixing Turkish-Syrian borders, thereby officially recognizing that the disputed Sanjak in Alexandretta was a part of the Turkish Republic and ending years of dispute over the territory. In April 2005, following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in which the Syrian regime was implicated, Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer made a similarly important visit to Damascus. Sezer's visit sent a strong message of support at a time when Syria was internationally isolated and under threat of sanctions from the US, EU, and Egypt. He visited Syria despite US threats that Turkey would be side-lined by the international community. This demonstrated the extent to which Turkish-Syrian relations had developed. Turkish support for the unpopular Syrian regime continued until 2008, when the international boycott finally ended, and French President Nicholas Sarkozy visited Damascus where he was met by both the Syrian and Turkish President Erdogan. Visa requirements were lifted between the two countries in 2009, and official remarks by

[10] 'Neo-Ottomanism' refers to the revival of Turkey's Islamic and multi-ethnic heritage as grounds for the revival of its influence in the Middle East area as a regional superpower, through the application of 'soft power' policies such as economic, political and diplomatic ties with the region (Tür 2010).

Turkish officials on the artificiality of the borders between the two countries became more common (Tür 2010).

During this period the two countries' leaders demonstrated a strong relationship, also on a personal level. In public discourses, President Erdogan often referred to President Bashar as his brother (ISPI 2019). A sharp turn in bilateral relations was therefore unexpected when in 2011 the first protests occurred in Syria. Turkey initially supported President al Asad and advised him to respond to the protests with political reforms. Its position quickly changed however when the Syrian government used force against protesters and the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, in August, petitioned President Bashar al Asad to refrain from using force. The use of force continued and two weeks later the Syrian army installed anti-aircraft batteries on the Syrian-Turkish border against Turkish warplanes, a gesture that signalled the end of the brotherhood between the two presidents (Lawson 2014). By September 2011, Ankara terminated communication with the Syrian government and started an international campaign to interfere in the civil war and end the Syrian regime. By November 2011, as large numbers of Syrian refugees were crossing the border and fleeing to Turkey, they were welcomed with an open-door policy and allowed to enter without visa requirements (Cloeters et al. 2018). Meanwhile, President Erdogan was expressing Turkey's support for the Syrian opposition and demanding that Bashar al Asad should step down (Galariotis and Ifantis 2017).

Eventually, Turkey would host the greatest number of Syrian refugees in the world (Zoeteweij-Turhan 2018). An estimated 3.2 million Syrian refugees are today officially registered in Turkey (UNHCR 2024c), and an estimated 1 million persons, including Syrian refugees, are considered as 'irregular migrants' or undocumented persons living there (Kirişci and Erdoğan 2020). In responding to the Syrian refugee crisis, Turkey chose to follow a different approach that placed primary responsibility for refugees with the government, and created policies that encouraged displaced Syrians to self-settle and become financially self-reliant. The following section outlines Turkish official Syrian refugee polices, tracing how they developed during the period 2011-2020 and their impacts on the living conditions and rights of Syrian refugees.

The Turkish Hosting Experience (2011-2018)

When the Syrian refugee crisis began in 2011, Turkey responded with an Open-Door policy and allowed Syrians to enter without visa requirements. Syrians impacted by the conflict and living close to the Turkish border fled to Turkish towns in the southeast of Turkey where some had relatives, relying on existing “Family, sectarian, ethnic and political networks between Turks living in border southeast cities and towns and Syrians” for support (Muhanna-Matar 2022:773).

The Turkish Government adopted a more hands-on approach to handling refugees than the Lebanese government. In 2014 it took over UNHCR's responsibilities for registering refugees with its newly created General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM) (World Bank 2015). The government built and managed several refugee camps along the Turkish-Syrian border, and did not restrict the movement of Syrian refugees, allowing them to leave the camps and self-settle outside (World Bank 2015). As a result of these policies, by 2019 less than 3% of Syrian refugees were living in 11 refugee camps (Erdoğan and Çorabatır 2019). The rest had migrated to Turkish urban cities, especially Istanbul which hosts the greatest number of Syrian refugees, an estimated 537,000 (Cloeters et al. 2018).

Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol, but with the reservation that it only accepts and awards refugee rights to refugees with European origins (Özden and Ramadan 2019). For refugees from other nationalities, Turkey is a country of transit (Chatty 2016). Therefore, like Lebanon, Turkey does not officially acknowledge the refugee status of Syrian refugees because they are not European. Instead, the Government of Turkey refers to them as ‘guests’ in public discourses (Cloeters et al. 2018) and officially places them under **‘**temporary protection’, a conditional refugee status that maintains the government’s right to deport them (İçduygu et al. 2017; Zoeteweij-Turhan 2018).

As the number of refugees continued to rise and the crisis prolonged, the Turkish government responded by further developing its migration policies towards the long-term integration of Syrian refugees (Cloeters et al. 2018). In 2014, it issued the Law on Foreigners and International Protection in Turkey which further established the rights of Syrian refugees (Zoeteweij-Turhan 2018) and changed the status of displaced Syrians in Turkey from “guests to ‘those under temporary protection’” (Şimşek

2019:177). According to Kivilvim (2016), the terms used in association with refugee women reinforce their victimhood and legal representation as dependent individuals through terms like "'mother' or 'wife', or represent her as a vulnerable or victimised being under the category of 'persons with special needs' because she is 'pregnant', 'alone with children' or 'the victim of physical or sexual violence'."(Kivilcim 2016:200). Kivilcim (2016) explores intersections between refugee status and gender in Turkey, arguing that the legal status of displaced Syrian women in Turkey, or placing them under temporary protection, is the most important factor behind their exposure to other forms of discrimination and violence (Kivilcim 2016) and enables the "physical, sexual, and economic violence of other actors" (Kivilcim 2016:195) against them. However, some interviewed women in this research had alternative experiences and felt that their gender reduced the discrimination they experienced as displaced Syrians living in Turkey. Farah, for example, is one such case. She became displaced in Turkey in 2016, and enrolled in an intensive Turkish language course for 6 months that allowed her to begin her university studies in Turkish at a public Turkish University. In 2018, Farah was unmarried and lived with her parents in a rural area close to Istanbul. In her view, being identified as a woman exposed her to less discrimination compared to Syrian men in Turkey:

> I believe that my gender posed more of an advantage and a blessing than an obstacle in Turkey. Life is difficult as a foreign woman in Turkey, especially when you're not able to speak the language, but from a socio-political point of view, Syrian women have it easier than men. It's common for Turks to group certain foreigners like Afghans, Iraqis, and Iranians under the same category - Syrians. And unfortunately, isolated events like rape, catcalling, and other crimes are taken out of proportion and Syrian men are blamed, so Turks automatically have a different kind of anger towards them. That is also beside the fact that many Turks believe that Syrian men are traitors for not fighting/defending their country and that it is inherently wrong for them to live elsewhere. This kind of anger is not directed towards women though, and this is a conversation I had with many Turks here.
>
> (Farah, Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 20.10.18)

Later in 2016, the Turkish-EU Deal was signed promising Turkey 3 billion Euros in return for improving the living conditions of Syrians in Turkey and keeping them out of Europe (Singh 2016). Registered Syrian refugees were given access to free public healthcare and public educational services at school and university institutions without paying tuition fees (Erdoğan and Çorabatır 2019; Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017). In addition, Syrian refugees were given the right to attend public vocational training courses which include language courses. In the period (2014-2018) 258,260 Syrians attended such vocational courses, 60% of whom were women (Erdoğan and Çorabatır 2019). In 2016 the initial open-door policy also ended, and Syrians entering Turkey were required to apply for a visa from Turkish embassies in their place of residence[11] (Cloeters et al. 2018). Approximately 110,000 Syrians with sufficient financial resources have been able to obtain residence permits (Körükmez et al. 2020) or long-term tourist visas in Turkey that are renewable and granted to individuals who can prove that they can cover their living and health expenses. As in Lebanon, due to geographic proximity, shared history, and familial ties, a small group of displaced Syrians were dual citizens and had Turkish citizenship before the outbreak of the war which gave them easy access to the host country. Thus, displaced Syrians in Turkey have different residency statuses that vary from those without any residency permits (irregular migrants), those with residency permits (without temporary protection), those with temporary protection (registered as refugees under temporary protection), and Syrians who have Turkish citizenship.

In 2014 Syrian refugees were given the right to work, but since 2016 specific legislation regarding the issuing of work permits to Syrians restricts them to specific locations and sectors (Cloeters et al. 2018; Erdoğan and Çorabatır 2019). Syrians living in Turkey are also permitted to start their own business in Turkey (FAO 2019; Erdoğan and Çorabatır 2019). Still, the vast majority of Syrian refugees are informally employed, and in 2019 only an estimated 31,200 Syrians, a mere 2.5% of the working-age population, had work permits (Erdoğan and Çorabatır 2019). The majority who work informally are paid less, work without social security, and live in conditions of poverty (Cloeters et al. 2018; Şimşek 2018). These findings were confirmed in an interview

[11] Noting that the Turkish Embassy in Damascus closed soon after the conflict in Syria broke out, meaning Syrians living in Syria that wished to apply for a visa had to travel to other counties with a Turkish embassy.

with Malek, a Syrian researcher working at a Turkish CSO who specialises in the economic conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey. During the interview, he highlighted how the practice of informal employment in Turkey is an identity-based form of discrimination that displaced Syrians are forced to accept because of their vulnerability in the host context:

> In 2016, about 40,000 work permits were issued for Syrians. Turkish employers before 2016 used to say, I want to hire Syrians, I do so informally because there is no regulation to do it formally. After 2016 they say I have to pay them a minimum wage and go through procedures, why would I bother with this? They don't even speak the language. Syrians don't take the jobs of locals, they fill the dirty jobs that the locals don't want. Before the Syrians came, it was the Kurds that had to do this. Syrians need the money, Kurds and Turks have a support system, government aid, family, etc. that allow them to say "No" to exploitation and low wages. Syrians are not eligible for unemployment aid by the government. So, Syrians accept lower wages than Kurds and Turks and informal employment and exploitation.
>
> (Malek. Ankara, Turkey. 19.09.2018)

Since 2016, Turkey has also been granting Turkish citizenship to a small number of Syrian refugees who "meet exceptional criteria based on high skill and higher education levels" (Koser Akcapar and Simsek 2018:177), under an amendment to the Turkish Citizenship Law of 1964 (No. 403) where "descent (Turkish ethnicity) and heritage (Sunni Muslims)" are key factors that are considered before granting Turkish citizenship (Koser Akcapar and Simsek 2018:179). This shift in Syrian refugee policies reflects the Turkish government's acceptance that the majority of Syrian refugees are most probably going to remain in Turkey permanently. In addition, their shared religious background as Sunni Muslims supports their acceptance as migrants among Turkish communities. Integration is furthermore easier for Turkmen Syrians who are of Turkish descent and speak the language (Koser Akcapar and Simsek 2018:180).

The naturalization of Syrian refugees in Turkey has been criticized by host communities who feared it was a tactic used by the current government to gain votes from nationalized Syrians (Koser Akcapar and Simsek 2018:182). The process was also criticized for being an exclusive form of 'class-based integration' offered only to educated and wealthy Syrians and not to the most vulnerable who require protection.

In their analysis of Turkey's naturalization policy towards Syrian refugees, Koser Akcapar & Simsek (2018) argue that the Turkish government excludes Syrians based on socioeconomic class, which they define as having "cultural and economic capital" (177). Indicators of high cultural and economic capital are linked to having exceptionally high skills and high educational levels (Koser Akcapar and Simsek 2018). In another article on the integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey, Şimşek (2018) also examines intersections among economic resources and integration, arguing that Turkish integration policies favour Syrians of a certain 'class' which she links to the possession of financial resources and skills at the expense of those unskilled poor refuges (Şimşek 2018). As of 2019, an estimated 117,000 Syrians (3.3% of displaced Syrians in Turkey) had received Turkish citizenship (Güney 2021). Farah, from the previous passages, also recently received Turkish citizenship. Before obtaining the citizenship, she and her parents resided in Turkey with a Tourist residency. Although receiving citizenship has made her right to remain in Turkey more stable, she feels that it causes additional resentment in her host community:

> Usually one gains a sense of security when being granted citizenship, but at the same time, I've noticed that Turkish people who are inclined to be racist and hold prejudice against Syrians are nearly always angrier after learning that you received citizenship. This is definitely a conversation I have regularly in my day-to-day life. Instances as simple as getting a prescription from the pharmacy, attempting to apply for a visa to a European country, or merely just existing in a university classroom are all enough to aggravate the Turks. I believe that the citizenship was a great benefit for me and my family and has saved us a great deal of worries of having to apply for residencies to remain in Turkey. However, I do feel the need to conceal the fact that I have received citizenship most of the time, in order to avoid receiving backlash and to continue to feel safe. I will only admit to having it when absolutely necessary. In short, in my day-to-day life in Turkey, I feel that I am in a weaker position in society and need to stay quiet not mention that I have the Turkish passport to avoid trouble, but I'm grateful that I was able to stay in the country and continue my studies.
>
> (Farah, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 20.10.18)

Since 2017, the vast majority of displaced Syrians living without the privilege of citizenship experience more restrictive refugee policies on their movement within Turkey. Syrian refugees are required to report to the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) and their residence is restricted to the province in which they registered (Cloeters et al. 2018). This means that Syrians wishing to relocate to another province for work or education can no longer do so without prior permission. Obtaining permission is difficult, and many Syrians relocate anyway in search of work opportunities thus becoming illegal residents and losing access to basic services because they require official registration documents or because they fear being detained if caught (Kirişci and Erdoğan 2020). By 2019, there were reports of unregistered Syrian refugees being subject to unlawful detention and deportation (Human Rights Watch 2019). Rami, a Syrian lawyer working in a Turkish CSO as a legal advisor to Syrian refugees, spoke of the bureaucratic challenges, compounded by the language barrier, confronting Syrian refugees in Turkey:

> There is no organisation in the management of immigration, new rules every day, something different, government inspections etc. The application of the laws is difficult, even when they [Syrian refugees] have the needed conditions the laws are not implemented, or they [government representatives] ask for almost impossible conditions. The translation services are bad, what happens is not legal and there is bribery sometimes. You need to be registered in order to benefit from services and it is sometimes not possible for Syrians to register themselves. For Syrians that work, they [employers] pay for [deduct] insurance from their salary even though this is illegal. The employer should pay this. There is too much bureaucracy. Even if you [Syrian refugee] want to pursue your legal rights to be employed formally [Syrian refugees cannot] because you [Syrian refugee] don't want to be caught by government inspectors. They [government inspectors] become aggressive and deport you at the border.
>
> (Rami, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 25.10.2018)

Thus, in Turkey, Syrian refugee policies and social attitudes towards displaced Syrians can appear rather contradictory. Both are influenced by Kemalist legacies which redefined Turkish national identity based on ethnicity and language, and in more recent times, by the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet Ve

Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) with its strong Islamic character and Neo-Ottoman thinking. The outcome is that displaced Syrians are seen by their Turkish hosts as 'Arab' and therefore ethnically and culturally different, often in a negative sense. The following quote by Farah includes some of the typical negative behavioural and physical stereotypes that are associated with the Syrian/Arab identity in Turkey:

> They [Turkish people] think that as 'Arabs' all Syrians are dark skinned with dark features, backward thinking, unclean, and "uncultured" and many times they believe we have stronger tendencies for criminal behaviour. In the beginning, I noticed that they struggle to mentally compartmentalize what category I fit in, as if all Syrians are the same. I'm usually bombarded with many questions, usually with an angry tone. Later on, things start to soften up gradually.
>
> (Farah, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 20.10.18)

At the same time, and especially at the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis, many Turkish people that support the politics and religious conservatism of the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet Ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) regard refugee Syrians as their 'brothers and sisters' in Islam who require their support due to the conflict in their homeland. This quote by Ahmet, a Turkish researcher and government advisor, demonstrates the contradictory perceptions of the Turkish hosts toward displaced Syrians in Turkey:

> Considering the large numbers of Syrians in Turkey, there is not much conflict among both communities because of the Muslim identity which acts as a facilitator to accept them. I'm referring to the concept of the 'Ansar' or 'Brotherhood'[12]. Still, many Turkish people do not realize that there are many different ethnic groups in Syria, so they confuse Syrians for the Dom, gypsies, who beg in the streets, and get annoyed by them. In the east of Turkey, there

[12] Referring to the concept of Islamic fraternity between the "ansar" (meaning 'the helpers') and "muhajir" (meaning 'migrants' who in the Quran are said to have been a group of migrants including the Prophet Mohammad and his followers, who escaped persecution in Mecca and were welcomed into the homes of the inhabitants of Madina) (Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017).

> was an incident, a fight between Turkish and Syrian people, and the Mayor said to the local people, “I guarantee that Syrian people will not stay in this city and we will not give them any work”. We still don’t know how to solve these kinds of conflicts.
>
> (Ahmet, Ankara, Turkey. 12.09.2018)

The impact of these contradictory perspectives can be seen in host responses to Syrian refugees from the official governmental policy level to the local level; in the host community's treatment of Syrians in their daily lives that aim to support their fellow Syrian brothers and sisters in their crisis but at the same time discriminate against them because of perceived identity differences. In particular, the Arab ethnicity is a major driver of xenophobic social discrimination and perceptions of cultural difference between Turkish and Syrian communities. The following quote from an interview conducted in 2015 by Knappert et al. (2018) with a Turkish Programme Officer working for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) demonstrates how the Arab ethnicity is used to ‘other’ displaced Syrians in Turkey:

> They [refugees] are seen as a kind of strangers invading our country, let us say, and coming to our country and exploiting our resources, but not really producing anything, not really providing and supporting the country […] they are seen as foreigners and they are Arabic. They have an Arabic culture, which is not very much liked in this country, although we are religious, we have the same religion, but towards the Arabic culture, we have some bias, let us say. (Programme officer, ILO, female, personal communication, December 2, 2015).
>
> (Knappert et al. 2018:68)

Research participants also spoke of discrimination that they faced from host communities because of their Arab ethnicity. They connected this form of discrimination to language use and mentioned how ethnic discrimination could be mitigated when they became more ‘Turkish’ by learning the language or being deemed worthy of Turkish citizenship. The following quotes are by two female Syrian university students during a group interview with volunteers at an Islamic Syrian CSO in Istanbul:

> Turkish people are a closed society, the Turkish ethnicity, they want to strengthen it. The nature of the Turkish people is completely different than ours.
>
> (Salma, Istanbul, Turkey. 19.10.2018)

> While doing official procedures for example, if you just speak two words in Turkish they transform and respect you a lot. They really like Arabs that have learnt Turkish. They have a clear racism, it's something they don't hide, and they speak very little English. Syrian girl [unmarried] students have fewer problems in integration, because they learn Turkish so that they can enter university.
>
> (Leila, Istanbul, Turkey. 19.10.2018)

In the quote above, Leila touches upon displaced Syrian women's intersecting experiences of discrimination that are based on their ethnicity and gender-related care duties at home. Displaced Syrians in Turkey who are unable to communicate in Turkish find it harder to establish relationships with host communities and feel more isolated (Koser Akcapar and Simsek 2018:182). Compared to Syrian men and children, the majority of displaced Syrian women in Turkey have not been able to learn Turkish making them "dependent on their husbands and sometimes on their children, who pick up the language quickly and become translators for their families" (Rottmann and Nimer 2021:68). Research by Rottmann and Nimmer (2021) confirms Leila's quote and those of other married women in this research, about the influence of having significant care duties on the ability of displaced Syrian women to learn the Turkish Language or engage in CSOs. They find that displaced Syrian women's gender and migrant status intersect to make it harder for them to learn the language:

> Women refugees are more likely, in principle, to have time to attend language-learning courses in comparison to their male counterparts, because they are less likely to join the workforce. However, women have to employ different strategies of making time to do so, as they are often responsible for caring for their children and can only rely on themselves, as they have generally been separated from extended family due to displacement; they either have to wait until their children go to school, bring them to the course or rely on a relative or

> neighbour for childcare. Many women postpone learning until after their child goes to kindergarten.
>
> (Rottmann and Nimer 2021:74)

Some studies claim that displaced Syrian women face additional discrimination in the Turkish labour market due to their gender. One such example is a study on the impacts of national policies on Syrian refugee working conditions in Turkey by (Knappert et al. 2018) who incorporate an intersectional lens to understand how the refugee status granted to displaced Syrians according to Turkey's Act on Foreigners and International Protection leads to experiences of inclusion or exclusion in Turkish organisations, and how these experiences differ by gender. Knappert et al., conclude that displaced Syrian women in Turkey face “reinforced exclusion based on gender [that] is rooted in the gender roles culturally embedded in refugees' home and host countries combined with a lack of empowerment by relevant stakeholders” (Knappert et al. 2018:76). Here the lack of empowerment refers to the Syrian women being in a subordinate position of power respective to Turkish employers who may exploit them financially or harass them. Unfortunately, Knappert et al.(2018) reproduce many of the victimising stereotypes associated with Syrian refugee women in Turkey with section headings titled: ‘Women's amplified dependency and despair’ and concluding statements like “In sum, female Syrian refugees who come to live in Turkey without a benevolent male partner, seem to be stuck between two poor options – working under exploitive conditions or entering a (convenience) marriage” (Knappert et al. 2018:73). While their research (which is based on interviews with only 10 Syrian refugees, five of whom were women) makes useful connections between national policies, their application within organisations in host countries, and refugee identities; in their interpretation, Knappert et al. leave little room to understand refugee agency in responding to host exclusionary practices. They do, however, acknowledge the possibility of bias in their data collection and analysis due to their identities “as female and European” (Knappert et al. 2018:76).

As the economic situation in Turkey worsened over the period 2011-2018, social resentment towards Syrian refugees grew due to exaggerated perceptions of the government support that they received. Only Syrians in camps received financial support from the government (Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017). After the above-

mentioned Turkish-EU deal in 2016, vulnerable Syrians received a small amount of financial support as part of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme executed by the Turkish Red Crescent (Kirişci and Erdoğan 2020). Islamic Turkish CSOs also provided "humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees out of an Islamic duty towards co-religionists" (Koser Akcapar and Simsek 2018:184-185). Several Turkish participants of this research confirmed the growing resentment among Turkish people over their government's spending on Syrian refugees instead of on Turks in need:

> The government did a good job in helping the Syrians, but they got a lot of money from the EU and there was a lack of transparency in spending. Turkish people were angry that the government is spending money on Syrian refugees when there are many poor Turkish people that are not getting support.
>
> (Ipek, Istanbul, Turkey. 25.09.2018)

As in Lebanon, financial difficulties drive some Syrian families into negative coping strategies such as subjecting their children to labour, early marriage or second marriages which are illegal in Turkey (Özden and Ramadan 2019). Although 'cultural arguments' (Özden and Ramadan 2019) are often used by Turkish communities to explain these coping strategies instead of poor living conditions, reports of child marriages existed in both Turkish and Syrian communities before the outbreak of conflict in Syria in 2011, especially in rural areas, and after the conflict "Turkish fixers" were involved in the arranging of such marriages (CTDC 2015:14).

Although initially welcoming towards refugees, the social attitudes of host communities in Turkey worsened and acts of discrimination and xenophobia towards Syrian communities became more common as it became clearer that European countries did not intend to absorb any more refugees and that those that were already in Turkey were there to stay (Zoeteweij-Turhan 2018). This was especially so, as the Turkish government struggled to meet the needs of over five million Syrian refugees while mitigating the effects of economic crisis since 2018 and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic (Diker and Ragab 2019; Kirişci and Erdoğan 2020).

Rather than a refugee-rights based approach, the Turkish government used a discourse of common Muslim identity and Islamic 'charity' and fraternity, combined with neo-Ottomanist inspired arguments of historical responsibility towards Syrians who were once part of the Ottoman Empire, as justification for its initial open-door

policy and support for Syrian refugees (Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017). With time, as economic, social and political pressures mounted, social and political discrimination based on ethnic differences increased dramatically. These invalidated arguments of common religious or Ottoman identity, and resulted in increasingly violent acts of hatred towards Syrian refugees. These included the destruction and burning of Syrian-owned business (Dadouch 2019) and, in some municipalities, threats to gradually increase Syrians' utility fees until they leave (Buyuk 2021). A growing number of Turkish politicians advocated for the repatriation of Syrian refugees, including the option of forced repatriation, as a solution for the growing problems in Turkey (Kayaoglu et al. 2021). Turkish host communities increasingly blamed Syrian refugees for rising rents, low wages, for their receipt of aid from the government and UN agencies (Cloeters et al. 2018), and during the COVID-19 epidemic, for spreading the virus (Kirişci and Erdoğan 2020).

According to (Özden and Ramadan 2019) the Turkish government's initial charity-based approach to the Syrian refugee crisis, instead of a rights based approach, was one of the factors behind the racism exerted against Syrian refugees:

> both the state and Turkish civil society organisations' approach to the crisis between 2011 and 2014 was generally humanitarian/emergency-based in nature, reinforcing the general perception of refugees as mere 'recipients of aid,' rather than individuals with rights and agency, and the hierarchical relationship between Syrian refugees and their "providers."
>
> (Özden and Ramadan 2019:6)

The authors add that a combination of government policies, which declared a state of emergency after the 2016 July 15th attempted military coup in Turkey thereby restricting the work of rights based organisations, and a lack of funding from the international donor community for rights based organisations, combined to limit the ability of rights based organisations to raise issues of Syrian refugee rights in broader public debates, and to focus instead on building social cohesion between Turkish and Syrian communities (Özden and Ramadan 2019).

Conclusion

In 2011, Syrians who were fleeing conflict and seeking refuge in Lebanon or Turkey were heading to countries that shared a long history of heritage and familial ties.

However, unlike hosting countries such as Germany, both Lebanon and Turkey did not grant them refugee status or rights under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Moreover, these two host countries had different political reactions towards the Syrian conflict. In Lebanon, political factions maintained an official neutral position, while the Turkish government chose to intervene in the civil war by supporting the Syrian opposition. In each hosting context, the political response to the Syrian conflict, existing refugee policies, and shared history with their neighbour combined to shape resulting policy responses to the Syrian refugee crisis of 2011. Examining these responses through the lens of 'Hostipitality', it becomes clearer how in both contexts, the identity of displaced Syrians played an important role in justifying them, and as the refugee crisis prolonged, also drove rising social, economic and political discrimination against them.

From the outset, seeking long-term refuge in Lebanon was going to be challenging for any group of refugees. The country's confessional composition and political system, which relies on maintaining a balance among various religious sects, made it impossible to assimilate any group of refugees that may disrupt this equilibrium. Thus, preventing a large group of predominantly Sunni Muslim refugees from becoming a permanent part of Lebanese society was an important motivator behind official responses to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011. This motivation was reflected in government decisions such as shifting responsibility for the refugees to local municipalities and INGOs, and prohibiting the establishment of refugee camps early on in the crisis. However, as the number of Syrian refugees continued to rise reaching one million in 2014, the presence of large numbers of refugees pushed the country's wanting infrastructure and social resources beyond their limits exacerbating social resentment towards refugees. Additional discriminatory policies followed like preventing UNHCR from registering Syrian refugees also led to large numbers of Syrians living in Lebanon unofficially and thus being denied access to basic health and education services, and making it even harder for displaced Syrians to remain or make a decent living in Lebanon.

In Turkey, political support for the Syrian opposition and the ruling government's Neo-Ottoman policy which revitalised Turkey's role in Middle East politics through embracing its Islamic, multi-ethnic heritage was reflected in the Open-Door policy that welcomed Syrian refugees in 2011. A dialogue of Islamic charity and support for

Muslim brothers and Sisters who were once part of the empire was used to gain local support for government efforts. Initial refugee policies referred to displaced Syrians as ‘guests’ and gave them access to shelter, public health and education services, and allowed them to work, establish private business and their own CSOs. A much larger country compared to Lebanon with more resources at its disposal, the Turkish government was able to take on a more centralised and hands-on approach in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis. However, as time passed and Turkey began to experience rising economic and political pressures, host populations became critical of government support, which they felt should be directed towards the Turkish people who were more deserving. The need to support displaced Syrians, with whom they shared a common Muslim identity, gave way to perceived ethnic differences between Turks and Syrians that were constructed at the end of WWI and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Syrians as ‘Arabs’ increasingly became different from ‘Turks’ and associated with negative traits like criminality, and backwardness, this was especially the case for Syrians who were not fluent in Turkish. Hostipitality, both social and political rose after 2016 beginning with the end of the open-door policy. Displaced Syrians in Turkey began facing greater restrictions on their movement and by 2018, more and more Syrians were fearing repatriation. Despite granting them right to work formally, the government also turned a blind eye towards the informal employment of Syrians and allowed them to be used as cheap labour and worsening their living conditions. The vast majority of displaced Syrians were also excluded from receiving Turkish citizenship because their poorer socioeconomic status and lack of skills. However, even when they became more restrictive after 2014, Turkish Syrian refugee policies still gave Syrians more opportunities to integrate in their new context, and the freedom to work and form their own CSOs compared to Lebanon.

In both contexts, Syrian women’s gender increases their exposure to discrimination and harassment in public spaces. In the Lebanese context, the influence of identity markers like religion (in particular wearing the hijab), nationality, residency status, and socioeconomic class on exclusionary experiences is more strongly felt than in the Turkish context, while perceived ethnic differences and the language barrier drive hostility in Turkey.

Chapter 3: Theorising Civically Active Syrian Women's Opportunities in Displacement

As outlined in the previous chapter, refugee policies in both Lebanon and Turkey became increasingly restrictive and hostile towards Syrian refugees during the period 2011-2018. Social hostility and discrimination by host communities also rose. However, as Chapter 5 on the 'Effects of Conflict and Displacement on Syrian Women's Civic Participation' reveals, both host contexts presented displaced Syrian women with new opportunities for their civic engagement. In this chapter, I engage with three theoretical concepts – Derrida's concept of hostipitality (2000), intersectionality, and Cooke's (2001) notion of multiple critique – to theorise relationships between the intersectional identities of civically engaged displaced Syrian women and their host contexts.

'Hostipitality' in Lebanese and Turkish Contexts

Derrida's theoretical discussion of 'hostipitality' helps explain the hostile host political and social responses to the Syrian refugee crisis, which also places certain limitations on Syrian women's abilities to engage civically in Lebanon and Turkey. Through Derrida's discussion of the conditional hospitality that exists in a hosting situation between host and guest, it becomes clearer how, among others, identity markers related to nationality, ethnicity and religion are used to 'other' Syrian refugees (guests) and justify acts of discrimination in Lebanese and Turkish host contexts.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter which outlined host responses to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011, political and social structures in Lebanon and Turkey regard Syrian refugees at best as temporary 'guests' and at worst as an unwanted 'other'. These structures play an important role in shaping displaced Syrian women's civic participation. Laws can either enable civic participation by allowing displaced Syrians to form Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and work formally in them as is the case in Turkey, or they can restrict their civic engagement by making it illegal as is the case in Lebanon. Official refugee policies that are created by the governments of host countries also play an important role in influencing social attitudes towards refugees and justifying discriminatory behaviours towards them. Derrida's philosophical contribution to our understanding of 'hospitality' or what he refers to as 'hostipitality' - the inevitable hostility that exists in any hosting or hospitality situation (Derrida 2000),

helps us comprehend the role that refugee identity plays in shaping host policies and social attitudes towards them.

According to Derrida, hospitality is defined "as inviting and welcoming the 'stranger'" (O'Gorman 2006:51). It can take place at the personal level of an individual (the master) inviting the 'stranger' into the home, or at the level of states (O'Gorman 2006:51). As hospitality necessarily occurs with an 'outsider' or 'guest' being invited in, it also "necessarily contains the concept of 'other' or 'foreigner' within it" (O'Gorman 2006:52). Derrida's discussion of hospitality centres around discussing the relationship between the "master, or host, and the guest, the foreigner," (Westmoreland 2008:4). He states that absolute hospitality – "without imperative, order, or duty" (Westmoreland 2008:3)- is impossible, and in reality the hospitality that takes place is conditional and entails a discussion of rights, duties and obligations (Westmoreland 2008:1). The 'master' according to Derrida is:

> he who receives, who is master in his house, in his household, in his state, in his nation, in his city, in his town, who remains master in his house – who defines the conditions of hospitality or welcome; where consequently there can be no unconditional welcome, no unconditional passage through the door.
>
> (Derrida 2000:4)

Thus, Derrida claims that "there is always a little hostility in all hosting and hospitality" leading to his understanding of 'hostipitality', the violence exerted by the master towards the guest in his possession and retention of mastery over the house (O'Gorman, 2006:51). What exists in reality is a conditional hospitality that "is accompanied with laws—the rules and codes of language, which are shared among human beings" (Westmoreland 2008:5). Conditional hospitality is offered only to those who have the right of hospitality; thus, persons without this right become, according to Derrida, 'parasites':

> Without this right, a new arrival can only be introduced 'in my home,' in the host's 'at home', as a parasite, a guest who is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest.
>
> (O'Gorman 2006:52)

In the situation under study, displaced Syrians are considered foreigners/guests that are subject to a conditional hospitality or 'hostipitality' by their hosts (the Lebanese and Turkish states). In the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis, both states welcomed forcibly displaced Syrians with open door polices. This welcome was subject to certain conditions and restrictions. In both countries their refugee status was not recognised, their stay was regarded as temporary, and many of their rights as refugees were restricted or violated. With the passing of time, in both states the conditional hospitality that was initially offered became restricted as displaced Syrians came to be unwanted guests that had stayed for too long. In both countries, legal restrictions on their presence rose, and social discourses increasingly referred to them as illegal or unwanted guests that should be expelled.

In Lebanon, nationality, religion, and socioeconomic status are key social markers used to 'other' Syrian refugees. As a Sunni majority population, their refugee status is denied because nationalising them would disrupt the delicate confessional balance of the country. As Syrian nationals they face legal restrictions in their right to work, to establish CSOs, and to reside in the country. Most Syrians are also believed to be less educated and to belong to a lower socioeconomic class compared to the Lebanese population. Munoz Alonso (2018) adds, that Syrian refugees in Lebanon are "socially constructed as the Other" (49) and contrasted to their Lebanese hosts who are "more advanced, modern, open-minded, while Syrian refugees are socially constructed as more primitive and disadvantaged" (Munoz Alonso 2018:49). This othering serves to dehumanise displaced Syrians and "lays the ground for a widespread socially accepted right to dominance by the Lebanese" (Munoz Alonso 2018:49). Linn (2020) adds that Lebanese state refugee policies, despite not being gendered at the state level, have added negative impacts on the daily lives of Syrian women:

> Poor urban infrastructures and shelter in densely populated refugee receiving neighbourhoods coupled with refugee policies that placed severe stress upon families. This creates spaces of vulnerability, and violence, for women. At home they can be exposed to an increase in domestic violence. In potential places of employment, they are subject to sexual harassment or demands to compromise their appearance. Thus, women experience insecurity at several levels: the

> intimate scale of their bodies, to the materiality of their homes, to their inability to obtain work and to their uncertain status as refugees and outsiders.
>
> (Linn 2020:167)

In Turkey, a Syrian nationality denies displaced Syrians internationally recognised refugee rights which Turkey awards exclusively to refugees of European origin. As such, for many Syrians displaced in Turkey, their residency status and their ability to remain in Turkey is a source of insecurity that increases their vulnerability and exposure to host discrimination. Kivilcim (2016) describes the Temporary Protection Regulation and the Law on Foreigners and International Protection in Turkey that applies to Syrian refugees as a "hostile legal context" that subjects female Syrian refugees to structural "legal violence" as it "keeps them in the regime of temporary protection and prevents their access to international protection" (Kivilcim 2016:193). This legal violence practiced by the state serves to "normalise and legitimise the social asymmetries which result from racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination" in host social interactions with displaced Syrians (Kivilcim 2016:194). Research by Knappert et al. (2018) on the working conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey, finds evidence that the state's resistance to enforcing laws that protect Syrian refugee labour rights and turning a blind eye towards informal labour practices is a form of legal violence than allows Turkish employers to legitimise the unequal treatment of Syrian refugees in the labour market. According to Knappert et al. (2018), interviewed Turkish employers and experts "felt that the act of discrimination was justified, especially in light of their perceived duty to treat locals better" (69). As discussed in the previous chapter, the common Muslim identity that the majority of Turks and displaced Syrians share was a factor that supported the initial welcome and aid offered to Syrians at the beginning of the refugee crisis. With time, perceived ethnic differences between Turks and 'Arab' Syrians became more important. As Arabs, Syrians not only spoke a different language but were associated with negative stereotypes including criminality, backwardness, and other cultural practices like child marriage and polygamy that were incompatible with Turkish society.

An Intersectional Perspective on Syrian Women's Civic Participation

However, host 'hostipitality' did not succeed in preventing displaced Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey from engaging civically in host CSOs or from forming their own

CSOs. Indeed, the Syrian women who were interviewed in this research in 2018 were all civically engaged; working, volunteering, or establishing Syrian CSOs in both host contexts. During the interviews they spoke of the challenges they faced in these contexts, and how they found different ways to overcome them. But how can we theoretically frame the various responses of displaced Syrian women to host hostipitalities? How can we understand the different strategies they adopt to resist exclusion and engage civically in these contexts? Here, applying an intersectional lens to interviewed Syrian women's civic participation illuminates the role identity plays in shaping their civic engagement in Lebanon and Turkey during the period 2011-2018.

An inductive analysis of interview data, explained in detail in Chapter 4 on research design and methodology, identifies the categories of gender, marital status, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, religion, residency status, and urban/rural background and age as the most influential on displaced Syrian women's civic participation. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 discuss at length how these identity markers shape civic participation differently within each host context.

As an explicit term, 'intersectionality' was first introduced into feminist theory in the United States by critical race theorist and African American law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics'. In her article, Crenshaw develops a Black feminist critique "of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis" in antidiscrimination law, antiracist politics, and feminist theory resulting in the marginalization and exclusion of Black women (139). Using antidiscrimination court cases as examples, Crenshaw demonstrates how relying on a single-categorical axis while examining discrimination can result in a bias towards taking only the experiences of the more privileged members of the group into consideration, and marginalizing others who are "multiply-burdened" (140). She argues that the analytical frameworks employed in feminist theory and antiracist policy themselves need to be changed to accommodate the intersectional experience of Black women and their social subordination.

'Intersectionality' become a popular term in the 1990s in studies examining social power differentials among subcategories of women resulting from intersections of

gender/sex and other social categorizations (Lykke 2010). Collins (1990), another African American feminist scholar who further developed the feminist theory of intersectionality, was critical of what she referred to as ‘Eurocentric masculinist thought’ and its ‘either/or’ dichotomous thinking which led to a studied factor being ranked at the expense of others. Instead, she argued to replace this additive approach in examining oppression in social sciences and feminist theory with an interlocking approach. She considered this a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of oppression in social sciences. In her own words:

> Instead of starting with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion, Black feminist thought sees these distinctive systems of oppression as being part of one overarching structure of domination. Viewing relations of domination for Black women for any given sociohistorical context as being structured via a system of interlocking race, class, and gender oppression expands the focus of analysis from merely describing the similarities and differences distinguishing these systems of oppression and focuses greater attention on how they interconnect.
>
> (Lemert 2017:413-414)

According to Collins, the foundation of the structure of domination is superior and inferior ideological thinking against a group of people within a certain system. However, individuals within groups experience varying degrees of subjugation and privilege: “Depending on the context, an individual may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed” (Lemert 2017:415). To clarify, Collins gives the example of how white women can be placed both in a position of disadvantage because of their gender, and advantage because of their race (Lemert, 2017). According to Collins and Bilge (2016), interlocking social markers that are being examined in a given context such as race, class, religion, ethnicity, etc. are regarded as “mutually constructing or intersecting systems of power” (27) that are to be understood in relation to each other.

Collins (1990) asserts that while the analytical categories of race, class and gender may be the most relevant when understanding the systems of oppression under which African American women live, the principle of intersectionality can be used to

understand the domination of ‘othered’ groups in all contexts. She refers to these groups as “All categories of humans labelled Others” (Lemert, 2017: 415). In applying intersectional frameworks to disaster or forced migration contexts, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2019) finds that intersectionality can be a useful tool to highlight:

> the extent to which certain individuals, social groups, and organisations benefit from particular disasters, while other people are exploited, marginalised, and excluded by individuals, social groups, and organisations, as well as by diverse systems of inequality and exploitation.
>
> (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019:43)

Gender in this study is understood with reference to feminist theories which critically problematize the object ‘gender/sex’ and its meanings (Lykke 2010; Disch and Hawkesworth 2016). These theories adopt a constructivist ontology, which views knowledge as discourse, and where society is “characterized by a constant negotiation of meanings between different actors and collectives” (Lykke 2010, 34). In the context of conflict, leading international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that work to protect and assist war victims, view ‘gender’ as a social construct that is separate from ‘sex’. Working globally, they also highlight the varied influences of culture and local contexts on their understanding of gender. The ICRC defines gender as:

> [the] culturally expected behaviour of men and women based on roles, attitudes and values ascribed to them on the basis of their sex, whereas the term “sex” refers to biological and physical characteristics. Gender roles vary widely within and between cultures, and depend on the particular social, economic and political context.
>
> (ICRC 2004:7)

Socially constructed gender differentiation creates distinct behaviours and roles for men and women in society. These behaviours are based on social and cultural values and therefore differ according to group, and vary across time and place. The majority of societies in the Arab region maintain distinct roles for men and women, and being part of classic patriarchal systems (Kandiyoti 1988), believe that “fathers, brothers and husbands are responsible for the conduct of their daughters, sisters and wives.” (Rabo

2005:157). This belief is legally institutionalised through Personal Status Laws in Arab countries which place women at an unequal status with men and in many cases under male authority (Rabo 2005).

Arab feminist scholars have criticised the adoption of a universal definition of gender based on Western liberal understandings that ignore the global plurality of feminist perspectives (El-Mahdi 2010). Indeed, finding an appropriate and agreed upon translation for 'gender' in the Arabic language remains a major challenge for Arab feminists. (Elsadda 2014) discusses some of the conceptual challenges in reaching a unified translation for the term 'gender' in Arabic. Citing the article 'Translating gender' by Mehrez (2007), Elsadda (2014) discusses how the term 'gender' has led to various translations in Arabic which include "the term *naw'* (social kind/species) or *jins* (sex, derived from the Greek word genus) […] *junusa* (derived from the root janasa)" (21). Elsadda (2014) also adds "naw' ijtima'i (social kind/species)" to the list of translations, which she believes reflects the movement towards understanding gender as a social construct and "that differences between the sexes are linked to the individuals' socialization and upbringing in a particular cultural context" (23). However, the term naw' ijtima'i (social kind/species) remains unpopular in daily use due to its linguistic awkwardness (Arenfeldt and Al-Hassan Golley 2012).

Increasingly, the term 'gender' is simply Arabized as 'jinder' without translation, reflecting the predominance of the Western origin of the term (Arenfeldt and Al-Hassan Golley 2012) and its channelling into the Arab world through Western academic institutions and INGOS.[13] Referring to the Lebanese context for example, a recent English/Arabic dictionary of twenty-five key gender-related terms titled: 'Gender Dictionary: Travelling concepts and local usages in Lebanon' published in 2016 by Lebanon Support, a local Lebanese NGO, includes a bilingual explanation for the term 'gender' which is translated to 'jinder/social species'. The dictionary's definition of gender demonstrates the evolution and use of the term 'gender' in local Lebanese discourses, and the external influences from INGOs and Western feminist movements in the evolving conceptualisation of 'gender' in the Arab world:

[13] This view is supported by the findings of this study, as the majority of research participants speaking in Arabic used the term 'jinder' to refer to the English term 'gender'.

> “Gender” is replacing “sex” in common speech, while نوع اجتماعي [social species] and/ or جندر [jinder] is increasingly replacing “jins” [sex] in Lebanese activist speech and publications specifically as part of gender mainstreaming efforts that are intimately linked with rising NGOization, institutionalization of feminist and women’s movements, and overall professionalization of activists and women’s issues. In particular, fourth wave feminists in Lebanon have taken “gender” out of its binary (or often singular) meaning and engaged with the queer feminist reconceptualizations outlined above which expand the term’s reference beyond cisgender women.
>
> (Lebanon Support 2016:26)

According to Elsadda (2014), the various translations of ‘gender’ reflect the “diversity of research methods and agendas” of Arab feminist scholars (23). In her view, none of the translations are necessarily ‘better’ than the other. ‘Gender’ like other travelling concepts or theories may take up new forms and meanings when it travels to a different culture, and these new meanings also change over time within the same culture. She argues for a definition of gender that is “liberated from the confines of its moment of origin or inception” (Elsadda 2014:23). As such, the meanings associated with the term ‘gender’ in the contemporary Arab context are a reflection of its evolution as it travels to a new culture and interacts with it across time (Elsadda 2014). Similarly, Lykke (2010) views the efforts of non-Anglo-American feminists to translate the category gender/sex as it travels to their contexts as part of the process of resignification of traditional meanings in feminist approaches.

This study regards the term ‘gender’ as a socially constructed travelling concept that is influenced by evolving Western conceptualisations of the term and channelled into the Arab and Turkish civil society context through INGO and Western academic discourses. The term ‘travelling concept’ implies that it may take up new forms of use and understanding as it enters other cultures and societies, and may take up multiple meanings across various subgroups of the same society.

When applying intersectional frameworks, feminist theorists disagree on whether analytical categories like gender, age, race etc. should be finite or infinite, and if certain categories should be prioritized over others or not (Lykke 2010). In her article ‘The Complexity of Intersectionality’, feminist sociologist McCall (2005) classifies current

intersectional approaches into three main groups based on “how they understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life” (McCall 2005:1773). This research follows what McCall refers to as the ‘intracategorical approach’ (McCall 2005:1773). Conceptually, the intracategorical approach falls between the other two approaches identified by McCall: the ‘anticategorical complexity’ approach which rejects categories and deconstructs them, and the ‘intercategorical complexity’ approach that uses analytical categories strategically to study inequalities “among social groups…along multiple and conflicting dimensions” (McCall, 2005:1773). In other words, an intracategorical approach is “critical of broad and sweeping acts of categorization rather than as critical of categorization per se” (McCall, 2005:1779).

One of the ways intracategorical intersectional research studies “multiple and conflicting experiences of subordination and power” (McCall 2005:1780) is by conducting a single-group analysis - selecting a single social group as a subject and studying it across multiple master categories. This is linked to its application in more recent studies that use intracategorical approaches together with case studies – “in depth studies of a single group or culture or site” (McCall 2005:1782). Intersectional feminists using case study methods do so in order “to identify a new or invisible group—at the intersection of multiple categories—and proceed to uncover the differences and complexities of experience embodied in that location” (McCall 2005:1782).

This research studies the experiences of a group of Syrian women who, due to the conflict, were forced to leave Syria after 2011 and migrate to Lebanon and Turkey. While this group of Syrian women (women who identify as Syrian, and were living in Syria in 2011 when conflict erupted and consequently became displaced in Lebanon and Turkey) is the primary subject in this intracategorical single-group analysis – their own experiences are used to identify certain ‘multiple master categories’ that influence their civic participation, and in doing so also demonstrate the complexity of their experiences and heterogeneity within the studied group. Multiple intersections are examined across and not within key social categories that had an influence on their civic participation. However, it is important to note that while an intracategorical intersectional approach can shed light on how multiple master categories intersect to influence civic participation, they can only provide partial perspectives of social groups

and cannot “determine the complex texture of day-to-day life for individual members of the social group under study, no matter how detailed the level of disaggregation” (McCall 2005:1782).

This research adopted a critical stance in the process of identifying the analytical categories of the intersectional analysis. The selected analytical categories were not predetermined from intersectionality’s “usual suspects”, namely gender, race, and class (Lykke 2010:82). Instead the categories emerged from an inductive analysis of the data. The perspectives of the interviewees were key to understanding and defining social markers, accounting for cultural differences in the meanings attached to concepts such as ‘women’ and ‘oppression’ and other social markers being examined together with gender.

Analysing the interview transcripts with an intersectional lens helped to demonstrate the heterogeneity of identity and experience of displaced Syrian women, and the variation in their civic participation and engagement. The findings challenge scholarly research on displaced Syrian women after 2011 that homogenises their experiences or limits them to intersections between their nationality and gender. Syrian refugee women fell victim to such biases in development, academic, and media discourses which represented them as ‘vulnerable’, ‘weak’, and ‘domestic’ victims of patriarchal forces in their own and host societies. The sociological and historical specificities of various subgroups of Syrian women are often ignored, replaced by assumptions of Syrian women as a homogeneous categorical group based on their perceived powerlessness which derives from their gender. For example, NGO narratives, based on simplistic understandings of ‘traditional’ uneducated Syrian women who never worked, assume that female-headed households are a new phenomenon resulting from the conflict and that they are vulnerable and in need of further ‘empowering’ and increased ‘awareness’ (Couldrey and Peebles 2018).

While discussing human trafficking or early marriage among Syrian refugee communities, media discourses often reinforce characterisations of victimhood and domesticity when describing Syrian women, instead of highlighting the role of conflict-induced poverty in such negative coping strategies. An example of this can be found in the book ‘No Refuge for Women: The Tragic Fate of Syrian Refugees’ published in 2017, six years after the refugee crisis began, where journalist presenter Maria von

Welser uses both words and images to reinforce the stereotype of the poor, weak, domestic, Muslim Syrian woman. While the book cover displays a stereotypical visual representation of the Syrian refugee woman: impoverished, veiled, barefoot and seated on the floor with a child on her lap, she uses words such as 'beautiful' and 'obedient' to describe Syrian women in Lebanese refugee camps, and to justify why Arab men are prepared to pay up to $10,000 USD to forcibly marry them:

> Syrian women are not only beautiful but apparently much more obedient than Arab women- the Lebanese women told me this.
>
> (von Welser 2017:6)

In this example, von Welser discursively implies that Syrian women constitute a single group based on their shared dependencies deriving from their gender and identity as Arab/Muslim women. Describing all Syrian women as beautiful (sexualised objects) and obedient (oppressed) is an illustration of the generalisations that were used profusely in media and development discourses. An intersectional approach that highlights differences among women is therefore helpful in countering the cultural reductionism of Syrian women.

Intersectionality as an analytical tool has been used by feminists, especially postcolonial and anti-racist feminists, to emphasize differences between women. According to Lykke (2010), "the aim of Feminist Studies is to break up stereotypes and ideas about sameness" (3). This research's analytical approach also attempts to avoid the 'cultural reductionism' of some Western feminist writings that construct Arab women, as a singular monolithic subject. According to Mohanty (1984) this cultural reductionism focuses solely on gender and ignores the impacts of other important identity markers among women, resulting in an understanding of women in the Global South as a powerless group that are exploited by men (333). By highlighting their differences and identifying key social markers that place individual civically active Syrian women in various positions of power relative to each other, heterogeneity within the group becomes clearer, allowing a more accurate depiction of the various forms of discrimination or advantage experienced by different Syrian women in civil society in Turkey and Lebanon. Intersectionality as a lens allows an analysis that uncovers "The potential for both multiple and conflicting experiences of subordination and power" among persons belonging to a certain group (McCall 2005:1780). Thus, this

research demonstrates that a more complex intersectional framework that looks at identity beyond gender and nationality, and at instances of discrimination but also empowerment, is absolutely necessary to understand Syrian women's experiences in displacement contexts.

'Multiple Critique' to theorise Syrian Women's Responses to Host Hostipitality

Intersectionality is a theoretical tool that helps us understand how different identity markers combine to "produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations" (Lykke 2010:50) that marginalise Syrian women in host contexts. However, it remains a passive theoretical tool that fails to explain how women respond to identity-based discrimination, or how they may use these same identity markers to counter oppression and discrimination in certain contexts. To capture such responses, the theoretical framework applied in this research includes the concept of 'multiple critique' by Cooke (Cooke 2000) which she uses to explain Arab Islamic feminists' political activism and emerging "multilayered discourse that allows them to engage with and criticize the various individuals, institutions, and systems that limit and oppress them while making sure that they are not caught in their own rhetoric" (Cooke 2000:100).

Cooke's notion of multiple critique helps capture various ways that different Syrian women from the sample contest and overcome exclusion, criticise host communities and their own, and even form strategic alliances that may seem contradictory. Her understanding of multiple critique builds on "the Moroccan cultural critic Abdelkebir Khatibi's concept of double critique and the African American sociologist Deborah K. King's "multiple consciousness" (Cooke 2000:100). Double critique allows the postcolonial subject to engage in self-critique, eliminating the contradiction of their criticism of their own local governments. King's multiple consciousness captures African American's women's awareness of their marginalisation because of their race and gender in both women's and black liberation movements. Multiple awareness is being aware of how one is seen by members of one's own community and others outside. This awareness places African American women in a position of power to challenge discrimination. According to Cooke (2000), King's notion of African American women's multiple consciousness provides useful insights for the notion of multiple critique which she uses to describe Arab Islamic feminists' activism because of "the similarities between black American women's experience of marginalization, as

they fall through the cracks of race and gender, and the condition of postcolonial Arab Muslim women" (Cooke 2000:101).

A key difference however between these two groups of women is their historical experience under colonization. African American women who were enslaved and used as labour by American colonizers had to evolve into strong and intimidating women to survive. This earned them the label of matriarchs in the derogatory sense by men in their communities. This label which still persists today can limit African American women's ability to be assertive (Cooke, 2000:101-102). In contrast, Arab women who occupied private spaces and were inaccessible to the European colonial powers, experience a different "postcolonial dynamic" (Cooke, 2000:102). Compared to African American women, "Because of their disparate histories due to the radically different positioning of women in slave and colonial economies, as well as the transnationalism of their religious and political affiliations, Arab Islamic feminists have been able to go beyond multiple consciousness to multiple critique. They are inventing new ways of contesting multiple forms of marginalization and silencing" (Cooke, 2000:102-103).

In practicing multiple critique, Islamic feminists adopt different situated attitudes or speaking positions depending on the context. They can contest and be critical of oppression in their own communities or outside communities, while their "multiple consciousness allows them to consider the possibilities of alliances others might reject" (Cooke, 2000:105). As Islamic feminists, they have a double commitment to their Islamic identity and also to women's rights:

> The label Islamic feminist brings together two epithets whose juxtaposition describes the emergence of a new, complex self-positioning that celebrates multiple belongings. To call oneself an Islamic feminist is not to describe a fixed identity but to create a new, contingent subject position. This location confirms belonging in a religious community while allowing for activism on behalf of and with other women. This linking of apparently mutually exclusive identities can become a radical act of subversion.
>
> (Cooke 2000:93)

Multiple critique allows us to understand the strategies that Arab women use to contest oppression in a new light. Referring back to this research, it can explain for example how in Lebanon, despite differences in their positions and beliefs regarding women's

rights, civically engaged Syrian women in secular Syrian CSOs were forming alliances with Syrian women in Islamic Syrian CSOs to execute gender-related projects for Syrian refugees living in camps. It can also explain how a Syrian woman leading an Islamic Syrian CSO in Turkey engages with Western donors to secure funding for her projects, while at the same critiquing their biased questioning of her voluntary choice to wear a veil, and their disempowered perceptions of Syrian women in general.

In summary, examining Syrian women's civic activity in displacement contexts requires us to consider the impact of hostile political and social structures that influence their participation and shape it. These hostile structures affect different Syrian women differently, as their complex identities determine how they are impacted and how they respond against discrimination. The following section sums up how the three theoretical concepts discussed above are combined into the conceptual framework used in this research.

Conceptual Framework

One of the contributions of this research is the combined use of hostipitality, intersectionality, and multiple critique in its conceptual framework to study the experiences of displaced women in hosting contexts. On the one hand, their experience is shaped by host/guest relationships in displacement. Here Derrida's notion of 'hostipitality' helps us understand how as foreigners in a host context, Syrian women are othered because of their identity by their hosts, and how hosting countries use identity to justify their refugee policies and treatment of refugees in social interactions with them. It helps us answer the question: 'How does the host treat the guest?'. Hostipitality also allows us to theorise the rising political and social discrimination against Syrian refugees as the refugee crisis prolonged and the need to expel unwanted 'guests' increases, fuelling additional hostilities as the hosts reinforce their "mastery over the house" (O'Gorman, 2006:51).

On the other hand, the displaced Syrian women sampled in this research study represent a variety of identities, encompassing diversity in marital status, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, religion, residency status, urban/rural background, and age. Furthermore, the two host contexts Turkey and Lebanon, each present a very different reality that influenced the lives of the sampled women and their daily experiences. Here the use of Intersectionality helps capture Syrian women's multiple

and intersecting identities and how structural, political, and social conditions in host countries can exclude them because of them impacting their civic engagement.

Still, intersectionality like multiple awareness is passive – intersectionality for the purposes of this research is a first, passive step that helps us answer the question 'Who is the guest?' in this hostile hosting situation. This allows for a better understanding of the sampled civically active Syrian women and their diverse identities. The notion of hostipitality is also passive as it describes how the guest suffers discrimination due to their identity but does not capture any reaction.

An additional step is required to theorise instances when Syrian women's consciousness is mobilised to critique acts of discrimination. Here Cooke's (2001) notion of 'multiple critique' captures the different acts of contestation and resistance towards host socio-political hostilities against their civic participation. "Identity and human relationships are structured in terms of hospitality. In such a scheme no one belongs naturally anywhere but is always working out the rights and responsibilities of "invitation, welcome, asylum, shelter" (Derrida 1997:119)" ((Cooke 2001:47). Analysing the interviews with the notion of multiple critique in mind, it becomes evident that interviewed Syrian women responded to host hostilities in multiple ways and their responses are influenced by their identities and previous experiences that they brought with them to their displacement context. They were constantly reflecting on their rights, responsibilities and the degree to which they were welcome as displaced Syrians in Lebanon and Turkey. However, in addition to this reflection, they actively countered limitations placed on them by their own societies and families. They took advantage of opportunities that they were presented within their host contexts to engage civically and responded to host hostilities that tried to restrict their engagement by finding ways to overcome them.

Figure 1 depicts the relationship between host 'hostipitality' in political, civic, and social structures and how Syrian women's intersectional identities are impacted by these hostilities and used to contest them (though multiple critique):

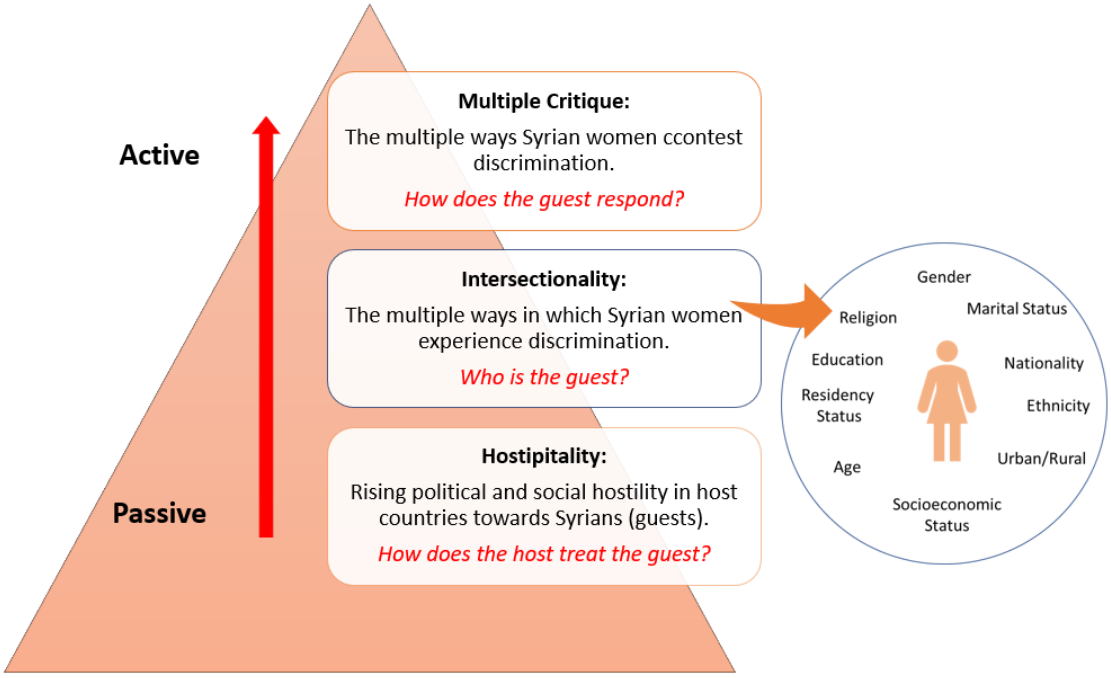

Figure 1: Conceptual approach combining the analytical components used in this research. Author illustration consolidated from components in (Derrida 2000) Collins (1990) Crenshaw (1989) & Cooke (2000).

The use of a pyramid is intentional to illustrate how beginning with hostipitality, the understanding gained from each theory develops the understanding of the theory above. By knowing how Syrian women are treated in host contexts it becomes easier to understand the various difficulties they confront there (hostipitality). When we know who they are, we can understand how discrimination in host countries affects them differently and shapes their civic participation in different ways (intersectionality). Once we understand their multiple identities, we can then identify instances of multiple consciousness and resistance to host discrimination (multiple critique). Combined, we can answer the central questions of this research and form a basis for understanding changes in Syrian women's civic participation in displacement contexts.

Having explored the theoretical concepts of hostipitality, intersectionality, and multiple critique and relationships between them, the following chapter outlines the research design and methods. It begins with a discussion of feminist epistemologies, in particular the postconstructionist feminist understanding of 'feminist objectivity' which has influenced this research's epistemological outlook and methodologies. It then moves on to a critical examination of my own positionality, where I consider how my own personal characteristics and biography as a member of the same society as my research participants but with "partial insider status" may have influenced the research

topic, the research process, and relationships with various research participants (Alcalde 2007:14). The chapter then details the qualitative research approach and methods employed to collect and analyse primary and secondary data with the aid of ATLAS.ti analytical software. It also provides detailed information on the employed sampling methods and the research sample, including their characteristics and criteria for inclusion in the study. Lastly, it discusses ethical considerations and methodological limitations.

Chapter 4: Research Design & Methods

Epistemological Considerations

A constructivist ontology is adopted in feminism, which views knowledge as discourse, and where society is "characterized by a constant negotiation of meanings between different actors and collectives" (Lykke 2010: 34). The lived experiences of women are deconstructed (Campbell and Wasco 2000). Socially dominated or stigmatized individuals are considered part of the process in which meanings are negotiated, and are seen to resist and counter hegemonic discourses. In doing so they engage in a process that Butler (1993) refers to as 'resignification', in which acts of resistance result in re-signifying, or changing the significance of the meanings associated with the categories of hegemonic discourses that are used to stigmatize or exclude individuals (Lykke 2010). Epistemologically, feminist theorists challenge positivist assumptions of neutrality and believe that the process of knowledge production is heavily dependent on the knower who is an integral part of the context of analysis (Lykke 2010:17).

As such, feminist scholarship makes no claims of normativity, and is inherently political, aiming to produce knowledge that informs political and social activism by challenging hegemonic gender-conservative discourses (Lykke 2010; Mohanty 1984). Arab feminist scholar Mervat Hatem defines feminism as "a set of analytical and critical tools that can be used to enhance women's understanding/consciousness of themselves, and their relations with other important national, regional and international groups of men and women. Seen in this light feminism can improve women's agency and inform the definition of their strategies for change" (Hatem 2014:4). In this manner, this feminist research study seeks to inform various actors engaged in supporting Syrian women engaged in civil society, or working with displaced Syrian women in Turkey and Lebanon, by bringing to their attention the existence of more disadvantaged or vulnerable subgroups.

According to Olesen (2007) "The way in which research is conducted suggests whether it is feminist work" (Olesen 2007:421). Reaching consensus on how such research should be conducted to be evaluated as valid scientific production, however, remains elusive in feminist theory. The diversity of perspectives within feminist theories itself, its ventures into various natural science and social disciplines, and

critical engagements with classic positivist empiricist assumptions of objectivity and normativity have all led to an "epistemological heterogeneity" in feminist theory (Lykke 2010:127). Despite this heterogeneity, some commonality can be found in feminist epistemological positions on the centrality attributed to self-reflexivity and localization by the researcher, which stems from their critique of an objective/value free 'knower' in empirical science. For the majority of feminist scholars, "the knower will always be anchored in a specific historical, societal and bodily material context, which frames and influences her or his knowledge-producing practices" (Lykke 2010:127).

Postmodern feminist epistemology, relabelled 'postmodern (anti)epistemology'[14] by Lykke (2010), criticises understandings and uses of the categories 'women' and women's 'experience' in feminist research. Lykke cites the work of Butler (1990) who criticises the unreflective use of the category 'women' by both standpoint[15] and empirical feminists[16], who in taking this category as a given or foundational sense when discussing women as an object or subject (knower) of research, effectively confirm the categories 'men' and 'women' "and their implication in a heteronormative gender order and a hegemonic, two-gender model" (131). Postcolonial, anti-racist, lesbian and queer feminists also criticise classic standpoint feminists' universalized use of the category 'women' in their grand master narratives, which outline a singular path for societal change and emancipation for all women. They argue that in doing so, classic standpoint feminists fail to consider the power differentials among women caused by various social categorizations such as race, class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and disabilities etc. which lead to the exclusion of multiple standpoints and realities. Regarding women's 'experience', postmodern feminists are critical of empirical and standpoint feminists' overly simplistic use of the concept as a basis of

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[14] Based on earlier work by (Harding 1986), Lykke (2010) classifies the main strands of feminist epistemologies into four categories: feminist empiricism feminist standpoint epistemology and, postmodern feminist (anti)epistemology, and postconstructionist feminist epistemology. She adds 'anti' to Harding's (1986) label 'postmodern feminist epistemology' to highlight the contradiction between the terms 'postmodern', which regards scientific knowledge as discourse(Foucault 1978), and 'epistemology', which concerns itself with defining criteria for objective and value-free knowledge production (Lykke 2010).

[15] Feminist standpoint epistemologies consider the 'experiences' of women (women in general or certain groups of oppressed women such as women of colour) as a starting point and valid source of information, i.e. women are "considered as bearers of a privileged access to potentially transformative insight into the existing hegemonic gender orders" (Lykke 2010:130).

[16] Feminist empiricism criticises existing gender bias towards "Universal Man as the human norm" in traditional science, and aims instead to correct this bias by including women's absent experiences and perspectives in empirical research (Lykke 2010: 128).

knowledge without considering the influences of language and discourses (Lykke 2010). To address these criticisms, the epistemological alternative, from a postmodern feminist perspective, is to base knowledge production on many heterogeneous "'small' stories, situated in specific local contexts" instead of grand master narratives (Lykke 2010: 133).

However, the resulting moral relativism produced by postmodernist perspectives clashes with feminism's political agenda and action-oriented research which requires a more reconciled relationship with 'objectivity' in knowledge production to act as a basis for societal change. After all, "Feminist research is, thus, not research about women but research for women to be used in transforming their sexist society" (Cook and Fonow 1986:13). The result is the rise of an alternative movement in feminist epistemology that attempts to resolve postmodern criticisms with poststructuralist theorizing. Lykke (2010) refers to this epistemological stance as 'postconstructionist feminist epistemology' due to its transgression "beyond de/constructionism and beyond postmodern (anti-)epistemologies" (Lykke 2010: 134).

As previously mentioned, this research is influenced by postcolonial criticisms of classic standpoint feminism's universalist use of the category 'women' and the need to incorporate a multiplicity of standpoints or perspectives in feminist research. My own research practice and experience have led me to believe that upon critical reflection and contextualisation a certain degree of objectivity is attainable in research, and needed, especially when one of the objectives of research is to inform transformative action. In this case, to counter essentialist narratives related to Syrian refugee women and their identities. As such the epistemological position of this research is influenced by the postconstructionist feminist understanding of 'feminist objectivity', and of 'situated knowledge', outlined in an influential essay by Haraway (1988): Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. In her essay, Haraway attempts to resolve postmodern (anti-) epistemological concerns and transgress beyond relativism because feminism "could use some enforceable, reliable accounts of things not reducible to power moves and agonistic, high-status games of rhetoric or to scientistic, positivist arrogance" (Haraway, 1988: 580).

According to Haraway, ‘objectivity’ can only ever be partial, and can be achieved with an epistemology of “situated and embodied knowledges” (1988: 583). She adopts a jointly critical position towards what she refers to as ‘radical constructivism’ and its resulting relativism, and ‘feminist critical empiricism’ and its totalization or single vision. Both extreme positions are victims of what she refers to as the ‘god trick’ or of claiming to see “everything from nowhere” and of producing knowledge that it neither objective nor responsible (581). In her view:

> Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally. The “equality” of positioning is a denial of responsibility and critical inquiry. Relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well. Relativism and totalization are both “god tricks” promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully, [...]
>
> (Haraway 1988:584)

Haraway argues instead for a feminist objectivity based on ‘situated knowledges’, ‘partial perspectives’, and accountability: “The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision” (1988: 583). When a knower reflects on their situatedness, and that of their research technologies, it becomes possible to “obtain a partially objective knowledge, that is, a knowledge of the specific part of reality that she or he can ‘see’ from the position in which she or he is materially discursively located in time, space, body and historical power relations” (Lykke 2010: 5). In other words, through practising self-reflexivity and self-definition and taking account of historical, political, sexual and cultural dimensions that influence knowledge production, the knower’s body becomes the site from which this partially objective perspective of reality can be articulated. In contrast, unsituated unlocatable knowledge, according to Haraway, is “irresponsible” because it lacks accountability (1988: 583). Therefore, in addition to situating himself/herself, Haraway argues that the knower should also be held morally accountable for their partial perspective and its effects. The knower achieves this by taking moral responsibility for their research and for their articulation of this partially objective reality and its ethical or political outcomes.

Haraway’s feminist objectivity responds to postcolonial criticisms by not universalizing the category ‘women’ and by instead using the term ‘the subjugated’. According to

Lykke (2010) with this replacement, Haraway (1988) makes room for the incorporation of multiple standpoints by using:

> categories that, as open nodal points and in line with intersectional thought, can encompass a diversity of different kinds of social and cultural in/exclusion, domination/subordination, majoritizing/minoritizing, including many kinds of bases for resistance and epistemically privileged access to understand the mechanisms of subjugation.
>
> (Lykke 2010: 135)

Haraway's notion of situated knowledges is not restricted to a self-reflexive practice and localization that should be carried out by the subject/knower. It also extends to the objects of research that she considers as actors and agents in the research process. Their role is not passive in the research process, in her words "the agency of people studied itself transforms the entire project of producing social theory" (1988: 592) thereby making the research account a product of "power-charged social relation of "conversation"" rather than exclusively one of "discovery" by the knower (593). In doing so:

> Feminist objectivity makes room for surprises and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production; we are not in charge of the world.
>
> (Haraway 1988:594)

This collaborative perception which stresses "the inter-relatedness of researcher and participant" (Olesen 2007:421-422) is common in feminist epistemologies. The importance of building trust, reciprocity and diminishing hierarchy between researcher and participant ensures that research is carried out in an ethical manner that is collaborative and respectful (Alcalde 2007; Cook and Fonow 1986; Campbell and Wasco 2000). I attempted to apply feminist collaborative approaches in my field research in a number of ways. Research participants were actors in the research project in the sense that the interviews adopted a conversational style that allowed participants the freedom to alter the prepared topic guide and to participate in shaping the final research questions and outcomes.

The research findings and discussion that follows in the empirical chapters below, derive from my own 'partial perspective' which I describe as 'objective' in a

postconstructionist feminist sense. It is limited to presenting the views of the displaced Syrian women that I was able to speak with in Turkey and Lebanon in 2018. I do not attempt to speak on behalf of all 'Syrian women' or to present a universalised narrative for their emancipation. Instead, with this research and research sample, I attempt to demonstrate the multiplicity of standpoints which can exist among Syrian women as a group, and the differences in their perspectives regarding the roles of women in public spaces. I also attempt to describe these different perspectives with caution, and to avoid "replicating oppression" while presenting some of their 'alternative' views of gender equality and the traditional gender roles of women (Olesen 2007:421). In the following section, I 'situate' myself as a Syrian, female, academic, and member of Syrian civil society that also became displaced by the conflict that erupted in 2011. I reflect on the influences of my positionality, experiences and standpoints on the research questions and processes.

Reflections on Positionality

Self-reflexivity is an important component of this research, not only because it adopts a feminist theoretical lens, but also because of the similarities in positionalities between myself as a Syrian woman engaged in Syrian civil society since 2008 and my research sample. It is therefore important to acknowledge and consider how my positionality, and the similarities and differences stemming from my personal characteristics and biography, have influenced the research topic, the research process, and my relationships with various individuals from my sample. In the following paragraphs, I look back at my fieldwork in Turkey and Lebanon to 'situate' myself by critically examining how my role as an academic researcher, and membership of the same society as my research participants with "partial insider status", has influenced this research and its outcomes (Alcalde 2007:14).

When I began my fieldwork in Istanbul, Turkey in 2018, my goal was to understand the current civic participation of Syrian women as influenced by the context of conflict and displacement. I was interested in learning how eight years of civil war and displacement in new country contexts might have altered their lives and their overall participation within civil society. At the time, my own view of civil society was far less critical than it is today. As a development practitioner myself, I believed that Syrian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) would have a key role to play in rebuilding not only infrastructure but also the social fabric of post-war Syria. I also expected that Syrian

women were going to be a big part of that process, and become much more visible in the public domain compared to the situation before the war.

My previous work experience in the Syrian civil society sector during the period 2008-2010, and my educational background in political science and sustainable development meant that I was already familiar with the particularities of development sector work environments and NGO 'jargon'. After completing my BA in Political Studies in 2006 from the American University of Beirut in Lebanon, my objective was to return 'home' to the birthplace of my parents, Damascus Syria. There I wanted to start a career that allowed me to contribute towards the development and growth of my native country- which was very different to that of the city where I was born and raised, the capital city Abu Dhabi in United Arab Emirates.

In 2008, I accepted a position as a Research Assistant at the Syria Trust for Development (The Trust) and relocated permanently to Damascus. The Trust was registered as a Syrian NGO, and was headed by the First Lady Asma al Asad. Its headquarters was in Damascus, and in 2011 when the first revolts began, there were almost 170 employees working for it in various development projects all over Syria.

As a Research Assistant, and later Research Analyst, my job was to fulfil the research needs of the Trust's main development projects. These related to rural development, youth entrepreneurship, child education, and culture as a development asset. None of the Trust projects were specifically dedicated to women's empowerment. Instead there were elements of female empowerment that were included in project activities, like supporting women in rural areas to participate in farmer associations or to start small businesses in their villages. For the Trust projects, I completed literature reviews to suggest best practices from global development initiatives, conducted interviews and household surveys with men and women from various Syrian governorates, and designed monitoring and evaluation tools to measure progress. In 2009, the research division at the Trust was also conducting national economic research, in collaboration with the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics and the World Bank. During this involvement I first learned that at 12.9%, the percentage of Syrian women in the workforce had dropped to one of the lowest in the region (SCPR 2016:35). I began to ask myself why this was happening at a time of apparent national economic growth and rising higher education attainment rates for Syrian women.

While working at the Trust I was also enrolled as a distance learning master's degree student with the University of SOAS in the UK. I was learning about the latest Western human development models, and working in a Syrian organisation whose internal language of business was English instead of Arabic, and whose goal was to operate at the highest degree of professionalism in the development sector, comparable to that of the large INGOs like the UN.

As a young twenty three year-old who grew up in the U.A.E., a county of exceptional wealth and privilege, working with the Trust allowed me to learn more about the needs and causes of suffering of various groups of Syrian people. Meanwhile, I accepted uncritically the content that was being delivered to me by my high-ranking and expensive British university. I tried to create synergies between the content of my courses and opportunities for their application in my work. My time at the Trust was also an intense learning experience in itself. The Human Resources department at the Trust exerted great efforts to train employees and raise their capabilities in the areas of development project management, strategic planning, and writing grants and funding applications. A good portion of our working hours was spent in trainings by international experts. At times it felt as though we spent more time training and learning how to fill complicated project reporting excel sheets than actually working. When the first protests began in Syria in March 2011, I was in the UK attending a one-week intensive training in Qualitative Research methods at the University of Bristol that was paid for by the Trust. I have therefore experienced first-hand the learning experience that was provided to Syrians working at the Trust during the decade that preceded the war. I also witnessed how several of my colleagues continued to use the NGO-related skills that they accumulated at the Trust in their own civic endeavours after the war. I myself joined a voluntary civic initiative to support young Syrian artists in 2015 that was headed by my previous Research Director at the Trust, Dr. Nader Kabbani. As some of the Syrian co-founders of the initiative also had Lebanese citizenships, the initiative, MASSYR, was registered as a Lebanese CSO in Beirut. Volunteering remotely from the UAE and then Germany, I became the Executive Director of MASSYR in 2016 and launched its first project SAFIR – Syrian Artists for International Reach[17].

[17] https://safirart.org/about-safir/

While preparing myself to travel to Turkey and Lebanon for field research in 2018, I did not expect that my positionality would be a major obstacle in the data collection process. I was already rather familiar with both research locations from previous travels and study. I was mainly concerned with power asymmetries based on my gender while interviewing men, my educational status as a doctoral candidate, and the fact that I was unveiled which could create some distance between myself and more religiously conservative men and women from my sample.

As the field research progressed, and I became more familiar with feminist theoretical perspectives regarding intersectionality and the importance of critical self-reflexivity, I became more aware of my positionality and its complexity. Especially when recognising the importance and influences of socioeconomic status, my urban background and nationality when interviewing non-Syrians.

The majority of my research sample was composed of Syrian women. I also interviewed Turkish and Lebanese managers, and whenever possible, Syrian men working for CSOs. Besides the staff from civil society, I interviewed Syrian, Turkish and Lebanese male and female experts on my topic. These experts were government officials, academics, and researchers. With this sample of experts and CSO leaderships, I discovered that my academic status as a doctoral student worked to my advantage as I was regarded as some sort of 'colleague'. My research work was appreciated by interviewees who were also academics or researchers themselves and at some point had been in a similar position. I gained some additional status as an academic because I was considered a 'Western' English-speaking academic that was visiting from Germany. In one interview with a Turkish university professor for example, I was encouraged to apply for a fellowship at her university. The general focus on women's empowerment and women's projects meant that CSO managements were also often interested in my research topic and wished to benefit from my findings. It was often in their interest to speak to me and tell me about the challenges they faced that they felt were limiting Syrian women's participation.

As part of the action-oriented nature of feminist research, I shared available research findings in the form of publications with CSO managements and participants that had requested to be informed of my findings in their informed consent form. I also complied when asked to support them with my research or NGO skills. When interviewing a

Syrian feminist and activist in Lebanon, for example, I was asked to locate research containing evidence of positive social outcomes following increased female political participation. She needed this research to support her demands at the Geneva peace talks for a 30% minimum quota for women across government positions.

Due to my earlier work at the Trust, in both Lebanon and Turkey I had a network of Syrians who knew me personally from before they had relocated to Lebanon or Turkey, and who had continued to be civically active. After the war erupted, Trust employees, like the rest of Syrian society, responded in different ways. Some chose to support the existing regime, others chose to oppose it, while some adopted a publicly neutral position. I chose to adopt the latter position, and so it was easier for me to establish contact with former colleagues after the war. I believe that the nature of my research topic itself, related to women's studies and participation, was perceived in a politically unthreatening manner by Syrian CSOs across the political spectrum. I was not asked directly about my political position in any of the interviews, nor did I ask interviewees about theirs.

In contrast to my expectations, the vast majority of Syrian women with whom I met displayed support for my research and affection towards me. My Syrian accent was often useful and helped other Syrians to quickly identify me as a fellow Syrian when visiting CSOs for the first time or in interviews. No matter what part of Syria they came from, how old they were, or their educational background, at the end of almost every interview I received an embrace, wishes for success in my doctoral studies and requests to return and visit them again. Instead of being a barrier, the degree I was pursuing was something that made them feel proud. To many of them I was a young Syrian woman showing 'others' (the Turkish and Lebanese) what Syrian women are capable of achieving. I made them feel proud because I challenged the stereotype of the uneducated, poor refugee Syrian woman who was only interested in being a housewife and having many children.

As a woman, my gender made it easier to access other Syrian women, especially those who worked in gender segregated spaces in religious CSOs. Syrian women found my topic very relevant to themselves and their lives. As soon as I spoke of female participation in public spaces they quickly began to speak of their experiences, and how they personally struggled to overcome patriarchal practices in Syrian society,

the challenges of displacement, and how they adapted and became part of the CSO they worked for. In the field, I realized the extent to which being a female Syrian researcher was in fact an advantage that allowed me to build rapport quickly and remove barriers between myself as a researcher and the women I spoke to. The men I interviewed were mostly academics or CSO staff already present in gender mixed environments. Thus, I did not feel that being a woman was a major obstacle in accessing their time for an interview, although it may have led them to omit certain personal perceptions about women that they felt could be offensive to me as a woman.

According to Cook and Fonow (1986) when conducting feminist research “Studying crisis situations increases the likelihood that the researcher and subject will relate during a more self-conscious “click” moment” (7-8). The shared experience of conflict and displacement between myself and the research participants also made establishing a connection and reducing hierarchies and boundaries easier. Even if I was an academic, for example, I was also touched by the war and forced to leave Syria just like them. I had similar problems in dealing with displacement such as adapting to new environments, putting up with host discriminatory attitudes. My social network was also damaged as I had to learn to live far apart from loved ones who had to remain in Syria or were displaced elsewhere.

Despite similarities with my research sample, stemming from a shared national identity, native language and gender, while interviewing other women there were important differences originating from my having lived outside Syria most of my life. My migration experience, and its privileged impact on my socioeconomic status, Westernised education, and religious identity leads to what Alcalde (2017) refers to as a “partial insider status” despite that I conducted this research mostly with members of my own community of origin and in our native language, Arabic (Alcalde 2007).

Growing up in the United Arab Emirates, I was exposed to a multicultural society with a majority expat population and a workforce of over 200 nationalities. As a child, I often visited my parent’s city of origin in Syria, Damascus. I am fluent in Arabic, and have a distinct Damascene colloquial accent that clearly identifies my origins to other Syrians and to Lebanese people. In the UAE, I am considered Syrian, Arab and Muslim. In Syria, I am first and foremost a ‘Gulfy’, a term used specifically for wealthy expats that live in the rich oil-producing countries of the gulf and have access to many luxuries

that are unavailable to the majority of people in Syria. I am also associated with being ‘urban’ because of my family name and colloquial accent. As an unveiled Syrian woman in a society that has become increasingly conservative over the past decades, my religious identity can be confusing. I could be a member of one of the religious minority groups in Syria, a Christian or Druzi woman for example. To those who are more familiar with Syrian families, I am clearly a member of the majority Sunni Muslim population in Syria. However, I am considered religiously ‘moderate’ by other non-conservative Muslims such as myself, or ‘misled’ by conservative Muslims and thus deserving of sympathy, prayers for redemption, and occasionally scorn.

I include this backdrop into my upbringing to highlight an initial bias towards Western academia and its ideals at the beginning of my doctoral research experience that resulted from my early education in the UAE, which unlike the majority of Syrians in Syria was in the English language not Arabic. This influence continued in my subsequent education in American, British, and more recently German universities. Growing up in the multicultural society of the UAE meant that I had different experiences that shaped my understanding of gender and the role of women in society, which I felt did not coincide with the views of my peers and extended family members whenever I visited ‘home’ during summer vacations. Differences such as going to a gender-mixed private school, or prioritizing university education over marriage, or like my mother choosing not wearing a hijab, were all heated issues that perplexed, and at times frustrated the Syrian women and girls I met with who were unlike me. I was not subjected to the social pressures of the Islamic conservative movements that slowly took over Syrian society in the 1980s and 1990s. I was raised to be critical of this religious movement and its growing hold on Syrian society which was making women more ‘domesticated’ and encouraging gender segregation and the confinement of women to private spaces. In the UAE, religious extremism and Islamic curricula in schools were strongly controlled and monitored by the state, especially after the September 11 attacks. My parents held more liberal Islamic interpretations that supported an active female presence in all domains of the public space. They strongly encouraged my choice to pursue a bachelor’s degree in political science so I could have a future career in a public domain such as politics or journalism.

Being ‘different’ from the majority of Syrian women meant that I had to learn how to deal with the social pressure exerted by them to conform. With time, I learned how to exist among the more conservative members of Syrian society without altering myself, but also without provoking them. For example, I learned to dress in a manner that was considered ‘modest’ even though I still refused to wear the hijab. I learned how uttering a single word in English like ‘Thank you’ could be alienating, as it reminded people that I was a privileged outsider who grew up in the Gulf. I learned how to respect implicit societal rules regarding gender segregation, especially with married men, which include not shaking hands with a man to say hello, or when visiting a married woman in her home to make myself scarce and leave when her husband arrives. I also learned how to navigate and avoid conflict in sensitive conversations with Syrian women about marriage, women’s work and education, and the hijab. In the field, I used this experience to dress appropriately and to address the conservative Syrian women I met with in a non-confrontational and respectful manner which I felt helped them express themselves and their opinions more freely because they did not sense that I was judging them. As it turned out, every single Syrian woman that I interviewed in Turkey wore a hijab. This was true for Syrian women working in Syrian or Turkish CSOs, including highly conservative ones. By contrast the sample of Syrian women in Lebanon included mostly women who did not wear a hijab.

While conducting my research in 2018, I faced more challenges with the Lebanese community than with the Turkish community due to my Syrian nationality. Lebanese-Syrian relationships were historically tense as outlined in Chapter Two. However, having lived in Beirut Lebanon for three years while completing my bachelor’s degree I was accustomed to navigating issues of identity with different groups of Lebanese people. I knew for example that it was better to speak English in certain settings or parts of the city to avoid discriminatory attitudes because it would immediately become apparent that I was Syrian from my accent. From personal experience I knew that individuals who speak foreign languages (French or English) fluently in Lebanon suffer less discrimination because they are perceived as products of expensive private schools and members of upper socioeconomic classes and thus are respected more. While conducting research in the Hizballah-controlled Ouzai slums in Lebanon, my Syrian identity worked to my advantage because of the pro-Syrian political relationship between the party and the Syrian government.

In Turkey, after the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011 and its coverage by the mass media, the people I met often had difficulty believing that I was Syrian and not a refugee. I was not veiled, I had fair skin instead of brown skin (according to their perception that Arabs are dark-skinned), and I was not dirty, poor, or uneducated like the other Syrian women they saw on television. I would try to explain that, just like Turkey, Syria was an ethnically diverse country with people from various social classes. In the end, it was easier for them to attribute my divergence from the Syrian refugee stereotype which placed me on a more equal footing with them to having Ottoman origins in my family bloodline. Meaning in their view that I was 'better' than the stereotype because I was part Ottoman. Despite the confusion over my national origins, I did not suffer from any direct discrimination because of my national identity in Turkey in 2018, or feel that I had to 'conceal' parts of myself to gain access to Turkish CSOs or experts. In light of the existing political tensions between Germany and Turkey, I was concerned that Turkish CSOs might be reluctant to speak with me. However, in practice I did not feel this was an issue.

In conclusion, I acknowledge that as a researcher I am not value free, and that my gender, nationality, past experiences and the values I grew up with affect my personal beliefs regarding the role of women in the public space. I personally believe that women should be able to contribute in all ways to their societies, not just as mothers and wives, but as people with full capabilities who have the right to participate in all economic, social and political aspects. I also believe that they themselves have the right to define how they wish to make this contribution, and not according to models defined by others. I also acknowledge the value of the guidance and critical feedback given by my academic supervisors. These critical reflections not only helped me to refine and improve this research, but also to realise the importance of my positionality in the research process. This heightened my awareness of my own personal views and my efforts to distance them from my questions during interviews, and from passing judgments towards research participants. As such, I tried to remain non-critical towards women who had different opinions or values than mine and to make them feel their opinions were respected and valued. I furthermore tried to maintain this respect for difference in the data analysis stage and to grasp and convey the perspectives of all participants in the empirical chapters below.

Research Questions & Approach

As highlighted in this chapter's introduction, this research involves a high degree of exploration as it attempts to understand the effects of a recent and unfolding situation – the eruption of civil conflict and its repercussions – on the civic participation of a sample of displaced Syrian women.

The main research question is: **how has conflict and consequential displacement to Lebanon and Turkey shaped Syrian women's civic engagement in these host countries during the period 2011-2018?**

This question is guided by the following specific research questions:

1. Is there evidence of change in the overall civic participation of sampled Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey compared to before 2011?
2. What role do refugee policies, social attitudes, and civic environments in each host country context play in shaping displaced Syrian women's civic participation? How do these interact with the identities of displaced Syrian women to shape their civic participation differently in Lebanon and Turkey?
3. How do different Syrian women from this sample resist and contest the exclusionary practices that confront them in host contexts?

To answer these questions, I have chosen qualitative research methods that are best suited to "answer the *whys* and *hows* of human behaviour, opinion and experience-information that is difficult to obtain through more quantitatively-oriented methods of data collection" (Guest et al. 2013:1 emphasis added by author).

The qualitative approaches used are based on ethnographic research approaches which emphasize gaining knowledge of insider or 'emic' perspectives and are "Oriented toward studying shared meanings and practices" (Guest et al. 2013:8). Temporally, this research was designed as a cross-sectional study: I was primarily interested in speaking with Syrian women that were displaced to Turkey and Lebanon after the outbreak of conflict in Syria in 2011, and also involved as staff or volunteers in various forms of CSOs in these host countries. In addition to Syrian women I also interviewed experts on my topic, and Syrian, Turkish, and Lebanese men that were working in the CSOs I sampled to compare male and female perspectives. Further details on the research sample and their characteristics are given later in this chapter.

In 2018, I conducted 80 semi-structured interviews in Turkey and Lebanon with experts (from academia, research centres and governmental bodies) and Syrian men and women who were involved in various forms of Syrian and host CSOs as volunteers, staff, or founders. In Lebanese and Turkish CSOs, interviews were also conducted with non-Syrian management staff to obtain their perspectives as hosts on the challenges confronting Syrian women within their organisations. These interviews enabled me to obtain more detailed accounts of participants' beliefs regarding their changing gender roles and their experiences in their CSOs and host country environments.

I also relied on participant observation as a tool to understand the physical context within the working environment of CSOs that were part of my research sample, and its relevance. By observing, and in some occasions participating in events, activities, or meetings in some of the sampled CSOs in Turkey and Lebanon[18], I was able to augment my understanding of the social structures, group behaviour and power dynamics between various CSO staff members as they interacted together in their natural work context. Primary data was also collected from photographs taken during the field research.

Prominent in feminist methodology is the use of triangulation, or the reliance on several research methods to increase the validity and clarity of research findings (Cook and Fonow 1986). Therefore, in addition to conducting interviews and participant observation, I also collected secondary data in the form of documents from the CSOs I visited. These documents, or grey literature, include CSO publications (reports, books, pamphlets etc), CSO internal documents, collected screenshots of CSO online content and photographs, and public documents such as laws regulating CSO formation in host countries. I continuously conducted desk research to review various academic articles and books. This thesis includes a review of a large body of research related to Syrian refugees and their living conditions in Turkey and Lebanon over the period 2011-2020, in addition to earlier works that were available on gender dynamics in Syrian society. This desk research was the basis for the contextual background presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis, and for the theoretical discussion

[18] The section on Data Collection Methods provides further details on the participant observation conducted during the data collection phase in 2018 in Turkey and Lebanon.

and conceptualisation of key concepts in Chapter 3. These references were accessed online and through the University of Bonn library. I also used part of my research budget to purchase additional academic books that were relevant to my research but not available in the University of Bonn library, and these are now part of the ZEF Library. I used Medley software for the in-text citation and bibliography.

Reverting back to my three specific research questions, the following table clarifies the links between the selected methods, primary sources and the concepts addressed:

Table 1: Operationalisation of Research Methods & Sources

Questions	**Research Methods**	**Primary Sources**	**Concepts**
1. Is there evidence of change in the overall civic participation of sampled Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey compared to before 2011?	• Participant Interviews • Management Interviews • Participant Observation • Document Analysis	• Syrian men and women from civil society • CSO leaderships (Syrian, Lebanese and Turkish nationals) • Researcher Field Notes	Conflict, Displacement, Civil Society, Civic Participation, Refugee Policies, Women
2. What role do refugee policies, social attitudes, and civic environments in each host country context play in shaping displaced Syrian women's civic participation? How do these interact with the identities of displaced Syrian women to shape their civic participation differently in Lebanon and Turkey?	• Expert Interviews • Participant Interviews • Management Interviews • Document Analysis	• Migrant/Refugee Researchers & Academics • Government Experts • Legal Experts in Civil Society/ Association Law • Individual Syrian men and women from civil society • CSO leaderships (Syrian, Lebanese and Turkish nationals) • Secondary Sources: collected documents,	Displacement, Civil Society, Refugee Policies, Hostipitality, Discrimination, Intersectionality, Women

		academic books and articles.	
3. How do different Syrian women from this sample resist and contest the exclusionary practices confronting them in host contexts?	• Participant Interviews • Management Interviews • Participant Observation • Document Analysis	• Individual Syrian women from civil society • CSO leaderships (Syrian, Lebanese and Turkish nationals) • Researcher Field Notes	Multiple Critique, Intersectionality, Feminist Consciousness, Discrimination, Contestation

Data Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse, identify, and code emerging themes in textual data from in-depth interviews, participant observation notes, and field research diary notes (Guest et al. 2013). The analysis was performed with the aid of data analysis software ATLAS.ti 8. For the purposes of efficiency and retrievability, the data analysis process began by designing a systematic procedure for categorizing, naming, and storing a large number of primary and secondary data items, as recommended by (Friese 2012). Figure 2 depicts the types of primary and secondary data items that were collected for this study:

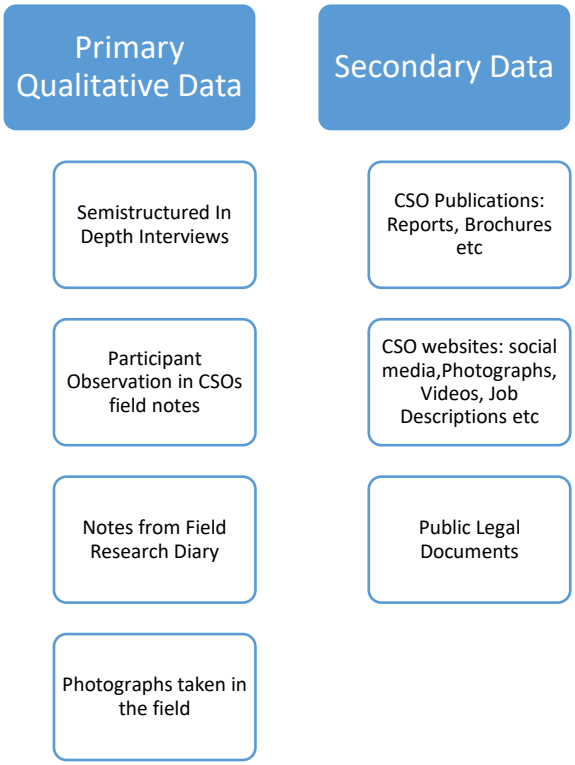

Figure 2: Sources of Collected Primary & Secondary Data

Written notes and hard copies of collected data were all converted into Word documents or PDF files to prepare them for entry into ATLAS.ti. A file naming protocol[19] was created to facilitate consistency and guide the file naming process, in addition to a data log of collected data. The file names included information on the research site from where the data item came (for example TKI for Istanbul, Turkey), the type of data collected (INT for Interview), and if an interview, then the type (PART for a Participant Interview), the type of organisation (LCSO for a Local CSO), the gender of interview participants, and finally a unique interview code assigned to each participant in order to protect their identity. An example of a file name for an expert interview conducted in Turkey, Ankara with a government official would be:

TKA_INT_KE_GOV_F_TA01

Following the naming of data items and their insertion into ATLAS.ti, I then proceeded to organize these data items further by creating document groups or 'P-Doc Families' on ATLAS.ti (Friese 2012). ATLAS.ti Families serve the function of grouping data files together according to variables of interest, such as socio demographic variables,

[19] A copy can be found in Annex V: File Naming Protocol

which then allows the data to be filtered during later stages of analysis. During analysis, the family groups I created allowed me to filter interviewee responses or codes according to gender, age group, marital status and so on, to look for commonalities or differences within and across groups. The full list of ATLAS.ti P-Doc Families created to sort the data can be found in Appendix V.

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, I did not begin with predetermined codes or hypotheses in mind, but instead began data analysis on an initial sample of interview notes from both research sites (Turkey and Lebanon) with exploratory coding methods, namely eclectic coding in which “any “first-impression” responses from the researcher can serve as codes” (Saldaña 2021:223). I did this by going through my data line by line, breaking it down, and assigning codes to data segments with the help of ATLAS.ti.

According to Saldaña (2021: 223), eclectic coding is useful “as an initial, exploratory technique with qualitative data; when a variety of processes or phenomena are to be discerned from the data”. He places eclectic coding under his classification of First Cycle coding methods, which are to be followed by Second Cycle coding which involves re-examining initial codes to “synthesize the variety and number of codes into a more unified scheme” (223). When combined with the use of analytical software such as ATLAS.ti, the coding process “becomes much more exploratory due to the ease of renaming and modifying codes” (Friese 2012:3).

Initially I assigned unique codes to segments of my data, however after the ninth interview I realised that I was mostly using the same codes that I had already repeatedly generated in the previous interviews. At that point of thematic saturation, I had accumulated 103 codes from first cycle coding.

I created a printed output of my first cycle coding list, and began second cycle coding by examining the generated codes, looking for similarities, differences, frequencies, and patterns in the data. At first, I merged the content of similar codes together under a single label and deleted irrelevant codes. Through the process of analytic reflection and synthesis of the remaining codes, I began to cluster the codes under broader categories, in a “move toward *consolidated meaning”* (Saldaña 2021:13 emphasis adeed by author). The result of this process was an updated code list containing four

main categories, and 44 codes. I then began to define these codes and used this resulting second cycle coding framework to analyse and code my remaining data.

In the data analysis process that followed, I further refined my coding framework, relabelled some codes, and further clarified some code definitions. I also created analytic memos on ATLAS.ti. to record my reflections during data analysis, and preliminary findings to my research questions with their associated quotes from my data. These memos served as a basis for writing up research findings in the chapters below.

Secondary data gathered during the field research was also collected and analysed to further triangulate and validate findings. Methodologically, confirmatory document analysis was used to analyse this secondary data (Guest et al. 2013). Whereby, various documents, images, and other relevant data items that were produced by the study population – in this research by the sampled CSOs - were selected after being reviewed because of their relevance to the research questions, or because they provided information that could inform or aid in the triangulation of primary data. These documents were accessible online, or as hard copies that were distributed by the CSOs in the form of publications. The same coding list developed while analysing primary data was also used to code relevant elements in collected documents from secondary data. The additional coded elements generated from the documents combined with those emerging from the coded interviews and participant observation field notes helped to join together various pieces of evidence and support the credibility of this study's findings.

Sampling

This research is cross-sectional, based on primary data collected from interviews and participant observation during field research in Turkey and Lebanon from September to December 2018, in addition to data collected from the research pilot in Berlin in August 2018. The study population comprises Syrian women, displaced by the 2011 Syrian conflict to neighbouring Turkey and Lebanon, and who were also involved in civil society organisations. As such the primary inclusion criteria were: gender (female), nationality (Syrian), experience of displacement after 2011 (to Istanbul, Turkey and Beirut, Lebanon), and civic involvement (as staff, volunteers, or leaders of Syrian, host, and International CSOs). Due to the exploratory nature of the topic and

the desire to collect multiple viewpoints to improve the quality of the study (Guest et al. 2013), I also interviewed other individuals with different occupations and roles within my sampled CSOs, such as Syrian men in these organisations and non-Syrian managerial staff. While in the field, it became evident how the social, economic, legal, and political contexts for Syrians living in Turkey and Lebanon differed, and how these differences influenced the participation of Syrians, particularly women, in CSOs. Therefore, I interviewed several key experts from leading research and academic institutions specializing in research related to Syrians, in addition to development practitioners, legal professionals, and representatives of government bodies in Turkey and Lebanon, to better understand the current living context and how it had changed since 2011. The information provided by the experts, together with grey literature, was used to triangulate the findings from participants' interviews and to better understand the factors that supported or hindered the participation of Syrian women in CSOs.

My justification for selecting the cities of Istanbul in Turkey and Beirut in Lebanon as my research sites is as follows. The majority of displaced Syrians escaped to the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan as refugees or residents. They engaged with many CSOs in these countries as beneficiaries, volunteers, employees, or as CSO founders themselves. In 2018, Turkey and Lebanon were the top two countries hosting the greatest number of Syrian refugees globally. The large populations of Syrians implied a high probability of obtaining a varied and representative sample. I also believed that my previous knowledge and familiarity with both countries and my existing networks, could facilitate my research. In 2018, as a Syrian national, I was permitted to travel and enter both countries.

I began my field research in Turkey in September 2018, and initially, I planned to restrict my research to the city of Istanbul. As my research progressed, I discovered that a large number of Syrian CSOs and refugees were based in the neighbourhood of Fatih, also known as 'little Syria'[20], on the Asian side of Istanbul. I was able to access several Syrian CSOs in Fatih and using the snowballing technique, the participants led me to other Syrian CSOs, including some outside of the area. Having realised that I should interview government experts and visit the head offices of INGOs, I travelled

[20] https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/little-syria-syrian-s-call-istanbul-s-fatih-district-home-6653

to Ankara for a week and conducted several expert interviews in addition to interviews with Syrian women working in a Turkish CSO. During my stay in Turkey, I had to visit the city of Izmit, located approximately 100 km from Istanbul, to renew my Turkish residency visa. I was facing difficulties, because of the language barrier, in locating official legal documents related to the establishment of Syrian CSOs in Turkey. I made use of existing connections in Izmit to meet with Turkish legal experts who were also members of a Turkish CSO. They invited me to attend one of their CSO meetings where I could observe the required formalities of CSO board member meetings in practice, and how decisions were taken among members. After the meeting, they answered my questions regarding the legal frameworks and provided me with legal documents for reference, which they also translated for me.

After completing my field research in Turkey, I travelled to the city of Beirut in Lebanon. Besides hosting the largest number of refugees per capita in the world and an estimated 1 million Syrian refugees (Amnesty International 2018), several additional factors made researching my topic in Lebanon particularly interesting. One, was the growing number of Syrian CSOs that were being established in Lebanon by Syrian nationals who also had Lebanese passports[21]. Being in Lebanon also provided me with the opportunity to interview key Syrian experts who were based in Syria but often visited Beirut. Beirut is considered a hub for academic research and libraries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. I made the most of this by searching for experts and publications on my topic. I was able to find many useful publications clarifying the Lebanese context and the challenges faced by Syrians in Lebanon at the library of the American University of Beirut (AUB)[22], and at the Issam Fares Institute for Policy Research and International Affairs. The latter is located on the AUB campus and during my stay held a number of workshops related to my topic. I conducted interviews mainly within the city of Beirut and its outskirts, namely the Ouzai slum which had a large refugee population. I also visited a Lebanese CSO that provides

[21] According to the Syrian Constitution, it is not allowed for an individual to give up their Syrian nationality. As such, a number of Syrians have dual nationalities including many that have both Syrian and Lebanese from the period following the French mandate when the political and social boundaries between the two countries were not clearly defined.

[22] I was a student at the American University of Beirut (AUB) during 2003-2006. As an AUB Alumni I was able to access the AUB campus, libraries and research institutes including the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs and the British/Syrian CSO Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship.

informal education to Syrian refugee children in the region of Akkar, located at the edge of northern Lebanon and sharing its borders with Syrian Homs and Tartous.

It was impossible to obtain a comprehensive sampling frame of all the CSOs with Syrian staff in Turkey and Lebanon in 2018. This was due to several factors including the large number of informal CSOs that were not officially registered, and the large numbers of Syrians working informally in the sector. Instead, I relied on non-probability sampling methods, in particular a combination of purposive maximum variation which is "useful for generating a wide range of responses" and snowball sampling techniques to locate sampling units (Guest et al. 2013:51)[23]. My intention was to select relevant and knowledgeable respondents but also to document variation in perspectives within my target population. As such, in addition to the primary inclusion criteria mentioned above which predetermined eligibility for inclusion in my study, I sought to diversify my sample by selecting Syrian women from various age groups, religious/ethnic backgrounds, marital status, role within the CSO, and previous educational and working experience. Snowball sampling techniques which are "Very useful for sampling hard-to-reach populations" was useful in overcoming the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame (Guest et al. 2013:52).

I relied on my own social networks and work colleagues from Syrian civil society to locate participants in the beginning of the field research. Several were themselves displaced to Turkey and Lebanon and were either working in or had some connections with relevant CSOs. After interviews I asked interviewees to identify other potential participants. In order to avoid recruiting biases however, I also relied on internet searches, especially social media outlets like Facebook or Instagram, to locate Syrian CSOs that often used social media to gain support or publicise their activities and campaigns. I used a variety of approaches to initiate contact with and recruit CSOs and experts for my study. These included direct door-to-door visits of CSOs, phone calls, emails and messages sent to participant's or CSO's social media accounts. I discovered that Facebook was a useful tool and often more effective than email or direct visits. My strategy was to reach out to the maximum number of local, Syrian and international CSOs in both locations to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews with their staff and to participate in their activities until no new data was collected.

[23] As adapted by Guest et al. (2013) from Patton's Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods (2002).

Additional CSOs were selected and participants interviewed until responses were increasingly repetitive and a saturation point was reached in the data (Creswell 2013).

Fieldwork was conducted in the two research sites over a period of fourteen weeks, from October 1st to December 14th 2018. The first eight weeks were spent in Turkey, mainly in Istanbul, with brief visits to the cities of Izmit and Ankara. The following six weeks were spent in the city Beirut with a one-day visit to the region of Akkar in Lebanon. Prior to conducting the fieldwork in Turkey and Lebanon, a one-week pilot was conducted in August 2018 with a sample of Syrian/German CSOs in Berlin, Germany. By the end of the research period I had managed to interview participants from 32 international, host, and Syrian CSOs. The following table provides further details on the numbers of sampled organisations in each research location:

Table 2: Sampled CSOs by Location and Identity (2018)

Location	Syrian CSOs	Host CSOs	INGOs	Total
Germany	3	0	0	3
Turkey	5	7	0	12
Lebanon	10	3	4	17
Total	18	10	4	**32**

A total of 80 semi-structured interviews (4 in Germany, 49 in Turkey and 27 in Lebanon) were conducted. Of these, 13 were expert interviews with experts and key informants from government entities, research/academia, legal experts and civil society. Five of the interviewed research experts were Syrians working in research CSOs in Lebanon and Turkey, or Syrian activists from civil society. They were interviewed in their capacity as both research participants and experts/key informants but counted only as participants in this research. A total of 67 interviews were conducted with participants from CSOs in Lebanon and Turkey. Of these interviews, 29 were with CSO management staff and 38 with staff/volunteer participants. Women constituted the bulk of the interviewed CSO participants, 51 interviews were held with women (39 of these were with Syrian women) and 16 interviews with men. This majority is also indicative of the high proportion of women involved in these organisations. Women also held a high proportion of management/leadership positions within the sampled CSOs:

Table 3: Gender Distribution of Interviewee Participants by CSO Position (All Nationalities)

	Gender		
Type of Interviewee	Male	Female	Total
Management	9	23	32
Participant	10	25	35
Total	19	48	67

By nationality, 51 of the interview participants were Syrian nationals working in Syrian, local or international CSOs in Lebanon and Turkey. 39 of them were Syrian women and 12 were men. The following tables provide information on the gendered age distribution of Syrian participants and their highest educational degree at the time of the interview:

Table 4: Highest Attained Educational Level by Gender

Highest Educational Level	Syrian Males	Syrian Females
Less than High school	0	0
High school	0	9
College/Bachelor	9	23
Master's Degree	2	7
Doctorate	1	0
Total	12	39

Table 5: Age Distribution of Male and Female Syrian Participants

Age Group	Syrian Males	Syrian Females
16-22	0	7
23-30	5	11
31-40	5	10
41-50	1	7
50+	1	4
Total	12	39

The majority of participants have completed a university bachelor degree or higher. By gender however, we see a small group of unskilled Syrian women that are participating in CSOs and no men. Most of the women in this group also belong to the age group (16-22) and represent Syrian women living in Istanbul who have not yet completed their university education but have managed to learn Turkish and gain access to entry level jobs in Turkish CSOs as interpreters. In terms of participants' skills, having accumulated CSO experience before the outbreak of the conflict in 2011 is another factor that influences the level of participation within CSOs in the context of displacement. The table below shows that Syrian women with previous civil society experience are more likely to assume leadership positions in CSOs compared to those with no experience. 26 out of the 39 female participants entered the civil society sector for the first time after the war, the majority (21) entering as lower staff or volunteers. Ten such women are working at a managerial level despite having no previous experience in CSOs.

Table 6: Syrian Participants with Experience in Civil Society before 2011

		Pre-Conflict Civil Society Experience	
		Yes	**No**
Management	Male	4	2
	Female	3	10
Participant	Male	2	6
	Female	3	21
Total		12	39

Chapter 5, which addresses empirical findings related to changes in the civic awareness and participation of Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey, elaborates on these findings in greater detail.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews (developing the topic guide)

The research findings of this study are based primarily on primary qualitative data collected from semi-structured in-depth interviews. Several factors motivated my reliance on this method. Namely, the suitability of in-depth interviews in exploratory research aimed at explaining poorly understood social phenomena: "When enough is

known about a topic or issue to formulate sensible research questions and identify potential interviewees, but not much more" (Guest et al. 2013:117). The reliance on in-depth interviews as a method, with its open-ended questions and inductive probing techniques, enables the collection of elaborated or detailed responses by participants that include not only short answers or factual responses. Their responses elaborate on their experiences in host country contexts, giving their perceptions on their gender roles and how these changed following the outbreak of conflict in their homeland (Guest et al. 2013).

Before entering the field, I designed two "loosely structured" discussion guides, one specifically for CSO management and the other for participants who were non-management CSO staff or volunteers[24]. These were designed for exploratory research covering "all of the essential domains of inquiry but not necessarily in the same order" (Guest et al. 2013:136). Interviews with management focused on understanding the background to their previous working experience and the overall objectives of the organisation, current projects, gender policies and on the actual participation of women across organisational levels. I also asked the management about their relationship with donors and how this affected project design, team formation from a gender perspective, and implementation. With staff and volunteer participants, I tried to triangulate the responses given to me by management, especially with regards to staff participation, feedback, decision-making and potential for growth within the organisation. I also inquired about their background and previous working experience in civil society, how they came to Turkey or Lebanon, and their current roles and responsibilities with the CSO. I inquired about their current understanding of what civil society is and the role of women within it, always referring back to the conflict situation and if they felt it acted as a catalyst for changes in their own traditional gender roles within their families, or as women involved in civil society.

Thus, during interviews I did not stick to a certain order of topics, allowing participants to disclose more information or to diverge freely which gave them the chance to participate and shape the conversation and to deviate into new subtopics which in the end influenced my original research topic. Prior to travelling to Turkey to begin my field research in September 2018, I tested my discussion guides during a research pilot

[24] A copy of both discussion guides can be found in Annex I: Discussion Guides.

conducted in Berlin, which composed of four interviews with CSO management and staff from three different Syrian German CSOs[25]. Besides providing me with the opportunity to become more familiar with my prepared discussion guides, the main objectives of the pilot were to test the overall research approach, further refine the interview tool as needed, and to collect more background information on the topic. The pilot confirmed the importance and relevance of the research topic, and the need for additional research to explain the challenges certain subgroups of Syrian women were facing in their civic participation in host country contexts. My experiences from the interviews also confirmed the suitability of relying on a loosely structured discussion guide and a conversational style of interviewing with non-hierarchical settings that are in line with feminist research methodologies.

In addition, the fact that I did not require an interpreter for translation purposes made it possible to conduct in-depth interviews in a one-on-one setting. This supported the building of rapport and enhanced confidentiality by allowing me to gather data in a more private setting that made participants feel safer, especially when discussing sensitive or emotional topics related to criticisms they had about their CSOs, their experience of displacement, exposure to violence or discrimination, and more private topics related to their gender roles at home.

The location of the interviews was usually the participants' offices or when these were crowded, in another quieter room with privacy such as an empty office or meeting room. This helped me better understand my participants' working environments and also facilitated the building of rapport with CSO employees and management, giving rise to the participant observation opportunities outlined in the following section. In some situations, and based on the interviewee's preference, interviews were conducted in participants' homes or public venues such as cafés.

Approvals from CSO management were necessary before I could speak to their employees in both research locations. Once approvals were obtained, the CSOs' management would select the individuals that I was allowed to interview. I would conduct the interviews with the suggested individuals and after building more trust and rapport, ask to interview other individuals. Sometimes my request was granted, on

[25] Details of the pilot can be found in Annex II: Berlin Pilot.

some occasions I was told that they were busy and was asked to leave. The duration of each interview typically lasted between 1.5 to 2.5 hours.

I began the interviews by introducing myself and research objectives. In most cases the CSO management had already received by email a copy of the official letter given to me by ZEF confirming that I was a university doctoral student. Still, at the interviews I provided a hard copy of the letter together with my ZEF business card that contained my contact information. While examining my business card I was often asked about ZEF and opportunities for pursuing degrees there.

I made sure there was sufficient time to *establish rapport* and allow participants to feel at ease before beginning the interviews. I tried to achieve this by adopting a friendly and open disposition, being responsive and answering their questions, and sharing information about myself and my research. As many of the participants were Syrian women who I was meeting for the first time, I was often asked personal questions about my family background, how I lived after the war broke out, and about my current doctoral studies, which would then allow me to transition into introducing my research topic. This discussion was often a good ice breaker and an opportunity to engage in 'small talk' that helped put the participants at ease before starting with the interview questions.

I then discussed issues related to confidentiality and the ethical requirements of my research. The informed consent form[26] used in this research gave interested participants the option to request a summary of the research findings in Arabic or English and my contact information. While going through the informed consent form with participants, I felt that the interest of some participants was heightened when they saw that they could receive a summary of my research findings. This was especially the case for CSOs that worked with women or were facing difficulties engaging more Syrian women as staff or beneficiaries. Around half of the research participants asked to receive a copy of the summary.

As I bilingual English/Arabic speaker I was able to conduct the interviews myself in both languages, sometimes switching between both in the same interview, to match

[26] The informed consent form used in this research was approved by the ZEF Ethical Committee and then translated by myself into the Arabic language for Arabic-speaking participants. A copy of the approved English version can be found in Annex III.

the language style and preference of my interview participant. Interviews with Syrians were usually conducted in colloquial Syrian Arabic. In such cases, being a native speaker and familiar with different Syrian dialects worked to my advantage in building rapport and helping me grasp the meanings behind native terminology and phrases used by my participants. Interviews with Turkish CSO management were conducted in English, and those with Lebanese CSO management were often conducted in both languages, reflecting the communication style of the participant, their educational background and the content being discussed. CSO objectives and projects would often be discussed in English using development terminology.

I kept a field research diary which contained notes from my daily observations in the field and I also wrote down expanded notes of interviewee responses after the interview. These were written in the language that they were spoken by the interviewee, and I tried to write down selected quotes verbatim that I felt were especially important for the analysis process. After the interviews, I often spent my evenings translating notes from Arabic to English and typing all of my hand-written notes into Word Documents to prepare them for analysis with ATLAS.ti software. I chose not to audio record interviews, as I knew this would make many Syrian participants feel uncomfortable, especially if they wanted to provide critical or negative information about the CSOs with which they worked. This also forced me to focus more on what the participants were saying and how they were interacting, in order to write my interview notes and to elaborate on them later that same day.

During interviews I tried to establish a non-hierarchical relationship between the participant and myself as an ‘all-knowing’ expert/academic, by briefly outlining my topic and research questions, expressing my lack of knowledge of their reality, and by stating that I was there to learn from them and their experiences. I tried to encourage their agency in the interview process by adopting a conversational interview style rather than an interrogative one. I did this by maintaining eye contact, by demonstrating genuine interest in the points they made, and by allowing participants to ask me questions during interviews (Cook and Fonow 1986).

I relied on the discussion guide that I had prepared and tested in the Berlin pilot to guide me during the interviews, making sure that all the relevant topics were covered in a natural sequence that emerged from the discussion with the interviewee. The topic

of low participation of Syrian females in public spaces seemed to be interesting for the participants and often provoked strong or emotional responses. I therefore often began with it, to help the conversation to begin before moving to other topics.

The flexibility and openness of in-depth interviews as a methodology, my loosely structured discussion guides, and the use of inductive probing techniques to formulate "questions that are based on the interviewee's responses and simultaneously linked to the research objectives" enabled the generation of more in-depth responses (Guest et al. 2013:114). My probing questions were often follow-up questions on their perceptions or feelings towards certain events they had mentioned factually, or when I felt I needed further elaboration to fully grasp the meaning behind specific general statements.

When relevant to the topic being discussed, I also shared my own personal experiences with participants, a typical practice by feminist researchers who "invest their personal experiences and emotions in the research process as means of connecting with their respondents" to enable the building of trust between researcher and participant, and consequently to obtain richer data (Campbell and Wasco 2000:786). The nature of the topic, and of displacement, challenges and discriminatory attitudes experienced by many participants and myself as displaced Syrians, meant that the interviews were often emotional. According to (Campbell and Wasco 2000) it is important to recognize the 'emotionality of science':

> *The emotionality of respondents' lives must be acknowledged throughout the research process. Moreover, because the researcher may be hearing emotion-laden material, the affective experiences of the scientist must also be examined. Throughout the process of research, feminist scholars attune to the feelings of their research participants as well as their own feelings.*
>
> (Campbell and Wasco 2000:786)

I therefore took the time to acknowledge and respect the participants' emotions during the interviews. I took note of them and their meanings, and of my own emotions, throughout the research process.

I took note of information related to the interviewee's background and personal demographics when they emerged naturally during the conversation, and inquired

about any missing information at the end of the interview. At the very end I asked the interviewees if they had any additional questions or concerns that they would like to ask me before closing the interview.

Participant Observation & Field Diary Notes

After gaining rapport with the CSOs' management, I took advantage of events, activities or meetings that were taking place at the CSOs to conduct participant observation. These participant observation sessions were not pre-planned, instead I relied on 'Situation-at-Hand' methodologies used in feminist studies especially for contested or emotional research topics. Taking advantage of a 'Situation-at-Hand' involves a researcher using:

> an already given situation as a focus for sociological inquiry or as a means of collecting data. That is, feminist scholarship often takes advantage of existing circumstances which are relevant to a particular topic of study or can be used to elicit information in a more naturalistic manner.
>
> (Cook and Fonow 1986:20).

The spontaneity of the participant observation sessions allowed me to gather more non-reactive data, and to formulate a clearer understanding of the interaction of CSO working environments as my primary setting of focus, and of the behaviours of various actors within them. Participant observation allowed me to observe the role of Syrian women as management, staff or beneficiaries of CSOs, and of the relationships between a CSO and other external parties such as their beneficiaries or funders. It also provided an opportunity to "confirm or gain face validity" by triangulating data provided by CSO management, especially host CSOs, regarding the participation of Syrian women in their organisations (Guest et al. 2013:83). I was primarily concerned with biased responses by CSO management, who wanted to depict an image of their organisation in which displaced Syrian members were more 'empowered' or given more opportunities to participate than was the case.

In certain situations, I was invited by the staff or management of CSOs to join activities (educational and psychosocial support activities) or to attend their meetings (board-member meetings, international donor meetings). In all but one such observation setting, the participants were aware of my identity as a doctoral student conducting research, and I recorded notes of my observations in my research diary in front of

them. Annex VI includes a table which summarises the participant observations that I conducted in my field research and my role in each setting.

Combined with the information collected from interviews and documents, my observations helped me incorporate the perspectives of Syrian women beneficiaries as well as of Syrian women working in CSOs, and to observe the dynamics in the relationships between these two groups that tended to be highly asymmetrical. I also learned more about the challenges faced by local organisations in dealing with the leading international donor organisations upon which they so heavily depended for funding. Consequently, they exerted great efforts to mould themselves and their projects to meet the donor requirements at the expense of their local expertise and the priorities of their beneficiaries. Through participant observation I was also able to observe first-hand how some Syrian and local CSOs provide safe environments and much needed social activities to both Syrian staff and beneficiaries in displacement contexts in which they suffer from host discriminatory attitudes and hostility.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at the Center for Development Research (ZEF) prior to beginning field research in September 2018. As part of obtaining this ethical clearance, the process of obtaining consent from research subjects was reviewed including the informed consent form I intended to use, in addition to my prepared discussion guide. This informed consent form was translated into the first language of Syrian participants, Arabic and its contents were discussed at the beginning of interviews with each participant to ensure that information regarding the study, use of data and confidentiality issues were all clear to participants prior to giving consent. At the end of each interview, I also reminded the participants that they could contact me at any point in time if they wished to make changes to the information they had provided or to completely pull out of the study.

I was concerned that the participation of some interview partners, particularly at lower staff levels, was not entirely voluntary, but rather performed under pressure by the CSO management. I attempted to counter this by encouraging genuine interest by taking time to discuss the research topic, the importance and value of the participant's input, and how I intended to share the findings. I also clarified that participation was voluntary and that I would not inform their higher management if they decided not to

participate. I informed them of confidentiality aspects and of their ability to fully control the degree of visibility of their identity and the data they provided in my thesis manuscript and other academic research outputs such as journal articles and conference presentations. To ensure data security, physical copies of primary and secondary data such as field diaries, signed informed consent forms and collected books or publications from CSOs were stored securely in locked cabinets in my home, and separately from the data file used for analysis in the ZEF shared folder. The data files in the ZEF shared folder have been stripped of research participant identifiers. Participant information can be found in a separate excel file that links the codes to respondents' identifying information. This excel file is password protected and encrypted and can be accessed only by myself.

According to Fox et al. (2020), while doing research with 'displaced persons' in 'fragile contexts' it is important for the researcher to engage in what they refer to as 'Ethics in Practice' which involves "anticipating, attending to and learning from the experience of conducting research, in parallel with following guidance articulated by institutional ethics review boards/committees (IRBs) and funders prior to research commencing" (830). As such, ethical considerations do not merely occur at the stages prior to conducting research, but are rather an ongoing process where the researcher interacts with participants while continuously considering the effects or consequences of the research and its actions, considering emerging vulnerabilities, and attempting "to 'do good' as well as aspire to 'do no harm'" (839).

Keeping in mind the emerging vulnerabilities of my sample due to political events in the ongoing Syrian conflict, after collecting my data I took the decision to protect and fully anonymize the identities of all my research participants and their CSOs, not just those who requested anonymity. I was concerned that by publicising their association with CSOs with certain national and political orientations, or statements they made, would have negative consequences on their relationships with various formal Syrian government bodies and perhaps increase their vulnerability.

Methodological Limitations

Accessing CSOs and getting their consent to participate was not without challenges. In Turkey for example, I was often confronted with a lot of internal bureaucracy. I had to visit the same CSO several times before obtaining an approval from their

management, and even then, some refused to be a part of my sample. Academic experts later told me that NGOs in Turkey had been oversampled by students doing research on Syrian refugees in the past few years. Unfortunately, some NGOs were the victims of unethical research by students who volunteered with them and stole beneficiary data without consent. This led such NGOs to become reluctant to deal with researchers. The Turkish government had even banned research on Syrian refugees for a period of time. In one case, the management of a Turkish CSO had refused to participate in my research, however, the Syrian women working there who I had approached sympathised with my research objectives, and decided to defy their management and speak to me during their lunch break: “We are free to speak to whoever we wish during our lunch break”, one of them said.

Discussing the topic of civil society with Syrian individuals and organisations was highly sensitive at the time of this research due to its association with the political demands of opposition groups and the politicization of the organisations themselves. I doubt that I would have been able to access a representative sample of Syrian CSOs if my research topic had been directly related to Syrian civil society. However, examining the gender dimension within Syrian civil society was regarded by most parties as a non-threatening topic, and in the words of one participant, ‘a la mode’.

None of the INGOs that I approached in Turkey – such as the UNHCR, UNWOMEN and UNDP – responded to my requests for meetings or interviews. The head offices of these INGOs were based in Ankara, however despite travelling to Ankara and several attempts to contact them via email, phone and personal contacts and visiting their premises, I was unable to get a response and to include them in my sample. Regarding Syrian CSOs in Lebanon, I had really wanted to include two organisations – Women Now and Sawa – that I believed were important due to the amount of publicity surrounding their work and the fact that they were led by Syrian women in Lebanon. Unfortunately, although both responded to my initial contacts, they then dropped out or ignored further attempts to contact them to set an appointment for interviews. I attempted to collect data about them from their own research publications and website content, and by attending public lectures and presentations given by their founders.

Logistically, navigating the city of Istanbul proved to be a lot more complicated than I had anticipated. The CSOs I visited were dispersed across the city. A megacity with over 15 million inhabitants, trips between different parts of the city often took up to two hours each way due to traffic, and due to the language barrier, I was not always able to ask for directions. In Lebanon, finding affordable and safe accommodation was challenging due to ongoing political tensions and the resulting poor economic situation in Lebanon. Initially staying with friends and in hotels, I was eventually able to find accommodation in a hostel that was close to the city centre and well connected. (Cooke 2000)Thus, a greater portion of my time during fieldwork was spent ‘settling in’ and ‘travelling’ than I had anticipated.

Finally, a second round of field research was initially planned in Turkey and Lebanon in order to present preliminary findings and discuss them in additional focus group discussions. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on travel and gathering in groups made this impossible. However, sufficient primary and secondary data were collected in the first stage of data collection in 2018 to address this research’s primary objectives and produce the findings outlined in the two empirical chapters that follow.

Chapter 5: Effects of Conflict and Displacement on Syrian Women's Civic Participation (2000- 2018)

Some of the interviewed Syrian women were already participating in civil society organisations (CSOs) before experiencing conflict and displacement, whereas for others their first experience of civic participation came after these events. For the latter, their civic participation was driven by the violence of conflict and its direct impacts on their lives, especially the resulting humanitarian crisis from the mass displacement of Syrians. The interviewed Syrian women actively made use of the new opportunities available to them. They participated in a variety of CSOs including formal and informal Syrian CSOs (SCSOs), host CSOs, and INGOS that supported Syrian refugee communities in Lebanon and Turkey.

This chapter addresses the first and second sub-questions posed in the Research Design and Methods chapter: Question 1 - Is there evidence of change in the overall civic participation of sampled Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey compared to before the war? And Question 2 - What role do refugee policies, social attitudes, and civic environments in each host country context play in shaping displaced Syrian women's civic participation? How do these interact with the identities of displaced Syrian women to shape their civic participation differently in Lebanon and Turkey?

Question 2 is addressed by building on the exploration of political histories and refugee policies in the second chapter of this thesis. Question 1 involves the identification of 'changes' in the civic participation of Syrian women, which requires additional background presented in the first sections of this chapter that discuss Syrian civil society during the period 2000-2010 and how it was influenced by key developments in Arab civic activity and ongoing debates around the roles and identities of civic organisations.

Civic Participation in Arab Contexts: Civil 'Madani' versus Native 'Ahli' Societies

The research participants had varied understandings of the concept and meaning of the terms civil society, civic organisations, and civic participation. Emerging from a conflict context, they held different political positions that impacted their choice of organisational labelling. Some organisations advocating for democratic and human rights values tended to refer to themselves as civic organisations. Some chose to remain politically neutral and used the term 'association' (the legal term for voluntary

non-profit organisations in Syria) or ‘NGO’ to refer to their organisations. Other organisations, in particular, Islamic CSOs used ‘charity association’ or ‘native society’. Pre-existing studies in Lebanon and Turkey found similar variations in self-labelling among SCSOs, with some organisations refusing the label ‘civil society’ because of critical connotations towards the Syrian government, while others label themselves as SCSOs and view politically neutral SCSOs as ‘non-profits’ that provide aid rather than being part of civil society (Mattes 2018; Diker and Ragab 2019). To contextualise these different labels, this section refers to existing literature and discussions with research participants to explore Arab intellectual/political debates around the concept of civil society and its transferability from Western to Arab societies, and the emergence of the alternative concept, ‘native society’, in Arab countries including Syria.

Civil Society Organisations, or various forms of organized voluntary associations of citizens, have existed in Arab countries since the late 19th century (Hassouna 2001). According to Hegel, in civil society citizens organize within private organisations that are separate from the state and family “to advance their shared interests and moral convictions” (Englehart 2011:347). Such understandings of civil society are based on a fraternity among citizens that is in turn based on the concept of citizenship and the individual rather than social groupings such as family and community. This understanding that views the individual as separate from the family fails to capture the importance of such groupings in defining individual identity in Arab contexts (Rabo 2005). It also fails to capture the contributions of large numbers of religious or familial-based organisations in the Arab region. It is therefore of no surprise that the concept of civil society and its transferability to the Arab context sparked such a debate.

In the 1980s some Arab intellectuals and social scientists engaged with Western literature on the role of the state after the failure of state-centred development in many global south countries and presented their views on state-society relations, criticising existing nation-states and exploring alternative models of liberal/democratic social and political transformation that included social actors and ‘civil society’ (Hamzawy 2002: 13-14). Their arguments were augmented by Western government foreign policies during the 1970s that supported local civil society actors in countries of the South to further democratization, good governance, and development (Howell et al. 2013). Following the September 11th attacks in 2000, US support for local civil society in the Arab region increased even more. This was part of the US’s ‘soft power’ strategies to

encourage political and economic reforms that would uproot terrorism and spread democracy with a special focus on funding civil society and women's empowerment (Salime 2010).

Meanwhile, socio-political changes in the Arab region during the 1980s also influenced the ongoing debate on civil society. The rise of Political Islam during that period brought with it a social-religious discourse that was critical of modernism and secular democratic systems that it regarded as harmful culturally-foreign concepts (Hamzawy 2003). The number of religious-based CSOs working in the areas of charity and service provision grew in the 1980s in response to the failures of many Arab states to provide basic services to their people (Berman and Sheri 2003; Hassouna 2001). Fearing the rising influence of Islamic CSOs on society, leftist and liberal political groups in Arab countries responded by supporting a secular neoliberal notion of civil society that acts as an intermediate between state and private spheres, and lobbied to have Islamic movements excluded due to their religious character (Hamzawy 2003).

Some Arab intellectuals, such as Egyptian Professor of Law Hussam Isa, opposed such efforts, criticising the neoliberal understanding of civil society as a culturally specific construction based on Western historical experience and concepts of individualism, democracy, political freedoms, and human rights. The concept of civil society also fails to capture the importance of religion and religious groups in the Arab region. Lebanese historian Wajih Kautharani and Egyptian political scientist Saif al-Din Ismaeil argue that the term civil society is a product of modern secularism and is culturally-specific to developments in the West that led to the marginalization of religion and its shifting to the private sphere. This development did not occur in all civilizations and is therefore not globally transferable. Furthermore, they view the neoliberal understanding of civil society as heavily influenced by dichotomies of Western thought: modernity vs tradition, secularization vs religion, which excludes religious movements and replaces them with modern secular organisations which are marginal in the Arab world (Hamzawy 2003).

Responding to this debate, and to state restrictions on the activity of religious CSOs, Islamist groups appropriated the term 'civil society' ('al-mojtamaa al-madani') and redefined it as 'al-mojtamaa al-ahli' or 'kinship/native society' to reinforce their position as a vital part of societal voluntary action (Hamzawy 2003). During an interview with

Sabah al Hallak, one of the co-founders of the Syrian League for Citizenship (SLC) in Lebanon, the topic of different labels used to describe civic activity among Syrian CSOs emerged. According to Sabah:

> ‘Mojtamaa al-ahli’ (native/kinship society) can be described as familial or tribal. Members of these groups can be relatives, or belong to the same neighbourhood or village. They share a common identity, relation, or kinship that is necessary for being part of the group. So, they are identity-based entities, like religious charity organisations for example. In ‘mojtamaa al-madani’ (civil society) individual choice is the basis for belonging to these groups, not identity, they are secular, they are made of up *citizens* (emphasis added by Sabah) with different religious beliefs, origins, ages, genders etc.
>
> (Sabah al Hallak, Participant Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

The Syrian League for Citizenship was established in Beirut in 2015 by a group of displaced Syrians including Sabah in Lebanon. It refers to itself as a Syrian civil society organisation and works to spread awareness on democratic and liberal values, gender equality and citizenship through trainings and publications such as their Citizenship Handbook, which includes definitions for both civil and native societies to raise awareness of their difference and advocate for civil rather than native societies.

Regardless of their chosen labels, the numbers of CSOs in the Arab world continued to grow from approximately 20,000 to 70,000 organisations over the period of the 1960s to late 1980s (Bensahel 2004:30). Many of these CSOs were structurally tied to or controlled by state authorities and often under-represented societal groups coming from rural areas and the urban poor (Bensahel 2004:30-31). Most were involved in the provision of essential social services like education and healthcare and in charity or aid provision, increasingly however, there were greater numbers of CSOs working in other areas such as the environment, and human and women’s rights (Hassouna 2001).

The number of “women’s non-governmental organisations (NGOs) dealing with aspects of women’s lives such as health, education, legal literacy, income generation and rights advocacy” grew in the Arab world (Jad 2007:177). Jad (2007) observes that Arab women’s movements underwent a process of ‘NGO-isation’ that replaced grassroots women’s activism with professionalised organisations led by NGO elites

and the wives of Arab leaders. She describes NGO-isation as “the process through which issues of collective concern are transformed into projects in isolation from the general context in which they are applied and without taking due consideration of the economic, social and political factors affecting them” (Jad 2007:177). The nature of work within NGOs, or what Jad (2007) refers to as “’project logic” (178) produces a dependency on NGO elites - highly educated and “qualified professional and administrative staff” (184) who are familiar with “international development ‘lingo’” (186) and can successfully fundraise, write reports and communicate in English with international donors. These NGO elites exert power over grassroots women and “determine which women’s issues should be brought to public attention” (Jad 2007:178).

Besides having to compete with NGO elites for funding and resources, smaller CSOs face significant legal restrictions by the state that limit their activities or in some cases, even prevent their formal registration (Bensahel 2004). In Syria, CSOs are registered as associations, institutions, unions or clubs by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) in Damascus (Al-Khoury et al., 2011). Syrian Law No. 93(1958) uses the term ‘association’ to refer to any non-profit organized group action that is carried out for a continuous period with headquarters within the borders of the Syrian Arab Republic. Every association needs to have a written charter signed by its founders that contains its name, objectives, information about its founders and members, and its auditing mechanism. The activity of associations is monitored by the MoSA, and those believed to be involved in activities that threaten “the integrity or form” of the Syrian government are subject to nullification (Kelly & Breslin, 2010:19).

Despite Western support of Arab CSOs to promote the democratisation and modernization of Arab societies, the growing number of Arab CSOs did not actively promote democratization prior to 2011 (Shadi Hamid 2010). Nor did they play an active role during the Arab Spring revolutions that were instead led by Arab youth’s strong desire for change (Aarts and Cavatorta 2013). The restricted conditions under which the CSOs operated could explain their failure to influence significant social change. According to Arenfeldt and Al-Hassan Golley (2012), the legal and governmental restrictions placed upon the formation and activity of civic groups in Arab countries necessitates the adoption of a broader understanding of civic movements than the Western liberal understanding.

Some researchers argued for a 'neutral' definition of civil society in authoritarian contexts, like that of most regimes in the Middle East, to include 'non-traditional actors' that do not necessarily have liberal or democratic agendas (Aarts and Cavatorta 2013:6). Taking into account concerns put forward by Arenfeldt and Al-Hassan Golley (2012) on the impacts of legal and governmental restrictions upon civic activity in Arab countries, and Aarts and Cavatorta's (2013) argument for a 'neutral' definition of civil society operating in constrained contexts, this research understands civil society and civic organisations (CSOs) in 2018 as a broad range of social actors that are formally or informally engaged in supporting Syrian refugees. It did not limit the CSOs considered in its sample to those with liberal political agendas, or to those that were formally registered. It included Syrian, Lebanese, Turkish, and international organisations in Turkey and Lebanon with various political views and labels to refer to their civic activity. The most important criterion for their selection was the involvement or active participation of Syrian women within them rather than their political activism or views.

CSOs in Syria (2000-2010)

To understand how Syrian women's civic participation was altered by conflict and displacement experiences, we need to first understand what their opportunities for civic engagement looked like before the war. In the decade preceding the outbreak of civil war under Bashar al Asad, growing segments of the Syrian population suffered from poverty and unemployment, including farming communities who were displaced from rural areas to cities after suffering the effects of climate change and worsening drought conditions since 2006 (Heydemann 2020). The arrival of an estimated 1-1.2 million Iraqi refugees following the 2003 US-led coalition war on Iraq also placed additional burdens on the Syrian national health and educational system, which were provided to Iraqi refugees for free. During the same period, Syria experienced rising living costs and unemployment levels. The Syrian government attempted to manage growing social problems and inequalities by outsourcing "important state welfare functions to charities" (De Elvira & Zintl, 2014:329).

According to Syrian statistics, on the eve of civil war in 2010, almost equal numbers of men and women were participating in officially registered CSOs, referred to as associations or *jameiyat* (Al-Khoury et al. 2011). The majority of these organisations were primarily led by men who dominated "the boardroom and executive functions",

with only 13% of Syrian CSOs headed by a woman (Al-Khoury et al. 2011:14). These organisations were mainly involved in charitable activities, providing much-needed social support (Al-Khoury et al. 2011). The decade 2000-2010 also witnessed the emergence of a small number of highly professionalised Syrian organisations that referred to themselves as non-profits or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Some Syrian women like myself who had studied abroad and were fluent in English were able to benefit from the new opportunities, supported by the Syrian government, for civic participation in certain sectors of Syrian civil society.

Syrian CSOs such as the Syrian Red Crescent and INGOs, especially the UNHCR, played an important role in supporting the government's relief response for refugees (Al-Miqdad 2007; Ferris 2013). Besides Iraqi refugees, Syria also hosts an estimated half a million Palestinian refugees from the 1948, 1967 and 1973 Palestinian-Israeli wars (Meininghaus 2016). Right before the Syrian civil war erupted, there were approximately 1000 registered and active Syrian CSOs in Syria that in 2010 provided SYP 6.5 billion ($139 million) in financial support and services to 2.3 million Syrians. Syrian charities dominated the work of Syrian civil society in 2010: over 70% of Syrians who benefitted from the services of registered CSOs in Syria were recipients of financial aid or health services for the poor (Al-Khoury et al., 2011).

The revival of Syrian civil society was led by Syria's new First Lady Asma al Asad who was born and raised in the United Kingdom (Al-Zoua'bi & Iyad, 2017; De Elvira & Zintl, 2014). In 2001, Asma al Asad launched The Syria Trust for Development (The Trust), a Syrian non-profit organisation with several projects focusing on the development or 'empowerment' of youth, children, women, and rural populations. With strong resemblances to Jad's processes of 'NGO-isation' and its effects (Jad 2007), projects at the Trust were executed in Arabic with local beneficiaries while the language of business was English reflecting the strong ties with major INGOs like the World Bank and UN agencies that funded many Trust projects. International partnerships were previously uncommon in Syria, as INGOs wishing to carry out operations inside the country were required to partner with a Syrian CSO and were subject to government approvals.

The gender composition within the Trust did not follow the national averages (roughly 50:50) mentioned above. Out of the estimated 120 employees in 2010, women made

up almost 70% and held most of the executive positions. For skilled Syrians who had lived abroad and wished to return to Syria like myself, the Trust provided attractive work opportunities in a highly professionalized work environment, and higher salaries compared to the national average income. Those lacking NGO-specific skills, or "project logic" (Jad, 2007:178), benefited from training and capacity-building opportunities. After the outbreak of the war, several former Trust employees made use of their accumulated NGO skills to launch their own civil society initiatives inside and outside of Syria.

Besides the Trust, a handful of other developmental Syrian and International NGOs that were strongly affiliated to the state and the First Lady were launched during this period, such as the Junior Chamber International (JCI) in 2004 and the Syrian Enterprise and Business Center (SEBC) in 2006 (De Elvira & Zintl, 2014; Hinnebusch, 2012). De Elvira and Zintl (2014) refer to these organisations as "government-organized nongovernmental organizations," or GO-NGOs" (334). Compared to the activities and beneficiary groups served by regular Syrian CSOs, GO-NGOs focused more on developmental projects with capacity building, training or awareness-raising components, and financing business start-ups. The GO-NGOs targeted mainly Syrian middle classes, while Syrian charities acted as a privatized form of state welfare, providing their services to lower and lower-middle classes (De Elvira & Zintl, 2014). Syrian GO-NGOs were also more professionalised, and more capable of meeting international donor standards to receive international funding (Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 2017). Their employees came mostly from wealthy, urban middle-class segments of Syrian society (Hinnebusch, 2012).

After 2011, the conflict in Syria and the resulting refugee crisis created a need for a larger and more active Syrian civil society sector. The number of Syrian CSOs multiplied as they responded to the urgent needs of Syrians, spreading to new geographical areas affected by war both inside Syria where there had previously been little civic activity, and to neighbouring countries like Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan where Syrian refugees were concentrated (Al-Zoua'bi & Iyad, 2017; Diker & Ragab, 2019; Mattes, 2018). Syrian CSOs not only grew in number but also expanded their activities beyond charity work.

Compared to the situation in Syria during the war, civically engaged Syrians were more likely to register their organisations abroad where registration because the procedures were easier and they had greater access to international donors (Citizens for Syria 2012; Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 2017). These newly formed organisations worked to meet the pressing humanitarian needs of Syrian people who became internally and externally displaced, to coordinate aid efforts, document human rights violations, and create job opportunities for young Syrians in host countries (Al-Zoua'bi & Iyad, 2017). The following section focuses on the civic contexts of Lebanon and Turkey during the period 2011-2018 and compares displaced Syrian women's participation in these host contexts.

Evidence of Increased Civic Participation among Displaced Syrian Women in Lebanon and Turkey

Before 2011, many of this study's research participants had no working or volunteering experience in CSOs in Syria. Many had a rather limited understanding of the role of CSOs, regarding them mainly as charitable or religious organisations that provide financial aid to orphans and those in need. After 2011, the exposure of displaced Syrian communities in Turkey and Lebanon to various types of civic organisations increased dramatically. Several research participants were themselves at some point beneficiaries of humanitarian aid or support services that were provided by such CSOs. As the crisis prolonged, international donor priorities adjusted, and the services provided by these organisations shifted from a focus on aid distribution to more long-term development and integration activities. Syrian refugees were offered additional types of support from CSOs that were non-monetary such as educational and vocational training, psychosocial support, health awareness training, and integration support.

Many of the civically active Syrian women interviewed in this research in Lebanon and Turkey spoke of how conflict and displacement experiences increased displaced Syrian's awareness of such organisations, and expanded their understanding of the functions and objectives that such organisations can have. The following quotes by Syrian participants from both host contexts demonstrate these views:

> Before I worked, I didn't know about associations. Here we learned about associations and their goals. Many Syrian beneficiaries that come here, in their

> view an association equals aid, it has nothing except aid. They say “We didn’t gain anything from your association at all” and I reply, “If you notice you’ll see more than money, here we give you the rod to catch the fish to feed yourself”.
>
> (Manal, Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 25.09.2018)

> My understanding, and the details I know about NGOs, has developed after the war. Before working at [name of organisation omitted] I never worked for an NGO or heard of anything similar. I only heard about UN organisations.
>
> (Anwar, Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 08.12.2018)

> Before the war there was a different understanding of what an association was, it was about helping the poor. After the events [conflict in Syria] the understanding expanded to include humanitarian aid, not just helping orphans and the poor… the demand for education among women went up significantly, and the percentage of working women, we felt that the world was changing in a more positive way. The development courses available after the war made Syrian women busy, training, qualifications, female empowerment, there was a very beautiful participation and a change in the understanding of what CSOs are.
>
> (Rajaa, Interview. Istanbul, Turkey.18.09.2018)

A decline in the financial situation of Syrian families due to conflict and displacement experiences was an important motivator driving many of the Syrian women from this research sample to enter the job market for the first time and seek employment in CSOs where working conditions and pay were favourable to the private sector in Turkey and Lebanon. This was especially the case for interviewed Syrian women who came from more conservative families that upheld traditional gender roles for men and women. Several studies on displaced Syrian women in Turkey and Lebanon confirm that after the conflict broke out in Syria, greater numbers of Syrian women assumed income-generating responsibilities in their families out of financial need (Khattab and Myrttinen 2017; Taweel 2020; Körükmez et al. 2020; Cloeters et al. 2018). Indeed, for the majority of Syrian women who were interviewed, their first paid employment experience occurred after 2011, in Lebanon or Turkey. Previously in Syria, many had

relied financially on their husbands or fathers, including women who were educated and held university degrees. Once they became displaced in Lebanon or Turkey, their financial situation changed and a single income was no longer sufficient to support the entire family. Interviewed women from both host contexts spoke of the large numbers of displaced Syrian women that were working to financially support their families:

> Now rarely you find a Syrian household without any women working in it. Even on Facebook, from their homes, they buy and sell products in bulk. My friend is an education and psychology major and she works in online trade now. She has groups on Facebook that she uses to sell her products. Life in Istanbul is difficult, it's not enough that the father works to support the family.
>
> (Wedad, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 17.10.2018)

> According to the UNHCR around 40% of Syrian women [in Lebanon] are providing for their families after losing their husbands and working in the private sector or civil society. Many of these women come from environments where, in general, there were no educational opportunities, or opportunities to accumulate skills. After becoming refugees, they entered the job market and there are NGOs that are working to empower them.
>
> (Sabah Al Hallak, Participant Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

According to interviewed participants, the working environments of CSOs helped them mitigate many of the hostilities and difficulties that they encountered in their displacement contexts. In the private sectors in Turkey and Lebanon, Syrian women are typically offered low-skilled informal jobs, in textile factories for example, where they work long hours for little return. Informal private sector job environments also imply higher exposure to host discriminatory attitudes and verbal harassment. A recent intersectional study on Syrian women refugees working in Turkey by Knappert, Kornau, and Figengül (2018) finds that their political status as refugees is an important social marker that intersects with their gender identity resulting in their "reinforced exclusion" (Knappert et al., 2018:76) and exploitation in the Turkish labour market. Körükmez et al. (2020), report similar findings, stating that Syrian refugee women in Turkey face double discrimination in the Turkish labour marker as migrants and women. Those who work, often receive low wages that are lower than their Turkish peers (Cloeters et al., 2018; Körükmez et al., 2020). According to participants, CSOs,

whether host, Syrian or international, offered better salaries to displaced Syrian women and better professional working environments in offices which are perceived as safer working environments, with better working hours and opportunities to benefit from training and capacity building. The following two quotes by Syrian women working in a Turkish and a Syrian CSO in Istanbul respectively are representative of these views:

> The positives of working here include flexibility in working hours and treatment. The team is very comfortable to work with, like a family.
>
> (Sanaa, Interview. Istanbul, Interview. 25.10.2018)

> The advantage of working here is that the work is respectable, in an organisation, and I get a high salary.
>
> (Hala Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 26.10.2018)

Körükmez et al. also find that although jobs at CSOs in Turkey for Syrian women are often project-based and temporary, however, they do offer reasonable pay and working conditions (thereby making them more attractive compared to other types of jobs in Turkey) (Körükmez et al., 2020). Besides getting better pay at CSOs, interviewees also described these organisations as 'safe spaces' where Syrian refugee women could bring their children to work, or as incubating spaces where they could work, adjust to their new lives in displacement, and develop their skills:

> Here [in the CSO] the environment is an incubator for women's ambitions. It provides a transition stage but in a safe space, we are now in a birth stage, the Syrian woman with ambitions is still in a birth state, she left her society because of war, and is still remanufacturing or repairing herself. These organisations are giving a push forward.
>
> (Fareeda, Participant Interview. Ankara, Turkey. 14.09.2018)

> The working environment here is good and they encourage women to work. Women need support, and here someone is supporting her. The place where you work is more important than the salary, there should be trust.
>
> (Mira, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 25. 09.2018)

> Their [Syrian women working in a SCSO] first reason for working here was financial need. After a while they developed a connection to the place. They got to know one another at work, something new started to develop between them. This place became special to them. Now I am not able to pay them, but they are still working, and going through new experiences.
>
> (Riham, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 04.12.2018)

This preference for CSO working environments was not only expressed by Syrian women. Anwar, who we encountered earlier, stated his preference for working in the civil society sector in Lebanon versus the private sector:

> They pay fairly. The friendly work-environment, no bureaucracy, flexible hours. Before I worked in the private sector as an accounting supervisor. It was hell, I had 6 or 7 supervisors, the private sector is not like the NGO sector, it's not a friendly environment, it's very competitive with lots of toxic masculinity in the work atmosphere.
>
> (Anwar, Interview, 08.12.2018)

Syrian women in urban areas of Turkey are also exposed to "a range of violence and insecurities due to border securitization, illegal trafficking, and patriarchal structures in both the Syrian community and the host society" (Cloeters et al., 2018:22). A qualitative study by Özden & Ramadan (2019) with 211 Syrian women aged 18-65 finds that 20% of the Syrian women in their sample were sexually harassed in Turkey "in markets, streets, and on public transportation" (45). The fact that some Syrian women need the permission of husbands or other male relatives to operate outside of the home poses another obstacle that restricts the mobility of Syrian women in Turkey (Özden & Ramadan, 2019).

Islamic CSOs, whether host or Syrian, offer conservative Syrian women gender-segregated working spaces which they prefer. For this group of Syrian women**,** gender-segregated spaces mean less resistance from family or husbands to their participation in CSOs and public spaces. According to research participants, the unfamiliar displacement context often heightens family fears that women might be exposed to sexual harassment or violence from host communities at work. These fears are heightened in Turkey where the language barrier makes it harder for Syrian

women who are not fluent in Turkish to ask for help or defend themselves in dangerous situations. During the interviews, Syrian female participants spoke of incidents where they were verbally harassed by host communities or felt unsafe in public spaces because of their gender or nationality, but there were no reports of physical abuse.

Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin (2019) discuss how this sense of instability among Syrian refugees in Turkey due to a perceived host community hostility drives Syrian families who fear for the safety of Syrian women to restrict their mobility in public spaces. Körükmez et al. (2020) arrive at similar findings from their sample of working Syrian women in Turkey who stated needing permission from husbands or parents before working in gender-mixed spaces because of harassment concerns. However, considering the findings of Özden and Ramadan (2019), as mentioned in Chapter 2, the prevalence of incidents of sexual harassment or violence exerted by host communities towards Syrian women is quite high, making their search for 'safe' spaces quite understandable.

For displaced Syrians whose social networks were destroyed by conflict, Syrian CSOs also provided opportunities to reconnect with their communities in displacement contexts, and greater opportunities to assume leadership positions compared to local and international CSOs. Sameeha, a 65 year-old Syrian woman displaced in Istanbul and working as the head of a sewing workshop in a Syrian CSO, talks about her motivation to seek out Syrian CSOs after becoming displaced and then working for the first time in her life:

> Here [in Istanbul] you don't have family or anything, I looked for people, meetings. I heard about this association where they do trainings. My children go to their work, and the place where I live is all Turkish people. So, I started to participate in the lectures that this organisation was giving to Syrian women. I was revived, there were young girls to talk to, and I was telling them about my experience, I must tell it and benefit others. Then the manager of the organisation asked me if I wanted to work and manage their sewing workshop. I would be responsible for a group of women. It benefited me and thanks to God I was able to lead them. I am happy, I fill my time, I am comfortable with the environment and it feels like I am among family, they are my daughters, my siblings.

(Sameeha, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 26.10.2018)

Other research of CSOs in Turkey draw similar findings. Körükmez et al. (2020) describe CSOs in Turkey as 'nodal points' where Syrian refugee women get the "chance to socialize as well as receive information about job opportunities by attending courses, training and other activities" (4). Özden and Ramadan (2019) highlight the important role of CSOs in providing spaces for socialisation that Syrian women in Turkey use to build their social networks to support each other, and which can also "evolve into self-organization initiatives that enhance their sense of independence and security" (7). In addition, Syrian women who frequent community-based centres in Turkey have the opportunity to get support from other members of their community outside of their family, which helps them to cope with the psychological impacts of displacement (Arenliu et al. 2020).

The increased exposure of displaced Syrian women with no previous working experience to CSOs as beneficiaries can enable their involvement in such organisations as volunteers or staff. Wedad, a 37 year-old Syrian woman managing a women and children's centre in an Islamic Syrian CSO in Istanbul is such an example. Wedad, who is married with two children, never worked or had any direct involvement in civic organisations when she lived in Damascus, Syria. She is an English literature major and has a diploma in Education. Although she never worked as a teacher, in Syria, she occasionally gave talks in private homes to other Syrian women on topics related to raising children and marriage. When she first came to Turkey as a refugee in 2014, she was a beneficiary of an Islamic Syrian CSO in the border city of Rihaniyeh that was distributing aid. Eventually, she was given the responsibility of executing some of the CSO's activities. Later she managed to convince the CSO's male-dominated management of the need for a dedicated department to focus on development activities for women and children. Seeing Wedad's leadership capabilities, in 2016 the CSO's management granted her request and gave Wedad full autonomy to plan and execute activities in a newly established women and children's centre in Istanbul. The top management's role is limited to managing the CSO's legal affairs. At her centre, Wedad creates a working environment that accommodates women's roles as primary caretakers at home to make it easier for them to participate in civil society as well. The centre is family-friendly: working mothers can accompany young children to the CSO and childcare is available. Mothers also benefit from flexible

working hours, and home office possibilities. Gender segregation at the workplace reduces resistance from husbands with security concerns, and according to Wedad, she and her staff feel more comfortable working in a women-only space. In this example, we see how Wedad makes use of opportunities brought by conflict and displacement to practice multiple critique and contest restrictions placed on her by her society and husband against her working before the war. We can see how she goes from giving private lectures in homes to heading a women's and children's Islamic CSO in Istanbul. By making her centre gender-segregated and family-friendly, she also creates opportunities for other displaced Syrian women who belong to conservative families to practice multiple critique and leverage the decline in household income work in CSOs as well.

I also interviewed Syrian men and women who had worked or volunteered for civic organisations in Syria before 2011. This group was already familiar with CSOs and their functions. Some were also involved in GO-NGOs like the Syria Trust for Development during the period 2000-2010 and had had opportunities to accumulate NGO-specific skills and experience. For them, their involvement in civil society continued in displacement, however often at a higher level of participation sought to establish their organisations or to assume managerial positions in host or international CSOs. The availability of international funds and support for Syrian civil society and development projects targeting Syrian refugees created opportunities for them to utilize their accumulated sector-specific skills and networks to create their jobs in displacement contexts, where seeking employment may otherwise have been challenging due to language barriers or host employment regulations.

Impacts of Host Country Contexts on Civic Participation

The previous section presented a key finding of this research, confirming evidence of increased civic awareness and participation among interviewed Syrian women. This section moves on to understanding how this civic participation differed in each host context. It examines the influence of refugee policies, social attitudes, and civic environments in shaping the civic participation of different Syrian women.

Lebanon:

For SCSOs, operating from Lebanon gave them opportunities to communicate in their mother tongue Arabic, and to network with and benefit from the experiences of many

Lebanese CSOs and INGOs. Indeed, the civil society sector in Lebanon has been described as the “most diverse and active civil society in the region” (Hawthorne 2004:9). Its growth is driven by the absence of a welfare state combined with a series of conflicts and humanitarian crises including the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006, and most recently the Syrian Refugee Crisis of 2011 (AbiYaghi et al., 2019). According to AbiYaghi et al., (2019), Lebanese civil society is one of the tools used by Lebanese elites from various confessional groups to maintain their power:

> The relative liberal atmosphere and the absence of a welfare state in Lebanon have historically provided opportunities for elites (political, social, and economic) to create and maintain informal dependency networks that contribute, *in fine* [emphasis added by author], to preserve the socio-political status-quo in the country.
>
> (AbiYaghi et al., 2019:5).

Lebanon is considered a hub for INGOs in the Arab region. While responding to the Syrian refugee crisis the state’s decision to adopt a limited role allowed local civic and humanitarian activity to be heavily influenced by international donor programmes and agendas (AbiYaghi et al. 2019). Many INGOs were also working on providing capacity building support for SCSOs. Sabah, who we encountered above, from the Syrian League for Citizenship in Beirut describes some of the capacity building and networking advantages for SCSOs operating from Lebanon:

> Previously there was a lack of skills in civic activity in Syria, and little funding available. When the Syria Trust for Development was established, this led to developing some skills. After 2011, there were many Syrian CSOs but they lacked institutionalization. Syrians that came to Beirut or Lebanon have the motivation, and the language skills, and they took advantage of international NGO trainings being provided to support Syrian civil society, like the Friedrich-Ebert training in proposal writing in Arabic for Syrian CSOs in 2013 for example. It was very useful. Syrian organisations network and exchange experiences in Lebanon. We have joint meetings and conferences, research presentations…we request skills from each other, for example, we support the organisation Mobaderoon with their gender training.

(Sabah Al Hallak, Participant Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

As described by Sabah, newly established SCSOs after the war had fluid agendas and informal structures that gradually became more institutionalised and formalised (Citizens for Syria 2012; Ahmad 2019) in order to meet the standards of international donors in grant applications - a primary source of funds and financial sustainability for these organisations (Citizens for Syria 2012; Diker and Ragab 2019). Besides being pressured to follow Western and INGO cultures and models of operation, language and practice (Dixon et al. 2016), another consequence of the "NGOization" (Ahmad 2019:39) of SCSOs was that they were pushed towards donor priorities and service provision projects (Ahmad 2019:39) such as focusing on relief and social cohesion activities rather than advocacy (Diker and Ragab 2019). In such a context, informal Syrian civic actors, or those with limited knowledge of INGO terminologies or foreign language skills to keep up with INGO operational standards, faced greater obstacles to grow their initiatives or survive in the long run (Dixon et al. 2016; Mattes 2018; Svoboda and Pantuliano 2015).

In terms of activities, the poor living conditions in Lebanon for Syrian refugees (that were outlined in Chapter 2) drove many Syrian CSOs to focus "on livelihoods and humanitarian protection and relief" (Abu-Assab & Nasser-Eddin, 2019: 35-36). In addition, Syrian CSOs were involved in providing educational activities, artistic and cultural activities, and income opportunities to Syrian refugee women mainly through arts and crafts production (Fourn, 2017). One example is the NGO Art Residence Aley which was established in Lebanon in 2012 by Raghad Mardini, a Syrian/Canadian who was born in Syria and holds a master's degree in Structural Engineering. Before 2011 she was living in Damascus, Syria and teaching design and engineering at Damascus University and carrying out restoration projects in the old city. Following the war, she moved to Lebanon with her family in 2011 and restored an old horse stable in the area of Aley in Mount Lebanon to host Syrian artists in art residencies. This research also included interviews with Syrian participants working in two other SCSOs with a cultural/artistic focus. One interviewee, Noor, a co-founder of a SCSO in Lebanon engaged in cultural activities, spoke of the particular advantages of operating from Lebanon:

> At the time [when the organisation was founded in Beirut in 2015] there were a lot of Syrian artists that moved to Lebanon that we could support. Lebanon also has a strong NGO sector, and several strong Lebanese art-focused NGOs like Ashkal Alwan, APPEAL, and the Beirut Art Center. In Beirut, we were able to network with them, get support, and carry out activities together.
>
> (Noor, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 17.11.2018)

Mattes (2018:17) finds that the majority of Syrian CSOs are engaged in providing services to respond to the socioeconomic needs of Syrian refugees, followed by a category that she refers to as 'political deliberation' which includes "activities like research and political education on issues of civil and human rights, gender, law, democracy, transitional justice, and peace-building." Such activities are naturally easier for SCSOs in Lebanon to engage in compared to those in Turkey, because of their ability to engage in these activities in Arabic and communicate to wider Lebanese audiences and local CSOs.

Syrian women are also more likely to make contact with various CSOs in Lebanon as beneficiaries compared to Syrian men. In Lebanon, where the mobility of refugees outside of camps is restricted, Syrian men are more likely to be stopped at checkpoints and arrested (Fourn 2017; Janmyr 2016). As result, men become more confined to private spaces and unemployed, while Syrian women and adolescent girls fill the gap and gain access to public spaces to fulfil necessary chores or to search for employment opportunities to support their families (El-Masri et al. 2013; DeJong et al. 2017; Fourn 2017). Syrian women are more likely to be given the responsibility of receiving humanitarian aid for their families (El-Masri et al. 2013) or to benefit from various training offers by these organisations.

The Lebanese government's lack of strategy in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis also resulted in a lack of coordination in the emergency responses and efforts of international, local, and Syrian CSOs in Lebanon (Mitri 2015). In addition to worsening ethnic and confessional cleavages in Lebanon, immense tensions were created between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees over the allocation of aid (Carpi 2015; Fourn 2017). The worsening of confessional cleavages was linked to the divided confessional nature of Lebanese society and the corresponding political positions of each group towards Syrian refugees and the Syrian conflict. Research

participants in Lebanon expressed critical views of the Lebanese government's minimal role in managing the Syrian refugee crisis, as the following quote demonstrates:

> The NGO sector in Lebanon is not organized, it operates without vision, without adequate studies of needs. Here there is no government, it's a farm. They are very selfish. They pretend to show the Europeans we are interested in refugees to get US aid and EU funding. People keep voting for these politicians because they are afraid, the election campaigns are all about fear of survival of each confessional group if the other groups take power.
>
> (Denis, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 07.12.2018)

As in Syria, civic organisations in Lebanon are referred to as 'associations' that fall under the 1909 Ottoman Law of Associations (AbiYaghi et al., 2019). Syrians living in Lebanon are not legally able to establish their own civic organisations, nor are they allowed to become formally employed[27] in Lebanese or international civic organisations (Fourn, 2017; Mattes, 2018). Based on information provided from legal expert interviews in Lebanon, Syrian nationals require approvals from the Lebanese Council of Ministers to establish associations because they are foreigners. Obtaining this approval is in practice impossible. Therefore, after 2011 many Syrians resorted to registering their CSOs as non-profit private companies. The use of this legal loophole was the creative response of displaced Syrians to the substantial legal obstacles they encountered when trying to formalise their civic activity in Lebanon. I was fortunate enough to interview one of the pioneers of the use of this loophole in Lebanon. A co-founder of a Syrian research CSO in Beirut, he described to me with a mixture of despair at the unfairness of the situation, and pride at having overcome it with the help of a Lebanese legal advisor, how this loophole came about and spread:

> We are registered as a civil non-profit establishment. An NGO needs an approval from the Council of Ministers in Lebanon, and if it is just founded by Syrians this is a problem. A private company, however, can be non-profit, and

[27] Syrians living in Lebanon are allowed to formally work only in restricted sectors - mainly in the agricultural, construction, and environmental sectors (Jagarnathsingh 2016).

> a private establishment can work as a research centre for example. When we did it everyone started doing it, Syrians and Lebanese.
>
> (Saleem, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 08.11.2018)

Thus, Syrian CSOs registered in Lebanon after 2011 operate either informally, or rely on registering as non-profit private companies rather than associations[28]. Some resorted to first registering abroad in Europe or the US, and then establishing branches in Lebanon[29]. A formal registration as a local Lebanese association is only possible when the founders happen to have duel Lebanese/Syrian citizenships[30]. The following quotes from interviewed Syrian research participants in Lebanon demonstrate some of the difficulties they encountered when registering their SCSOs in Lebanon, and how they attempted to find ways around them:

> We registered our NGO in Belgium, then here in Lebanon as a non-profit private company. For new organisations that are just starting, it is much harder, Lebanon is very expensive, and there is difficulty in registering. But compared to Syria, there is a degree of freedom in our work.
>
> (Ali, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 04.12.2018)

> We are registered in Canada, the US, and the UK. In Lebanon, it is very difficult to register.
>
> (Sarah, Management Interview. Lebanon, Beirut. 06.12.2018)

> Licensing is very hard, until now we have no registration, but there is space to work without it. We have been working for the past five years. Our activities are livelihoods and informal teaching.
>
> (Talal, Management Interview. Lebanon, Beirut. 06.12.2018)

The inability to register or work formally in the humanitarian sector in Lebanon means that displaced Syrians lack access to social security and working rights, which also leads to salary discrimination and limits their possibility of advancement within CSOs.

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[28] Saleem, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon, 08.11.2018
[29] Ali, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon, 04.12.2018
[30] Noor, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 17.11.2018

Mattes (2018) finds that Syrian CSO actors in Lebanon felt discriminated against by Lebanese CSOs because of their nationality and that Lebanese CSOs were merely using Syrian refugees as a beneficiary group to get international donor funds and create jobs for Lebanese staff rather than Syrians. The presence of large numbers of INGOs and UN organisations in Lebanon, and the high salaries offered in such organisations, have created a competitive job market for qualified staff. This causes challenges for Syrian CSOs in Lebanon who often cannot match these salary levels and who struggle to find qualified Syrian staff (whose education was disrupted because of the war), or whose staff often lack NGO-specific skills compared to Lebanese staff. Still Syrian CSOs attempt to mitigate this shortage by training inexperienced Syrian staff (Mattes, 2018). There are reports that Syrian refugees working or volunteering for INGOs in Lebanon are exploited, and that Syrian refugee communities complain of being approached by INGOs solely for research purposes without being offered support or compensation (Mansour 2018). Fourn (2017) reports a preference for hiring Lebanese staff rather than Syrians in CSOs because it is easier to officially register them, and because they tend to have higher educational levels and foreign language skills.

Despite these difficulties, Syrian CSOs in Lebanon offer displaced Syrians better employment opportunities and working environments compared to private and Lebanese CSOs, and a means to "partially cope with barriers to integration through humanitarian work" (Fourn 2017:3). Fourn describes the civil society sector in Lebanon as a "crossroads between employment and civic participation", especially for young Syrians from an urban middle-class background having had some form of university education (2017:4). The absence of a language barrier in Lebanon created greater competition between Lebanese and Syrian applicants for CSO job opportunities, often to the disadvantage of Syrians who compete with Lebanese candidates who tend to have superior foreign language skills and CSO experience. This gap in skills combines with discriminatory host attitudes which openly discriminate against employing Syrian staff in local CSOs based on their nationality and discriminatory employment policies in Lebanon that make it harder to formally employ Syrians, as the following quotes demonstrate:

> We didn't get any CVs from Syrians that are impressive. We have no Syrian employees, we want to empower the Lebanese community there

> so they get benefits…In our organisation Lebanese staff serve the Syrian community.
>
> (Maya, Management Interview. 06.11.2018)

> I feel that progression within the organisation is difficult. I feel mistreated, and there is not much opportunity to take part in decision-making in the organisation. I look for other vacancies and do the interview but they can't hire me because I'm Syrian. In my organisation [SCSO] they cannot employ Syrians in a formal way and they don't register all their employees. They prefer to hire Lebanese or foreigners. If I wasn't crucial for the work they would have hired someone else.
>
> (Anwar, Interview, 08.12.2018)

In terms of participation within civic organisations themselves, findings from this research show that Syrians with prior NGO experience before 2011, tended to take advantage of this to form their own CSOs in Lebanon or assume leadership positions. Fourn comes to a similar conclusion in his 2017 study of Syrian civic activity in Lebanon:

> Heads of organisations often held jobs prior to the crisis that provided them with experience and qualifications which were convertible and highly relevant for a career in the humanitarian field. It is noteworthy that some of them have participated in "civil society" activities sponsored by the Syrian regime within the framework of the Syria Trust for Development programme. For the older individuals in our sample, we have identified a path in which humanitarian work in Lebanon makes up a sequence building on previous engagement of a similar kind. In some ways, the hierarchization of the new NGOs follows "naturally" from people's differences in social capital and experience from "civil society" organisations.
>
> (Fourn 2017:11)

Syrian elites, with no prior CSO experience and no financial need to join the sector, were still motivated to join the growing wave of local CSO activity that emerged in response to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011. A participant in this research with

previous civic experience in Syria, and one of the co-founders of the Syrian League for Citizenship in Lebanon, referred to the wealthy women who became involved in civil society after 2011 in Lebanon as ‘the ladies with the white hands’ emphasizing the mostly charitable character of the organizations they established. Their involvement in civil society augments their social status within their social circles, and unlike other Syrians without financial and legal privileges from, for example, second citizenships, their civic participation is made easier because these privileges enable them to bypass bureaucratic challenges associated with establishing CSOs, and to gain practical experience to grow their organisations over time.

Regarding the elitist nature of Syrian CSOs in Lebanon, observations in the field showed that ‘unskilled’ Syrian women from disadvantaged backgrounds were often given jobs as cleaners or cooks in CSOs. They were also offered handwork jobs, such as in sewing or embroidery projects run by the CSOs, to produce products for sale. While the CSO projects from the research sample claimed that they run these projects for disadvantaged Syrian women in Lebanon to promote human rights, improve their self-esteem, and help them generate income, these projects were designed and run in a top-down manner. No evidence emerged from interviews with the management of Syrian and Lebanese CSOs of participatory methods having been used in their work to uncover the needs or desires of the disadvantaged Syrian women with whom they worked. Disadvantaged Syrian women undergoing elite ‘empowerment’ were not asked if they preferred to develop their capacities in other ways or to train to do other jobs. They were not asked if they needed support to use the handwork skills that they were developing to start their businesses and make their own designs. According to management interviews in this study, these decisions were unilaterally made by the managers, based on the availability of funding for such activities and the assumption that all Syrian women in refugee camps were from poor rural backgrounds and preferred jobs related to handcrafts that they could do from home.

Turkey

Despite the language barrier, greater numbers of Syrian CSOs chose to register formally in Turkey compared to Lebanon, because Turkey allows Syrians to formally create and register their own civil society organisations (Özden and Ramadan 2019; Dixon et al. 2016). According to a government official in one of the expert interviews conducted in Turkey:

> CSOs in Turkey are usually referred to as Vakif or Dernik. An STK (Sivil Toplum Kuruluşu) is the equivalent of an NGO or CSO, they are under the Ministry of Interior, and there is no legal barrier against Syrians opening their own CSOs in Turkey.
>
> (Sabet. Expert Interview. Ankara, Turkey. 12.09.2018)

In practice, registering SCSOs and operating within Turkey is quite easy (Özden & Ramadan, 2019). According to Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin (2019), compared to the overall situation in other host countries, the local context in Turkey, legal regulations, and permitted scope of activity for Syrian CSOs (which is not limited to humanitarian aid and relief) enabled "Syrian CSOs to grow, develop and have future visions for their work beyond the crisis" (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2019:35). The experience of Khuloud, who we encountered above, provides a good example. She has a medical background and was working in a hospital in Jordan when the conflict in Syria broke out in 2011. Her first volunteering experience was in medical aid provision to Syrian refugees in Jordan. As a Syrian however she was not permitted to establish a CSO in Jordan, so she moved to Istanbul where it was possible:

> It is more difficult to operate in Jordan especially if you want to do something that is not humanitarian aid. In Jordan it is not allowed for Syrians to open a CSO. In Turkey it is very easy.
>
> (Khuloud, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 27.10.2018)

Wedad, the head of a Woman and Child centre in an Islamic CSO, also confirmed the ease of registration and operation for Syrian COSs based in Turkey:

> It is not difficult to open associations here [in Turkey]. In Fatih and Bashakshehir [districts in the city of Istanbul] you will find many SCSOs.
>
> (Wedad, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 17.10.2018)

Wedad believes that Syrian women in Turkey have opportunities that were not available to them in Syria and that they should take advantage of them. These benefits include the legal environment that allows Syrians to establish CSOs, educational opportunities, Turkish language opportunities, and the many trainings for women being

provided by CSOs. In such a nurturing environment, Wedad believes that Syrian women can better realize their goals of self-actualization.

Unsurprisingly, the number of Syrian CSOs in Turkey grew rapidly since 2011 (Cloeters et al. 2018; Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017; Building Marekts 2018). Together with INGOS and Turkish civil organisations, they provide support to self-settled Syrian refugees living outside the camps (Cloeters et al. 2018; World Bank 2015; Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017). A mapping of SCSOs by Ahmad (2019) counts 252 Syrian CSOs with headquarters in Turkey compared to 23 in Lebanon and six in Jordan. Projects run by Turkish or Syrian CSOs often started by providing humanitarian aid and then moved towards providing more long term support such as livelihood support, psychosocial and health services, education services for children, integration services including translation services and legal advice, and social cohesion activities (Cloeters et al. 2018; Diker and Ragab 2019; Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017).

Employment practices in Turkey also play a role in driving displaced Syrians to look for opportunities in the civil society sector. In Turkey, Syrians are legally permitted to work in most occupations including civil society, and are entitled to receive social benefits. In practice, however, this right is not enforced by the government and is left to the scrutiny of Turkish employers. The result is that the vast majority of Syrian refugees work informally for wages well below the Turkish minimum wage, making it almost impossible for Syrian families to survive on a single income. According to research participants from the sample, this drives Syrian women who never worked before to look for employment out of financial need, especially in CSOs where the pay and working conditions are better compared to the private sector.

Amani, from this research sample, is a 27 year-old divorced Syrian woman working as an Employment Officer in a Syrian CSO in Fatih Istanbul. Her organisation was created in 2014 in the border area of Urfa, and later established additional branches throughout Turkey. It provides employment assistance services mainly to Syrian refugees. The office space is not gender-segregated, and Amani shares the office with seven Syrian women and four men. Amani has a bachelor's degree in Business Management and did not previously work when she was married and living in Aleppo, Syria. In 2018, as she had been living in Istanbul for two years, she decided to look for work because of financial need after getting divorced and moving in with her

parents. She is now fluent in Turkish, and before joining this organisation, Amani worked at several places including a sewing workshop, a clothes shop, a book shop, a supermarket, and a shipping company. She had no previous experience working or volunteering for CSOs in Syria or Turkey, but she was motivated to apply for her current position because she wanted to develop her working experience further, and because the financial compensation and working environment were more suitable for her:

> I decided to work because the circumstances are completely different, for financial reasons, my father's salary is not enough, my family allows it, I don't have a husband that forbids it, I am divorced, and my family saw that here [in Turkey] it is normal for women to work so they allow it. The work is suitable for a woman, in an office, there are not that many men, it's not far [located in central Istanbul], and the working hours are not long.
>
> (Amani, Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 19.11.2018)

As in Lebanon, the activities of SCSOs in Turkey are highly influenced by international donor agendas and not necessarily local needs (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2019). INGOs do however support the capacity building and professionalism of local CSOs through training and partnerships (Mackreath and Sağnıç 2017). Findings from this research show that the effects of NGOization were less visible amongst research participants working in Islamic SCSOs. These organisations relied on alternate sources of funding besides INGOs, such as financial support from Islamic Gulf countries which came with less stringent application procedures that could be completed in Arabic and no foreign language requirements. Some research interviewees pointed out that Islamic SCSOs in Turkey are more numerous compared to Lebanon due to the Turkish government's political character and tolerance of their activities and political orientation. Malek, the Syrian researcher working at a Turkish think tank, also highlighted the tolerance of the Turkish government towards Islamic SCSOs during his interview:

> Syrian CSOs in Turkey reflect the division between secular and religious people in Syria. They view coming to Turkey as an opportunity to establish a new path for them, especially religious ones that feel they are in country that tolerates them so they have an opportunity to establish their ideological project which

> they could not previously in Syria, so these CSOs are politically motivated. Turkey embraces Islamists, so this is a chance for those people to make their project successful.
>
> (Malek, Participant Interview. Ankara, Turkey. 19.09.2018)

On July 15th 2016 following the attempted military coup in Turkey, the government declared a state of emergency and placed restrictions on the work of rights-based civil organisations (Özden and Ramadan 2019). The government also began enforcing work regulations more strictly which impacted Syrian CSOs and curbed their growth. Those that were already established started to suffer from greater insecurity in their operations, including the detention of some of their employees for not having work permits, and some even had to shut down their organisations (Özden and Ramadan 2019). Mackreath & Sağnıç claim that cooperation between Turkish CSOs and Syrian CSOs is limited due to "[h]ierarchical relationships, language barriers and cultural differences" (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017:3). Syrian research participants working in Turkish CSOs also claimed that their nationality and/or refugee status were barriers against them progressing within Turkish CSOs even when they had accumulated skills and were fluent in Turkish.

During interviews with female Turkish management staff in Turkish CSOs and government employees involved with Syrian refugees, discriminatory comments were common when they were referring to Syrian female staff in their organisations or their Syrian beneficiaries. Syrian women were often grouped in a single category, subjected to generalization, and stereotyped as lazy, unmotivated, sexual, and even culturally backward because of their Arab ethnicity and culture. The following quotes by Turkish participants from this sample demonstrate these perspectives:

> We create spaces for activities, so they can feel more relaxed. The Arab population has no equality at home, so they need a space to feel safe and relaxed, and for Turkish and Syrian women to get social cohesion.
>
> (Ilayda, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 18.10.2018)
>
> Lack of passion [demonstrated by Syrian women] about their careers, unlike Turkish women. They are only interested in earning money, reaching a big

> success. More passion means more responsibility. We need more staff, but when we don't see passion we need none of that because we [Turkish women] take our job seriously.
>
> (Elif, Participant Interview, Istanbul, Turkey. 18.10.2018)

> There is little participation by Syrian women in the CSOs I met with, it's mainly men. Females are only working as teachers, and are not engaged in decision making, they are not eager to do this. They are very domestic, more domestic than Turkish women, they just want to go to school, lecture, and go back home to their children. Syrian women are more feminine than their Turkish peers, they use make-up even in refugee camps. We prepared some campaigns for Syrian women to encourage them to breastfeed, they are using formula instead to not ruin their appearance.
>
> (Fatma, Expert Interview. Ankara, Turkey. 11.09.2018)

Such perspectives often contradicted the observed reality of the situation in the CSO context during the interviews, and also the claims of other Turkish interviewees who had contradictory opinions of Syrian women based on their interactions with them. For example, Mutlu a male Turkish project manager at a community centre for Syrian refugees, belonging to the same organisation as Ilayda and Elif above, had the following opinion:

> Lots of Syrian women participate in our trainings, it's hard to find male participants, women want to learn more and improve their status.
>
> (Mutlu, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 18.10.2018)

Several interviews were conducted with Syrian women who worked at the same Turkish CSO as Ilayda and Elif. From the experiences they shared about their displacement, and how they were working hard to support their families, to develop their skills further to advance in their careers, or of their sense of fulfilment from working in civil society and supporting their community, it is hard to describe them as 'lacking in passion', or necessarily having 'no equality at home' because of their gender and ethnicity. It does call into question, however, the degree of genuine

participation or advancement that such women might have in host CSOs when surrounded by hosts who hold such views of them. Syrian women in this sample spoke of the discrimination they faced from Turkish host communities based on their ethnicity, of difficulties in progressing within Turkish CSOs due to their Syrian identity, and how this discrimination could be mitigated if they became more 'Turkish' by learning the language or being deemed worthy of Turkish citizenship:

> Before, no one got promoted from Translator [Syrian women working at a Turkish CSO]. There are two who got promoted recently and became social workers. The nationality may play a role [these women recently received Turkish citizenship].
>
> (Manal, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 25.09.2018)

Another example from the Turkish context is Rajaa, a displaced Syrian woman working as a coordinator at an Islamic Turkish CSO in Istanbul. Rajaa is 35 years old and wears a hijab. Our interview took place at her desk in a gender-segregated section of the office building. During our interview, I learned that when the war first broke out in Syria, she worked as an accountant in the private sector in Damascus and had no experience working or volunteering in civil society organisations. As the conflict worsened she quit her job and informally established an association for orphans in the besieged area of Ghoota in rural Damascus. Living in Ghoota alone without her family, and working with 40 other Syrian women, she provided aid to 2200 orphans and 5000 poor Syrian families until she was forced to flee to Turkey in 2017 due to armed conflict in the area. In Turkey, she found employment at an established Islamic Turkish CSO with many international projects. However, Rajaa has no official documents and lives in Turkey as an unregistered Syrian refugee. This means that she works for the Turkish CSO informally and receives no social security or benefits. Her chances for advancement within the organisation are also slim because of her residency status and nationality, as Syrians are not usually promoted to upper management levels in Turkish CSOs. Still, she values the work experience and the training opportunities that the CSO provides her. Her Turkish CSO requires its employees to be proficient in foreign languages and aware of NGO protocols, and Rajaa benefits from training opportunities at the CSO to develop her skills. She hopes to remain in Turkey and continue working in civil society to develop her skills even further, so that in the future she can become an international activist and ambassador for human rights. Rajaa's

resilience is an example of how the capabilities of Syrian women are often underestimated, and how they continue to resist discrimination and oppression against their civic activism.

Conclusion

The outbreak of conflict in Syria had the effect of stimulating the growth of Syrian civil society in neighbouring Lebanon and Turkey. Over the period 2011-2018, for the Syrian women who took part in this research in both host contexts, there is a clear overall increase in civic participation and awareness of CSOs and their functions. This finding is based on the large number of cases of Syrian women from the sample who participated in CSOs as volunteers, staff, or founders for the first time after 2011, and who also developed a more nuanced understanding of civic activity that extended beyond charity. It is also based on the observation that for Syrian women with pre-conflict CSO experience and skills, their participation in displacement contexts continued, however often at higher organisational levels with more strategic level decision-making responsibilities, as organisational founders, project managers, or upper management.

Based on the interviews, this increase in civic participation was strongly connected to conflict and displacement experiences that worsened the financial situation of many Syrian families and drove Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey to work to support family livelihoods. This was especially the case for women from conservative families with traditional gender roles that discouraged women from working. Furthermore, several women from this sample stated their preference for working at CSOs where working conditions were more favourable and considered ‘safe’ compared to the private sector in host countries. Besides financial need, displaced Syrian women were motivated to join CSOs to engage civically and become self-reliant and no longer dependent on aid, and because SCSOs provided them with opportunities to reconnect with Syrian communities in the diaspora. For elite groups of Syrian women, civic engagement during the refugee crisis was an opportunity to augment their social status by playing a charitable role and providing aid to disadvantaged Syrians.

This research also finds that for both host contexts, being a woman was a factor that supported the civic participation of Syrians in displacement for two important reasons. First, Syrian women were more exposed to CSOs compared to Syrian men: as a

group, they were primarily responsible for going to CSOs to seek support. Second, the majority of these organisations often had special projects that focused on women and children as the most vulnerable and in need of support in conflict contexts. This focus created a higher demand for hiring women staff rather than men, so Syrian women had more opportunities than men to work in CSOs during the period 2011-2018.

External factors linked to host country policies and international donor and INGO policies also played an important role in shaping Syrian women's civic engagement. In Lebanon, where Syrians faced considerably greater obstacles in establishing and financing their civic activity, and were not permitted as Syrians to work officially in the development sector, the number of SCSOs remained small compared to Turkey. In the face of such challenges, factors such as having financial resources, existing networks, previous CSO experience, and dual citizenship were all helpful in overcoming these obstacles; resulting in a degree of 'elitism' in SCSOs in Lebanon. Displaced Syrians in Lebanon with more financial and educational assets were more capable of overcoming government and host CSO discrimination by creating new pathways for themselves to civically engage in Syrian CSOs, or to find ways around Lebanese residency and employment restrictions in order to remain in the country and informally work in CSOs, or formally work as citizens of other counties. The resulting elitism in both host and Syrian CSOs in Lebanon raises questions about the genuine opportunities given to Syrian women from rural or poorer backgrounds to participate in civil society.

In Turkey, government policies that allow Syrians to easily establish their own civic organisations, open bank accounts and work legally in them has provided Syrians a greater degree of freedom to engage civically. In comparison with Lebanon, this resulted in less 'NGOized' CSOs and more grassroots CSOs, especially Islamic CSOs that were tolerated by the Turkish government. Syrian women in Turkey faced obstacles based on their Arab ethnicity and gender which prohibited their participation and progression within Turkish CSOs. However, they did participate in such organisations, often at lower levels due to the language barrier which they were able to overcome once they accumulated Turkish language skills and became assets to Turkish organisations as interpreters and coordinators. Knowledge of Turkish created more opportunities for less educated Syrian women, and those from rural backgrounds and lower socioeconomic statuses, to become employed in CSOs as compared to in

Lebanon. For the few who had received Turkish citizenship, progression opportunities improved. Syrian CSOs in Turkey offered Syrian women environments that were free of such ethnic-based discrimination, and where Syrian women could occupy positions across organisational levels.

Chapter 6: Syrian Feminist Activism in Displacement

In addition to their civic involvement in host contexts, interviewed Syrian women spoke extensively of how their lives had been dramatically altered by conflict and displacement. They spoke of the challenges they faced in adapting to new and rather hostile environments in host countries. Many had to assume new financial responsibilities and roles within their families to cope with the changes forced upon them by war. In responding to and processing all of these changes, many women questioned the injustices or unfair expectations inflicted upon them by the multiple actors around them. In interviews, Syrian women openly criticised not only their host governments and societies, but also patriarchal practices within Syrian society and their families.

This chapter addresses the third research question in this thesis: How do different Syrian women from this sample resist and contest the exclusionary practices that confront them in host contexts? In responding to this question, it looks deeper into the criticisms made by the interviewed Syrian women as examples of change occurring in their consciousness and explores developments in their activism during the period 2011-2018. These criticisms also reflected the diversity of identity and experience of Syrian women in the sample. For lifelong feminist activists like Sabah Hallak, the criticisms she voiced were the same criticisms she had been making for over twenty years, conflict simply gave her access to new platforms to make them. As this chapter will demonstrate, conflict and displacement in Lebanon gave urban, educated women like Sabah opportunities to institutionally expand their activism and fight for Syrian women's legal and political rights on an international level. Other interviewed Syrian women were not necessarily interested in such activism and were more focused on the unfairness of their experience without necessarily wanting to change it, while some were beginning to resist through decisions concerning their own lives and actions.

To make sense of the variation of awareness and response that was evident among research participants, this chapter refers to the framework developed by (Badran and Cooke 2004) which they use to categorise Arab feminist writings into the three "stages or levels of feminism: 'awareness', 'rejection', and 'activism'" (xv). According to this framework, women's feminism is at the level of awareness when they "recognise injustice done to them because they are women and for no other reason" (xv). Their feminism can be categorised as 'rejection' when they "reject such behaviour without

counting the cost" and as 'activism' when they "do something to put an end to such behaviour and stake their claim to gender justice and rights" (Badran and Cooke 2004). Syrian women's activism is also examined within the framework of multiple critique (Cooke 2000) which enables the analysis to capture how different Syrian women became more active after 2011 and made efforts to "engage with and criticize the various individuals, institutions, and systems" in their host environments (Cooke 2000:100). To demonstrate multiple critique, this chapter provides a more detailed analysis of a Syrian women's experience from each host context: the case of Sabah Hallak in Lebanon and her engagement with Islamic CSOs in Lebanon who are critical of her liberal religious views and ideas, and Farah in Turkey who resists social host discrimination against Syrians by publishing articles on a SCSOs online platform.

The different levels of feminist consciousness and activism that existed among interviewed women in 2018 is best understood in relation to Syrian feminist activism before the conflict erupted. In particular, the feminist movement in Syria and the rights of Syrian women were greatly influenced by Baathist policies, which began when Hafiz al Asad took leadership of the Baath Party in the 1970s. The following sections discuss the main Baathist policies that impacted Syrian women and their activism during the period 1970-2010.

Syrian Feminist Activism under the Baath Party & Hafiz al Asad (1970-2000)

After Syria became fully independent from French Mandatory rule in 1947, the country witnessed almost two decades of political instability and repeated coups. This phase ended when Hafiz al Asad, of the ruling Baath Party, seized power in 1970 from leftist factions within the party, in what became known as his *haraka tashihiya*, or Corrective Movement (Cooke 2007:7). He remained in power as the President of Syria until his death in the year 2000.

As a secular and socialist party, the Baath has consistently adopted an official position in favour of women's rights and public participation (Rabo, 2005). Article 25 of the 1973 Syrian Constitution calls for equality of all citizens 'before the law in their rights and duties', while Article 45 is specifically dedicated to protecting the rights of Syrian women:

> The state guarantees women all opportunities enabling them to fully and effectively participate in the political, social, cultural, and economic life. The

> state removes the restrictions that prevent women's development and participation in building the socialist Arab society.
>
> (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012)

Early Baathist ideology was openly critical of Syrian "traditional institutions which it defines as 'feudal, tribal and patriarchal'" (Rabo, 2005: 158) and their regressive impacts on the progress of society. Syrian women were encouraged to pursue their education and seek employment by the Baath (Meininghaus, 2016; Rabo, 2005).

Early Syrian feminist activists came predominantly from an elite, highly educated and politically connected class. These aspects of their positionality were important factors that intersected and enabled their activism, allowing them to draw on substantial economic and socio-political resources and establish a number of private societies during the late Ottoman and French Mandate periods (Homsi Vinson and Al-Hassan Golley 2012:66). They also played a key role in gaining the right to vote for Syrian women in 1949[31], which came as a result of their political connections with the Syrian President of the time, rather than demands from a popular suffragette movement (Meininghaus 2016). The Baath wanted to break up such existing ties between ruling elite activists and politicians "and give rise to a new generation of prominent women in Syrian history" (Meininghaus 2016:68). In 1966, the Baath reshaped Syrian women's activism by adopting a socialist model for mass organisation, and establishing a single Syrian women's mass organisation that would centralise and replace all other Syrian women's organisations. The General Union of Syrian Women (the Union) was officially created in 1967 and headed by Baath party member Suʿad al-ʿAbd Allah and council members who were all party members. The Union was responsible for working towards the liberation and full participation of women from various segments of Syrian society. It was officially overseen by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and setup branches across Syrian governorates. By 2008, it had 395,316 Syrian women members (Meininghaus, 2016). The idea was that such a structure would facilitate the unification of Syrian women's advancement and spread party ideology to remote segments of society. According to Meininghaus, the

[31] Syrian women's right to vote and candidacy in elections was subject to their having completed at least primary education (Meininghaus 2016).

establishment of the Union also reflected the Baathist “gendered approach to welfare” (Meininghaus 2016:27).

In 1985, Sabah al Hallak, one of the Syrian women interviewed in this research, became a member of the Syrian Women’s League (SWL) - a Syrian feminist organisation that was impacted by Baathist regulations on women’s activism. The Syrian Women’s League refers to itself as a feminist non-governmental organisation that works to advance Syrian women’s rights and gender equality. Despite its existence since 1948, it continues to operate informally. During our interview, Sabah spoke of the legal challenges confronting Syrian women’s rights activists under Baathist policies:

> In Syria there are no NGOs related to women’s rights that can be officially licenced because of Clause 8 of the constitution. In 2012, Clause 8 should have been dissolved, but it still exists. The ones [women’s organisations] that exist are not NGOs, and are under the Ba’ath party. There have been no amendments to Civil Society laws since the 1950s, even though there are demands to make amendments. The Syrian Women’s League, for example, is not registered formally.
>
> (Sabah Al Hallak, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

Despite governmentalizing women’s rights activism, the Union’s efforts and other Baathist government policies did result in significant improvements in the overall education and economic participation of Syrian women. According to Meininghaus “[t]he role of the Union was to encourage, channel and bring together women’s activities, and to raise women’s standards socially, culturally, politically and economically” (Meininghaus, 2016: 109). It focussed on reducing high illiteracy rates among Syrian women, a major barrier against their ability to fully exercise their rights and duties in society. It also supported their economic involvement through providing vocational education and training (VET), and establishing nurseries and kindergartens for the children of working mothers (Meininghaus, 2016).

Literacy rates for adult Syrian women in 1981 were estimated at 37% (Kelly & Breslin, 2010:14). Government policies made education free for all Syrians and basic education compulsory from 1973 onwards. These policies advanced education levels among girls so much that in the early 1990s Syria had one of the highest female school

enrolment rates in the Arab world (Hamand 1993). By 2007 women's literacy rates improved dramatically, especially among those aged 15-24. The average literacy rate among this group of women was 92 percent (Kelly & Breslin, 2010:14).

Syrian women's formal employment rates also rose during this period from "12.6 percent in 1980 to 21.9 percent in 2007" (Kelly & Breslin, 2010:14). This occurred especially in the public sector where working conditions were more favourable and "generally seen as 'safe' and 'protected' spaces for women" (Rabo, 2005: 165). Although laws that protected women's "wage levels, working hours or social security" were in place (Kamla, 2014: 621), the government failed to enforce them in the private sector. Women who managed to secure a job in the government sector were paid significantly higher hourly wages and benefitted from flexible working hours and maternity leave compared to women in the private sector ((Kabbani 2009).

Such government educational policies and social programmes supported "the erosion of sectarian privilege and improved the social and economic status of hitherto disenfranchised groups" especially for Syrians living in rural areas and women ((Rabo 1996) as cited in Homsi Vinson & Al-Hassan Golley, 2012:75). While these advancements may have benefitted some women, especially those who migrated to major cities, there still remained stark inequalities in the living conditions of Syrian women in urban and rural areas as evidenced by persisting discrepancies in educational levels, poverty levels and access to basic services. According to national statistics, in 2010, just before the conflict erupted, Syrian women in rural areas were still twice as likely to be illiterate compared to their urban counterparts (SCPR 2016). Sabah describes the discrepancies in urban-rural realities as the "complete disconnect between the city and rural areas"[32] in Syria.

Besides pay differences between the public and private sectors in Syria, the lack of safety and exposure to sexual harassment or physical harm in non-governmental public spaces is another major concern for Syrian women and their families. Rabo (2005) states that Syrian women feel safer working in a family business in the private sector because they are protected by their kin. Several participants from this research sample, including male participants, confirmed these concerns. Anwar, a Syrian 27

[32] (Sabah Al Hallak, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

year-old male and an economics major who became displaced in Lebanon in 2015 describes his experience of working in the private sector in Syria before 2011 as follows:

> Working conditions in the private sector are very bad, it's not even male friendly. You have toxic masculinity at the workplace, and sexual harassment that can be in the form of words or touching. For example, a male manager keeping a woman after work so that he can speak to her in private, this is sexual harassment. We have no laws against sexual harassment, only [against] rape.
>
> (Anwar, Participant Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 08.12.2018)

For most of the Syrian women interviewed in this research, work often came hand in hand with 'double burden' pressures. This is not new: Rabo (2005) argues that the assumption of new economic roles for Syrian women in public spaces following Baath policies did not correspond to changes in gender roles in private spaces and they were "still expected to put their families first" (Rabo, 2005: 160). Working Syrian women found themselves "squeezed between the ideal of the good woman and that of the good employee or worker" (Rabo, 2005: 160).

In displacement, 'double burden' continued to be a recurring theme, cited by many of the research participants in this sample who described how they and other Syrian women they knew were struggling to balance their work and their domestic care responsibilities. Many were aware and critical of the unjust expectations exerted on them by their societies because of their gender, to prioritize care responsibilities towards their husbands and children at the expense of their own needs. Women who were accused of neglecting these responsibilities would be subject to social judgement and blame, not only by men in their family, but by other women including their mothers, mother in laws and friends. The following quotes from the sample demonstrate this awareness of gender injustice:

> They [society] have certain ideas, like studying is not going to help you, so get married, and get settled. They say things like "You are a diamond that is precious and should be protected [inferring to the lack of security for women in the public space]. Gain skills that you can use at home." ... These ideas are ingrained from a long time ago. "A woman will study and end up in the kitchen."

> Or “Study just to educate yourself for your children and then stay at home.” And “If there is no financial need, don’t neglect the needs of your household.”
>
> (Salma, Istanbul, Turkey. 19.10.2018)

> They [society] make you feel guilty if you neglect your children [to work]. And then you make your children feel guilty that you stopped living your life for them.
>
> (Sameeha, Participant Interview. Istanbul Turkey. 26.10.2018)

> Syrian women are not raised to be productive; they are raised to be a wife. She has no awareness of her role, and that with focus and effort she can become influential and make a difference in her society.
>
> (Wedad, Interview, 19.10.2018)

The following quote by a female Syrian research participant who studied Pharmacology demonstrates how dealing with double burden factors into making education and career choices for Syrian women. Prior to moving to Berlin, she was first displaced to Turkey where she became civically active for the first time in her life:

> I studied pharmaceutical studies in Syria. Out of 200 females there were only about seven men in the faculty. It was seen as a ‘female faculty’ because it was believed that when women got their degree, they could rent it out to someone else and make a living while staying at home to take care of their husbands and children. This is something we don’t hear from a male. The idea of tying professions to household duties. In Syria, a woman chooses her career based on the time that she has left for her children.
>
> (Rosa, Management Interview, Berlin, Germany. 16.08.2018)

In their research with displaced Syrian working women in Turkey, (Körükmez et al. 2020) draw similar findings. Syrian women from their sample stated that in Syria they had preferred to work “in ‘women and children only’ environments” (17), and that they

felt that the working conditions in Syria were easier involving lesser and more flexible working hours as compared to those in Turkey.

During her interview, Sabah al Hallak also spoke of the double burden struggles and safety concerns that working Syrian women suffer from. She is a strong advocate of policies that support women's active presence in the public space. These include protection against all forms, not just physical forms, of harassment at the workplace, better childcare provision for young children, and providing improved safer public transportation to facilitate the mobility of women. In her view:

> A job for a woman means having two jobs. The overall environment does not support women that want to work. There is a lack of protective measures, so at the workplace they face discrimination, verbal abuse, exploitation. Also, the lack of safe transportation options to get to work, especially at night when women are more prone to harassment. The lack of half ready meals to save time, lack of nurseries, incentives, etc.
>
> (Sabah al Hallak, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

In the absence of such policies to support and protect women, combined with double burden pressures, it is not surprising that prior to 2011, married Syrian women were increasingly leaving the workforce compared to single or divorced women (Meininghaus, 2016; Nasser and Mehchy, 2011 as cited in Alsaba & Kapilashrami, 2016). This phenomenon was also reflected in the majority of research participants' perceptions towards the employment of women which tended to be rather negative. Participants often spoke of women 'being forced to work' or 'having to work' rather than just women working. Working Syrian women were described with words such as poor, exhausted, or dishevelled because of having to fulfil responsibilities at home and at work with little or no support from their husbands. For many, the primary motivation to work was often financial need. On the other hand, women who were able to stay at home were described as being more 'pampered' rather than disempowered or discriminated against by men. The following quotes demonstrate some of these negative associations with work in Syria before the conflict broke out in 2011, and later in displacement contexts:

> Most Syrian women before the war were not compelled to work. Working for money means working outside the house and being tired.

(Wedad, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 17.10.2018)

> Our women [Syrian women] are pampered, they're not like Turkish women who are dishevelled and overburdened. The woman is spoiled in Syrian society, the man provides her with everything while she sits [at home]. This is especially the case in areas where women are educated, in rural areas women work [usually as informal labour on family land]. In the cities or the big governorates women don't work. And the woman that is very competent and works, well, this is at the expense of her health and comfort. She has to manage a house, children and work. The husband does not help.

(Sameeha, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 26.10.2018)

> Syrian women don't like to work. They work and they don't like it. I'm a doctor, my sister is a doctor and she doesn't work. For women who have children, the long working hours are a problem. Putting your children in a nursery can take up all your salary. So, the work is not worth the effort. The work itself is exhausting, it's not easy, even for men. Teachers are more comfortable, they work for five hours and have access to nursery. In Europe, women participate more, so they affect policies and this leads to better outcomes.

(Khuloud, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 27.10.18)

In the absence of sufficient childcare support before the war, working Syrian women looked to each other and to their private networks to outsource some of their household and childcare duties. The following quotes demonstrate some of these strategies and the importance of women's social networks to support each other:

> In the last few years before the war, especially after 2003, women's wages went up, and women were able to spoil themselves, for example, by paying a neighbour to prepare vegetables and food for her so she can cook easily when she returns home from work. The neighbour that way can also get some income to buy her own vegetables and food.

(Fedaa, Management Interview. Berlin. 15.08.2018)

> The obstacles that confront a woman that wants to work are difficult. In Syria you get four months of maternity leave, less for the second child, and one hour per working day for breastfeeding. Two women put their children with me. My cousin had three children, she had to make use of the whole family to support her, including her mother in law. We don't have good nurseries. The nursery in Syria is like an animal pen. You don't feel secure leaving your children there and trusting their care.
>
> (Sameeha, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 26.10.2018)

The quotes above show a considerable degree of awareness of the challenges confronting Syrian women who wanted to engage more in the public space, or fulfil other roles in society besides that of being a wife and mother. However, besides the quote made by Sabah where she stresses the need for change at the policy level to overcome these challenges, most quotes remain at a level of awareness of gender injustice and do not contain evidence of resistance or the desire to actively do something to improve the situation of Syrian women.

Political Participation & Representation under the Baath (1970-2020)

As stated above, the Baath effectively governmentalized Syrian women's activism through the establishment of the General Union of Syrian Women (the Union) in 1967. Under Baathist Party leadership from the 1970s onward, a handful of Syrian wo***m***en held key party and governmental positions. These included Minister of Culture, Minister of Higher Education, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, and also unique to the Arab world, the position of the Vice President (Kamla 2014:606). In 2010[33], 12.4% of parliamentary seats were held by women in Syria (after the war began this number dropped slightly to 11.2% in 2021[34]). This figure is lower than the 18% average for Arab countries in 2020 (Masad 2020).

Considering that Syrian women held few key positions in executive and judiciary systems (Freedom House 2017), it became more challenging to enforce policies or enact new legislations that reflected women's needs despite constitutional claims to remove "restrictions that prevent women's development and participation" in Syrian

[33] http://data.un.org/en/iso/sy.html
[34] https://data.unwomen.org/country/syrian-arab-republic

society (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012). Although men and women in Syria have equal rights to education, employment and suffrage (Rabo, 2005), and Syrian labour laws guarantee equal pay for women and maternity leave benefits (Hamand, 1993), in the area of personal status laws which govern 'private' matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody, Syrian women from various religious sects are legally subordinated to men and are not awarded the same legal rights due to their gender (Homsi Vinson and Al-Hassan Golley 2012).

The legal subordination of Syrian women in personal status law dates back to the colonial period when the French mandate Westernised the legal system in Syria through codification and left personal status laws under the prerogative of various religious sects (Rabo 2005). This consolidated and strengthened the power of religious authorities in the area of personal laws, while simultaneously transforming them into a site of colonial resistance (Homsi Vinson and Al-Hassan Golley 2012). Rabo (2004) adds that "Personal status laws were perhaps the most important locus of a (constructed) cultural tradition" (157). According to Taweel (2020), even when laws that protect Syrian women exist, such as imposing a minimum age to prevent early marriages, enforcing them is challenging due to the power of traditions and social opposition among segments of Syrian society with highly patriarchal practices.

The Union established a legal affairs office in 1993 where women could get individual legal advice and worked to raise the awareness of Syrians about their legal situation and rights about marriage, inheritance, and child labour, within existing legislation. It also advocated improved maternity leave and family allowance legislations for women but did little else to significantly further women's rights or to campaign to illuminate gender-based inequalities in Syrian law that were based on Islamic Sharia interpretations (Meininghaus, 2016). Activists who attempted to change personal status laws were often countered with cultural arguments and accused of falling under Western influence or being anti-Muslim (Homsi Vinson & Al-Hassan Golley, 2012: 72).

One of the participants of this research, Faten, is a retired Syrian parliamentarian and government employee who spent most of her career fighting for the rights of Syrian workers and women. She was a member of the Syrian Parliament for almost a decade. During her interview, she spoke of her efforts together with other women parliamentarians to reform Syrian personal status laws, which in her view as a Muslim

woman, discriminated strongly against women and were in fact against the essence of Islamic Sharia. In 2002, she and a few of her colleagues wished to put forward before parliament an amendment to Syrian law that would raise the custody age of children living with divorced mothers. At the time she approached an Islamic scholar and religious leader who was also a member of parliament with her proposal:

> The Sheikh fully supported us, and said that he would help us convince the rest of the MPs. We needed a 2/3 majority to pass the proposed legislation. But he had one condition. He said I will help you, on the condition that you all [the women MPs behind the proposal] stay quiet and say nothing. If they [the majority male MPs] hear it from you they will reject it immediately. And that's what we did, he went up on the podium, and began giving a religious sermon on how the Prophet Mohammad teaches us to have mercy, arguing that there is no mercy in keeping children away from their mothers, and children need their mothers etc etc…they all agreed with him and passed the proposal. If we had argued for it instead of him and with a women's rights argument they would have rejected it.
>
> (Faten, Expert Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 10.12.2018)

While this story demonstrates the challenges faced by Syrian women parliamentarians in their activism, it also reveals the importance of religious authority in Syrian society. The Syrian constitution protects freedom of faith and the rights of religious minorities[35] and states that the Syrian President must be a Muslim and that Islamic Sharia is the main source of the country's legislation (Carnegie Middle East Center 2012). Led primarily by Syrians from the Alawite minority religious sect, the Baath softened its secular stance in the early 1980s and opted for a policy of 'managing' rather than repressing the Sunni Muslim population in Syria, described as creating a government-managed 'public Islam'[36] (Meininghaus 2016:15-17). According to (Hinnebusch 2012),

[35] According to 2019 estimates, approximately three-quarters of the Syrian population are Sunni Muslims. Ethnically, they identify as Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, Circassians and Chechens. The next largest group is the Christian community at about 10% of the population, while the rest of the population is made up of smaller Muslim and non-Muslim minorities such as the Druze, Alawites, Ismailis and Shia (United States Department of State 2019).

[36] According to Salvatore (as quoted in (Meininghaus 2016), public Islam can be defined as 'the objectification and systematization of Islamic values and practices as a normative model for the moral order of society'.

this state alliance with non-political Islamic groups in Syria was a strategy to tame more oppositional Islamic movements in Syria such as the trans-national Muslim Brotherhood who were strongly against Ba'athist socialism. Moderate Islamic groups that were “concentrating on personal piety, rejecting violence, calling for constructive criticism within the system and mobilizing around non-political issues such as opposition to liberal reform of Syrian family law” were supported (Hinnebusch 2012, 105). Besides funding Islamic schools, learning centres and mosques, this state policy involved supporting the Sufi Muslim order in Syria under the leadership of Ahmad Keftaru, the appointed Grand Mufti of Syria during 1964-2004, and giving room for religious instruction by a number of religious scholars and leaders such as Ramadan al-Buti and Ratib al-Nabulsi in Damascus, and Suhayb al-Shami (born 1949) and Adib Hassun (1915–2008) in Aleppo. Still, religious activities and preaching were closely monitored by the secret services, and in 2008 they were placed under direct control when they overstepped boundaries drawn by the state (Meininghaus 2016). Still, in the area of women’s rights, the state refrained from passing reforms to the personal status law that they felt would receive strong opposition from these religious groups. Instead, Syrian women’s rights were “sacrificed to the politics of cooperation between…politicians and religious patriarchs” (Thompson 2000:150)” (Homsi Vinson and Al-Hassan Golley 2012:72).

Secular members of the Baath party in the Union resorted to using religious arguments to advance women’s rights too. An example is the use of religious arguments, which stipulate a period of rest of three years between pregnancies to reduce fertility rates and repeated pregnancies, in family planning campaigns directed towards both men and women in rural areas (Meininghaus, 2016). Furthermore, as part of the state’s appeasement of moderate Islamic groups, they allowed an Islamic religious women’s movement, the Qubaysi movement[37], to gain influence and to preach Islam to other women (Hinnebusch, 2012). Sparre (2008) (as cited in Homsi Vinson & Al-Hassan Golley 2012) states that during the 1990s, growing public Islamic discourses in Syria shifted public discourse towards mobilising women in the roles of mothers and wives rather than as public employees. Homsi Vinson & Al-Hassan (2018) argue that the

[37] A leading women-led Islamic religious group in Syria, also known as the Qubaysiyat, and named after its founder Munira al-Qubeysi (kalmbach 2008 as cited in vinsion).

effects of this public discourse shift included an increase in veiling among Syrian women and also "the growing acceptance of women as religious leaders" (78) and cite Zoepf (2006) who states that "Syria, virtually alone in the Arab world, is seeing the resurrection of a centuries-old tradition of sheikhas, or women who are religious scholars". These female religious leaders were not restricted to private homes in Syria, but also claimed spaces in public mosques and religious institutions for their teachings and female-led prayers.

Homsi Vinson & Al-Hassan Golley (2012) question whether these emerging female religious leaders in Syrian society were working to empower Syrian women and transform "women's roles from within Islam" (80) due to the rather conservative version of Islam they preached, which upholds traditional social norms rather than advocating for equal rights among Syrian women and men. Although still unfolding, they conclude:

> Thus even though increased religious participation by women may empower particular women and even lead to legal changes that benefit women in general, this same religious involvement may ultimately prove to be another version of patriarchal bargain, this time between religious women, influential men in their families, and government authority.
>
> (Homsi Vinson and Al-Hassan Golley 2012:80).

According to Arenfeldt & Al-Hassan Golley (2012), legal restrictions and governmental scrutiny in most Arab countries against the formation of civic groups necessitate a broader understanding to capture various forms of formal and informal civic engagement that fall under women's activism. This understanding should include "women's organisations that accept and perhaps even sustain the status quo (rather than seeking to change it) through support for women in vulnerable positions (as, for example, widows and divorcees)" (Arenfeldt & Al-Hassan Golley, 2012:8).

Feminist Activism in Syria and Displacement (2000-2018)

State-Sponsored Feminism Continues under Bashar & Asma al Asad (2000-2010)

In 'Gender, state and civil society in Jordan and Syria', Rabo (2005) discusses how since coming to power, the ruling Baath party effectively practiced a form of state feminism (Rabo 2005). Syrian women were encouraged by the state to be economically active and were well-represented in various professions. Politically, they were visible in parliament and some key government posts, however, these women

were often ‘hand-picked’ and backed by the party because they required support from “powerful men in the public sector for access to economic and political resources” (Rabo 2005:169). In practice, Rabo (2005) argues that although “Syrian women are visible in most areas of life” (161), Baathist State Feminism has only “increased Syrian women’s economic burdens” (161) without giving Syrian women access to equal political representation and influence. Baathist policies towards women were purposefully intended to appear as though the state-supported women to ‘break out’ of traditional gender roles to assume new roles typically held by Syrian men. According to Rabo:

> In Syria, this kind of ‘breaking-out’ by women is officially sanctioned because it tells Syrians and the world what kind of society the state plans to build: one in which all citizens are ‘productive and equal’
>
> (Rabo, 2005: 170)

In the year 2000, Hafez al Asad died and was succeeded by his son Bashar al Asad who officially became the new Syrian President in the same year. Shortly after assuming the presidency, he married Asma al-Akhras who became known as Asma al Asad - Syria’s new First Lady. Together, they led efforts to ‘modernise’ the Syrian Arab Republic and reinvigorate gender equality reforms, continuing the Baath’s top-down approaches of state feminism.

Syria’s state feminism policies were not unique in the region. According to Geha and Karam (2021), during the late 1990s and 2000s the Arab world witnessed a rise in what they refer to as “women’s machineries” or “state-based mechanisms and government institutions intended to help governments mainstream gender equality in all policy areas” (Geha and Karam 2021:24). During this period, many Arab states were using state feminism and policies that promote gender equality to reinforce their legitimacy and appear more modern before the international community (El-Husseini 2023), and even to gain greater access to international development assistance funds (Welborne 2010; Geha and Karam 2021). Examining the cases of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, Tripp (2019) argues that authoritarian regimes in the Arab world instrumentalized women’s rights issues and gender reforms to further their own political goals and to counter extremist Islamic groups (Tripp 2019). Across the Arab world, state feminism manifested through the use of gender quotas in parliaments,

appointing women in key government positions, creating national woman's machineries, and reforming legislation (El-Husseini 2023). The Syrian Arab Republic used all of these policies in its state feminism. Furthermore, in several Arab countries, First Ladies like Suzan Mubarak in Egypt, Asma al Asaad in Syria, and Rania the Queen of Jordan played a prominent role in promoting state feminism and undermining grassroots feminist movements. In their attempts to access INGO funding for their own initiatives, First Ladies in the Arab world became associated with the 'NGOization' and governmentalisation of Arab women's rights (Abou-habib 2011; Abu-Lughod and El-mahdi 2011).

Under the new leadership of Bashar and Asma al Asad, the first manifestations of state feminism began to show when the Syrian Government's ninth five-year plan (years 2001-2005) declared its aim to raise female participation in public life and decision-making positions by a minimum of 30% (Kelly and Breslin 2010). It continued with the ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the Syrian government in 2002**,** and the establishment of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs in 2003 to identify gender-discriminatory legislation negatively impacting the lives of Syrian women (Meininghaus 2016).

When acceding to the CEDAW agreement, however, the state made a number of reservations to the articles on the rights of women related to "nationality, mobility, divorce, inheritance, reproduction and protection from child marriages" (Alsaba and Kapilashrami 2016:9). The reservations were made on the basis of contradicting Syrian and Islamic laws (Meininghaus 2016). Reservations included the legal acceptance of spousal rape, reduced punishments for honour killings, denying women full control over marriage, divorce, custody issues, and the ability of a woman's husband to forbid his wife from working outside the home or from leaving the country if accompanied by her children (Kelly and Breslin 2010).

Before the war erupted in Syria, Sabah al Hallak had been involved in work to eliminate legal discrepancies between Syrian personal status Law and the CEDAW. Sabah worked as a Coordinator for Women's issues at the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs during the years 2004 to 2006, and was one of the contributors to the Syrian

national shadow report on CEDAW submitted to the UN in 2005[38]. Sabah understands gender as a social construct. In her view, discrimination against women in Syrian society has deep historical roots that persist in social practices and the legal system: "It's about gains, from the laws of Hammurabi to the Greeks to now, it's about reinforcing the rule of men over women, and this is the legacy."[39] Her lifelong women's rights activism has been organised along these two lines, fighting for legal reform and raising awareness to alter social attitudes through training. She argues that for social change to occur, Syrian men need to be included in women's rights activism as well. In her gender training she tries to explain the concept of gender equality between men and women in private and public spaces as a sharing of burdens among them in both spheres:

> Women's organisations are usually all women, there are very little or no men, their boards are all made up of women. When men are involved they become less threatened by gender equality and change, they understand that gender equality shifts some of the burden they carry by sharing it with women. Acceptance is higher among men when they think of it as sharing. And men have rights too.
>
> (Sabah al Hallak, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

Besides attempting to reform legislation, after 2000 the state also passed several neoliberal economic reforms that were intended to modernise the Syrian economy. (Kamla 2014) argues that these neoliberal reforms made working conditions for certain groups of Syrian women in the private sector worse, by widening gender inequalities in terms of pay between men and women, and exacerbating class inequalities among Syrian women themselves, making it easier for more educated women from upper classes to compete in the market and secure jobs while those from lower classes became more excluded. Furthermore, Kamla (2012) argues that women from negatively impacted segments of Syrian society that became poorer due to these neoliberal economic policies suffered as their communities resorted to "tradition and religion to challenge the advantaged, mostly westernised classes. […} women's purity and morality become symbols for this struggle (cf. Kamla 2012), resulting in the

[38] Microsoft Word - 0551777e.doc (un.org)
[39] Sabah Al Hallak, Beirut, Lebanon. Interview, 15.11.2018

domination of traditional interpretation of culture, religion, the furthering of women's marginalisation, exclusion from public spaces and decision-making positions."(619-620). Alsaba and Kapilashrami (2016) echo Kamla's view, as they describe the weakened position of Syrian women in society in the years before the conflict broke out following the introduction of neoliberal policies:

> Before the conflict, the public sphere was dominated by an old state bourgeoisie, religious orthodox elites, new corporate institutions, and militarised institutions hostile to and violent against women. Embedding of religious institutions in political power was regressive for women and contradicted claims of "modernity", and the private sphere became more repressive and violent. Changes in the social and economic milieu brought constraints on women's public participation and their access to economic opportunities, and thus greater dependence on the male members of their families. As women's position became increasingly defined by their family ties, their bargaining power in the household reduced, thereby increasing their vulnerability in situations of conflict.
>
> (Alsaba and Kapilashrami 2016:9)

However, some legislative improvements were made in the period 2002-2003. These included extending the period of maternity leave for a working woman to 120 days for her first child (and with fewer days for following children), increasing a mother's legal custody periods over her children to 13 years for boys and 15 years for girls, and giving a woman the right to travel outside Syria without her husband's permission. Still, the CEDAW Committee expressed concern over the persistence of low female participation in public and political life in Syria, and the lack of concrete measures taken by the Syrian government to realize its commitment to increasing a female quota of 30% in decision-making positions as had been promised in its Ninth and Tenth Five Year Plans (Kapur 2017).

In 2019, in spite of the ongoing conflict, a proposal to amend the 1953 Syrian Personal Status Law that was presented ten years earlier in 2009 was finally passed. The amendments were a disappointment to those hoping for a more modern civil family law that treats male and female citizens equally, with differences based on gender and religious sect retained. The amendments did offer a few improvements to the status

quo, such as raising the minimum age of marriage from 17 to 18 years old.[40] They also allowed Syrian women and men to add stipulations in their marriage contract as long as they did not violate Sharia law. This means that Syrian women can include conditions that give them the right to travel without permission from their husband, to work outside of home and to be financially supported by her husband even if she is working, to hold the right to divorce (which is usually held by the husband) and the right to refuse to live with a second wife in the same residence. Women who are divorced arbitrarily, without reasonable cause, are entitled to financial compensation. Women aged 18 and above have the right to marry without a legal guardian, and those given out for marriage by their guardians without consent have the right to invalidate these marriages. The amendments did not however make polygamy illegal, nor did they allow civil marriage so that members of different religious communities could intermarry.

According to Meininghaus (2016), the power of the Syrian President to implement legislative reform to remove gender inequalities is in fact limited because achieving gender reform in Syria would involve social negotiation rather than decisions handed down from above. In government-led efforts to lift reservations on CEDAW, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, the Union, and the Communist party worked together to create a public consensus on legislative reform in this area. These bodies initiated social forums for Syrian women to voice concerns. They also created workshops for jurists of Islamic law and members of the Public Assembly to engage in joint discussions about the CEDAW articles and their compatibility with Islamic law in order to arrive at some form of consensus to lift at least some of the reservations on CEDAW articles (Meininghaus, 2016).

Forty years of a Baathist state feminism policy has had different impacts on various groups of Syrian women. Overall, more women benefitted from education as indicated by national improvements in education enrolment at all levels for women and girls (World Bank, 2019). With regards to employment, greater numbers of Syrian women began working formally under the Baath, especially in the government sector in urban

[40] Previously, if deemed fit for marriage (based on a joint judge and child guardian evaluation that the child is of physical maturity and has genuine desire to marry) the minimum legal age of marriage was 13 years for girls and 15 years for boys in Syria (Meininghaus 2016).

cities. However, the decade preceding the outbreak of conflict witnessed a sharp decline in female labour participation. Policies appear to have benefitted mostly urban rather than rural Syrian women, and those from middle- and upper-income groups compared to the poor. This situation is typical for state feminism in the Arab world that tends to benefit mostly urban middle-class Arab women (El-Husseini 2023). Politically, the few 'handpicked' women that succeeded to get into the Syrian Parliament or other key government posts were not able to achieve significant improvements in Syrian women's rights and personal status laws that still discriminate against them based on their gender.

Still, state feminist policies like installing gender quotas in legislatures ensure that women are elected even if the majority of the population are biased against women politicians (El-Husseini 2023). In addition, having more women in office can encourage a greater voluntary participation by other women that feel represented and more politically involved (Masad, 2020). According to El-Husseini, even if the support for women is a strategy used by Arab regimes to further their own political interests, it results in slow incremental change that can lead to substantial progress and normalisation with time (El-Husseini 2023). Geha and Karam (2021) remind us of the origins of state feminism in Scandinavian welfare states, where it signified a state commitment and responsibility to promote women's rights. In their view, the failures of state feminism in the Arab world derive not from the policy itself but that it is being applied in a way that excludes "women of different communities, socio-economic status, and intersectional identity profiles" (24). This implies that local needs and experiences are sacrificed for state interests and agendas (Geha and Karam 2021). In their words:

> Despite women's machineries and ministries dedicated to women's empowerment, structural reforms toward inclusion and democratic governance were and are still lacking. In fact, inequalities have magnified over time as women's empowerment strategies failed to reach vulnerable women, such as women with disabilities, women from more marginalized communities, and poor women.
>
> (Geha and Karam 2021:26)

In 2010, on the eve of the outbreak of civil war, the vast majority of Syrian women above the age of 15 were housewives (Alsaba and Kapilashrami 2016). According to Alsaba & Kapilashrami (2016), the drop in female Labour Force Participation from 21%-12.9% during the years 2001-2010 was driven by a number of factors including a large decline in women working in the agricultural sector due to climate change and continuous droughts, the new neoliberal policies that were being introduced by Bashar al Asad's government, and deficient formal and informal worker rights and social protection.

The conflict that erupted in 2011 dramatically changed the lives of all Syrians, regardless of class, gender, age, or urban/rural background. Over half of the Syrian population became internally and externally displaced, and Syrians from all walks of life found themselves struggling to survive in new environments, some more hostile than others. The following section describes how various groups of Syrian women displaced to Turkey and Lebanon found ways to engage civically in these host countries to support other Syrian refugees affected by war. Some began civil society work for the first time, others were continuing and expanding their civic involvement or feminist activism. The section clarifies how various positionalities intersected with host country contexts and refugee policies to influence Syrian women's civic participation in this period.

'Gender' supports Syrian women's participation in CSOs (2011-2018)

An interesting finding that emerged from analysing the interviews of Syrian women and men, is that the focus on supporting displaced Syrian women and children in many CSOs facilitated women's participation, compared with that of men, in these CSOs in both host contexts. A mapping conducted on 748 Syrian CSOs inside Syria during the period 2015-2016, by Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad (2017) describes the overall participation of Syrian women as "severely low" and limited to "selective or non-essential roles" even though many of these organisations were working on supporting Syrian women affected by the conflict (Al-Zoua'bi & Iyad, 2017: 22). A more recent study of SCSOs inside Syria and in neighbouring countries by(Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2019) claims that since 2011 more Syrian women from various socio-economic and political backgrounds have become active in CSOs, however:

> Women are often excluded from decision-making positions, unless these positions were at an organisation that focuses solely on gender or women's rights. In addition to that, men are often granted leadership positions in the majority of organisations, and often in organisations headed by men, women find themselves completely excluded from major decision making conversations.
>
> (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2019:9)

Syrian CSOs are seen to recreate gendered hierarchies, favouring men in the workplace, that are widespread throughout Syrian society. These hierarchies are reflected in "(1) decision making, (2) positions and ranking, and (3) numbers and representation" in SCSOs (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2019:9). The authors also claim that the heavy reliance on short term project funding makes it harder for these organisations to invest in internal organisational development that could lead to the development of internal policies and working conditions more favourable to women. Research conducted by Taweel (2020) with the members of 76 Syrian feminist or women's organisations inside Syria and in the region of Gaziantep in Turkey also finds evidence of gender biases in SCSO recruitment, compensation and progression opportunities that curtail the participation of Syrian women.

These findings contrast with claims made by Fourn (2017) for Lebanon, who reports equal participation by both Syrian men and women in the sector and across organisational levels:

> It is remarkable that the "Syrian" humanitarian field in Lebanon seems to comprise as many female as male activists. We did not observe blatant gender disparities in favour of men within any of the NGOs we studied. On the contrary, women are very well represented in leading positions, in stark contrast to most economic sectors. Some associations dedicated to women have almost only female staff. Just as for young Syrian men, humanitarian aid is a cherished employment sector for young Syrian women.
>
> (Fourn 2017:11)

Geographically, there is evidence that the participation of Syrian women in CSOs is higher in areas that experience more stability inside Syria and in Syrian CSOs that are

based in neighbouring countries (Ahmad 2019; Al-Zoua'bi and Iyad 2017). The ongoing conflict divided Syria into four different geo-political areas under the control of: the Syrian government, the government opposition forces (Idleb and parts of western rural Aleppo), the Turkish government along the Syrian-Turkish border, and the democratic self-administered areas in the north-east Syrian regions. The ability of Syrian women to participate in CSOs is linked to levels of security in each of these areas which also tends to fluctuate according to conflict levels (Ahmad 2019). Additionally, SCSOs that have more stability in their operations are more likely to have gender-inclusive internal policies that promote the participation of Syrian women (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2019).

Focusing on the Lebanese context, Mattes (2018) finds that the location of CSO activity influences the gender composition of Syrian CSO staff, with low female staff numbers in the field contrasted with increasing numbers of women in main offices. Some participants from this research made similar connections between the perceived danger of CSO locations or activities and the participation of Syrian women. The following quote by a Syrian male working for an Islamic Turkish CSO that distributes relief inside Syria demonstrates how CSO activities are gendered in some Syrian CSOs due to perceived differences in women's capabilities or nature:

> We have four offices on the Syrian border and we execute activities inside Syria. In the Istanbul office, there are whole sections of female staff. There are offices that are overseen by women, like in Ankara. Syrian women work as volunteers as well, they have stronger social networks and are better at fundraising. In my office there are no Syrian women because the nature of our work is a little difficult, it is dangerous. You can't find a single woman in the border offices, because of the danger of war, the danger of being kidnapped or killed. If you are traveling to Aleppo for example, there is no place to sleep. If there is a bombing, I would be afraid to take my own sister. We go daily inside Syria. Humanitarian relief work is not easy. There are suitable jobs for women, and jobs that are not suitable. Women due to their nature are not placed in disaster and conflict areas. I have been working for 25 years in humanitarian work, there is a high degree of risk involved. You need to run, jump, this a woman cannot bear, it needs endurance and patience, withstanding hunger, 24 hours there is no food, sometimes there is kidnapping. I would feel much pain

> if a woman was with me and she was kidnapped, it pains me more if it was a woman rather than a man. That's why we don't encourage employing women. In the educational centres or women health centres, the numbers of women employees are higher than males, in safe areas, the percentages of women are higher. A driver for example, we employ a male, we can't ask a woman to get her husband's permission to go at 2 am to the airport. The nature of some works requires men and others require women.
>
> (Ayham, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 15.09.2018)

Post-2011 studies focusing on the participation of Syrian women in civil society in Lebanon and Turkey tend to provide mixed results. These differences reflect the difficulties in obtaining representative samples of Syrian CSOs in Turkey and Lebanon, and the influences on civic activity of rapidly changing refugee policies and donor priorities in host countries. Although this research makes no claims of representativeness, in 2018 when the interviews were conducted it was observed that women were well-represented in sampled CSOs in Turkey and Lebanon, and that they often outnumbered men in gender-mixed CSOs. Many participants claimed that being a woman increased the chances of participation and employment in CSOs. For example, in two interviews conducted with Syrian CSO employees working to help refugees find employment in Turkey, they both stated that job opportunities in CSOs and the private sector were, in general, more available to Syrian women than men:

> I think 25% of Syrian women are working after the war. The biggest percentage still wants to stay at home. But the jobs are mostly available for women, they want women.
>
> (Amani, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 19.11.2018)

> 70% of the available jobs are for women. I've been here since 2014. In the last four years unskilled women are working more than skilled men.
>
> (Ahmad, Participant Interview, Istanbul, Turkey. 19.10.2018)

Rami, another Syrian male interviewed in Istanbul, has a bachelor's degree in Law and eleven years of work experience in CSOs. In 2018, he was working for a Turkish CSO as a legal advisor. He is married to a Turkish woman and speaks Turkish fluently. During his interview, he spoke with frustration about his declining employability in

CSOs in Turkey. He feels this is primarily due to a growing bias towards employing women to satisfy international donor requirements:

> Every day I apply for jobs. They reject me because they say now we can't employ Syrians even though I match the job description. Two years ago, when I used to apply, I would get an offer right away. NGOs now want to display gender equality to get more funding for projects. They are concerned with monitoring and evaluation and want to send staff CV profiles to donors.
>
> (Rami, Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 25.10.2018)

Rami's manager also confirmed the importance of providing opportunities to Syrian women in Turkish CSOs because of organisational policies and the belief that they face greater barriers to work than men:

> The organisation policy is to equalize gender and LGBT representation among staff, participation is 50/50 men and women. Here in the office, we have seven Syrian female staff, and only one male employee. We work with Syrians, and need Syrian staff because they can communicate more easily with the beneficiaries. Also, we try to recruit more women because women need more support than men. They face more barriers like not being educated or cultural problems like needing a husband's permission or getting married young.
>
> (Mutlu, Project Manager at a Turkish CSO, Istanbul, Turkey. 18.10.2018)

International NGOs and international donor policies play an important role in supporting the overall participation of displaced Syrian women as opposed to men in civil society. They do this by funding projects aimed at supporting Syrian refugee women and children (Ahmad 2019; Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin 2019) and by prioritising NGOs that demonstrate gender equality principles in their operations and staff. In Turkey, at the beginning of the refugee crisis projects run by Turkish or Syrian CSOs that were providing humanitarian aid then shifted towards more long-term support for refugees such as livelihood support, psychosocial and health services, education services for children, integration services including translation services and

legal advice, and social cohesion activities (Cloeters et al., 2018; Diker & Ragab, 2019; Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017; Özden & Ramadan, 2019). Gendered aspects became more prominent in these projects, as Cloeters et al., (2018) point out:

> Civil society organisations in Turkey that are active in refugee support have developed gender-sensitive needs assessment procedures, services focusing on the specific needs of Syrian refugee women and girls, and empowerment and skills development programs for labor market integration. Some municipalities support programs specifically targeting refugee women and girls.
>
> (Cloeters et al., 2018:23)

The nature of many CSO activities creates more opportunities for educated Syrian women compared to men. CSOs providing services such as psychosocial support and education created opportunities for Syrians with degrees in education, sociology and psychology, majors that in Syria are chosen by more women than men. For example, Ragheb, the Syrian legal advisor who we met above, was one of two Syrian males employed by a Turkish CSO which also employed six Syrian women as teachers, providers of psychosocial support, and in finance.

Several research participants confirmed that CSOs with gender policies in place and high percentages of women employed were prioritized in aid provision, which motivates other local and Syrian CSOs to include women. However, some research participants were critical of gender mainstreaming driven by donor requirements rather than local commitments to gender equality and women's rights. The following quotes from Lebanon and Turkey demonstrate these criticisms:

> There is a lot of funding for women's projects in Lebanon. Many NGOs focus on providing makeup and sewing, embroidery, hairdressing trainings and workshops etc. They give them [Syrian women] low wages in return for their work, they take advantage of them. NGOs follow the latest trends, it's gender-based over the last two years, gender equality. Gender empowerment is the latest fashion now. Even as staff they have to reflect this, but there is little real decision-making by women in practice.
>
> (Nawal, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 06.12.2018)

> When you ask them, “Why are you working on this project?” The response is, “The donor wants this”.
>
> (Denis, Participant Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 07.12.2018)

> Within the organisation they try to seem like they are into ‘gender equality’. The Country Director is openly very sexist, a lot, in an unbelievable way. I know him personally. The operations manager, CEO, Strategy Manager as well, all sexist.
>
> (Anwar, Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 08.12.2018)

> Here [in Turkey] NGOs employ women for donors.
>
> (Lima, Participant Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 26.10.2018)

Awareness Shifts & Growing Resistance: Syrian Women’s Desire to be Self-Reliant and Active in Lebanon and Turkey

Several participants, especially from the sample in Turkey, spoke of developing a sense of civic duty and purpose which motivated them to remain active in civil society even after the war. Khuloud, a 34-year-old Syrian female heading the women’s division of an Islamic Syrian CSO in Istanbul, discusses how the understanding of civic organisations developed among Syrian women after the outbreak of conflict, leading to the development of a “culture of helping” among them and increasing their participation in the sector and their overall mobility in public spaces (Khuloud, Interview, 19.10.2018). She explains how after 2011:

> Knowledge about civil society has developed a lot, it is much better than before [the conflict]. Before, the meaning was different and unclear. [Syrian] Youth didn’t understand what volunteering was and its importance. Now it is very clear. Everyone has done something because there are people in need, [and] a culture of helping has developed. This has led to women developing, women are helping more, even in areas under siege [in Syria], and women are more active. In the media they put images of Syrian women participating, in Jordan and Turkey they have more freedom to move, they feel a sense of duty.
>
> (Khuloud, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 27.10.2018)

Displaced Syrian female participants who were working for the first time in their lives spoke of their motivation to earn a living out of a sense of duty to support the livelihood

of their families and to become self-reliant and no longer dependent on receiving aid. Their decisions to pursue an education and work are evidence of their refusal to accept social pressures to remain in private spaces and dedicate their lives primarily to domestic duties. The following quotes demonstrate these acts of rejection:

> We came to Istanbul. I decided to work, so I could accomplish something and not ask for money. I've been working for almost two years. I'm Turkomani, [so] for us it's a little easier. I studied the language for one year, so I can build my life and not stay at home.
>
> (Mira, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 25.09.2018)

> Here we [Syrian women] have to work and establish ourselves by ourselves.
>
> (Khuloud, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 27.10.2018)

Nasser-Eddin and Mhaissen (2020) come to similar conclusions regarding the empowering effects of work and involvement in CSOs on displaced Syrian women in Lebanon. They claim that for many of the Syrian women they interviewed who were working to support their families, "their engagement in income-generating activities in Lebanon made them feel more 'independent' and 'respected'… [and] has improved their self-esteem and confidence" (26). Concerning the influence of CSOs in this process, they add that "the women also expressed that, with their displacement, they gained the opportunity to learn new skills offered by different organisations. Skills, such as tailoring, made them feel independent, productive and active agents within their communities" (Nasser-Eddin and Mhaissen 2020:26).

Thus, even when the initial motivation to participate in civil society was financial, for many participants in this sample, the increased exposure to the work of CSOs altered their motivation to participate in civil society to include other factors like a sense of purpose towards one's community. Many Syrian women from the sample whose first experience in CSOs came after 2011, spoke of their desire to remain in the sector in the long run; to develop their skills further so that they could establish their own CSOs one day and continue their civic participation once they return to Syria, to participate in rebuilding their homeland. An example is Salwa, a 26 year-old unmarried Syrian woman working in a Turkish CSO in Ankara. Her first experience in the civil society sector was as a volunteer in Damascus after the conflict broke out in 2011. She later

became displaced in Turkey with her family, and intends to make a career out of working in civic organisations:

> In ten years, I imagine myself still working in the NGO sector. I chose this path. I hope that I will be the manager, and that everything will be in my hand. I wish I could start something myself and plan the activities that I want.
>
> (Salwa, Participant Interview. Ankara, Turkey. 14.09.2018)

The empowering effects of being involved in CSOs for displaced Syrian women were also evident among those who were volunteering and receiving no financial return for their efforts. For this group, their motivation to remain civically engaged was strongly linked to the meaningfulness of the work they felt they were a part of, the ability to connect with other Syrians, and the skills they gained. The interview conducted with Farah in Turkey provided important insights on the value of civic engagement to young Syrians in displacement contexts even when they receive no financial return for their efforts. In her interview, she described how she found ways to overcome the obstacles that were making it harder for her to participate in CSOs while living in a rural area that is a three-hour drive away from Istanbul:

> I've been volunteering with a Syrian organisation for nearly two years now. It's incredibly fulfilling to contribute to their meaningful work, and while it's unpaid, the value I gain from making a difference outweighs any financial compensation. Being part of a group of Syrian peers my age has also given me a sense of belonging that I don't have here in Turkey. This sense of community fuels my motivation for the work we do together. Additionally, volunteering allows me to contribute to important societal discussions, raise awareness about Syria's diverse heritage, and provide much-needed mental health support to Syrians affected by war. It's an opportunity for personal growth and skill development. This combination of meaningful work, community engagement, and personal development makes volunteering with [name of SCSO omitted] an invaluable experience for me.
>
> (Farah, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 20.10.2018)

Farah's first CSO experience came after the conflict started in Syria and she became displaced in Turkey in 2016. It is easy to sense how much Farah values the voluntary work she does in this SCSO. Having joined at a crucial time when it was a growing informal initiative that was building its presence online, Farah successfully coordinated the initiative's team which grew to 65 Syrians all over the world, and participated in creating content for the SCSO's online platform. Due to her efforts, a year and a half after joining she was promoted to a prominent leadership position within the SCSO. At the time of writing this thesis in 2024, Farah was still voluntarily involved in this organisation that became a licensed Syrian CSO in Canada. She is an example of Syrian women who became active in Syrian civil society after the war and were motivated to remain active.

Growing Activism & Evidence of Multiple Critique in Action

Conflict and displacement placed Syrian women in new contexts where they had opportunities to become civically engaged in ways that were not possible for them before 2011. Some women in the sample made use of these opportunities to access new platforms in the public space from where they could speak and challenge host discrimination against displaced Syrians. Others became more vocal in their criticism towards social practices that try to limit Syrian women's activism.

While Cooke (2001) uses multiple critique to describe strategies used by Islamic feminists in their activism, this research finds evidence of its practice among Syrian women from the sample who identified as staunch secularists as well. Going back to the concept, multiple critique is a "fluid discursive strategy taken up from multiple speaking positions." (Cooke, 2001: 133), its practice requires a self-awareness of one's own idenity/ies and a "multiple consciousness of others." (Cooke, 2001: 133). To demonstrate how multiple critique was being practiced by displaced Syrian women in the sample who differed in identity and religious conservatism, this section focuses on the activism of three women who all had leadership positions in SCSOs: Sabah Hallak from Lebanon, a secular lifelong feminist, Farah from Turkey, a young single woman volunteering in a secular SCSO, and the case of Wedad from Turkey, a married Syrian woman heading a Woman and Child Center in an Islamic SCSO.

Farah: Challenging Stereotypes about Syrians in the Cyberspace

Besides volunteering for a SCSO, Farah is also a university student at a public university in Turkey. As a Syrian national, she benefits from government policies that allow Syrians to study in Turkish public universities for free. She studies in Turkish, a new language she learnt after arriving in Turkey. Farah graduated from a private English-speaking high school, and is fluent in English, Arabic and French. Studying in Turkish requires additional effort and time. However, she does her best to perform well so she can continue her education and pursue a master's degree. During the interview, Farah also discussed how her age, care responsibilities for her elderly parents, and displacement in a rural region outside Istanbul all place limitations on her mobility and ability to engage civically. She has older sisters, but as the youngest unmarried woman in her family, most of her parents' daily care burden falls upon her. However, Farah's strong desire to be part of the growing SCSO movement with other young Syrians her age directed her towards opportunities for civic engagement in cyberspace. Her Syrian nationality, socioeconomic status and educational background which enabled her fluency in three languages (English, Arabic, and Turkish) and helped her secure this opportunity. During her interview, she spoke of the challenges she faced being the primary caretaker of her parents in their new displacement context in Turkey, and how she found ways to overcome this:

> I'm a student and the main caretaker of my parents as I'm the only one who lives with them and speaks the language in the family, and this has limited my mobility. I also live in an area that is quite far from physical places and initiatives that I could volunteer in, but I managed to be present and active by participating in a Syrian NGO online that works to support Syrians and is run by Syrians based in different parts of the world. So, in my experience, my nationality has opened doors for me and has allowed me to participate in civil society. Also, having completed high school in the United Arab Emirates and being trilingual as well as accumulating experience and skills in different administrative roles from internships that I completed in the UAE has had a huge impact on my ability to effectively volunteer in this organisation.
>
> (Farah, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 20.10.2018)

Farah's cyberspace activism allows her to network across the globe with other young displaced Syrians who come from different parts of Syria and belong to different religious groups. Together they work on a cultural project to build 'Syrian identity', demonstrate its heterogeneity, and counter common discriminatory stereotypes about Syrians by creating online content on social media platforms.

Farah experiences host hostility due to her Syrian nationality often in her daily life in Turkey. She experiences it at university from her professors and Turkish classmates, and also while caring for her parents' needs which requires that she communicate often with medical providers, banks, and various government administrations. In her university context, she was avoided completely by her peers for several weeks when she first joined and would not get any responses when she tried to approach her classmates. Farah believes she was excluded because of her Syrian identity, her tanned skin colour, and the way she dresses as an unveiled Muslim woman, which confuses Turkish people because, in her words, she does not "dress according to their stereotypical "Syrian way of clothing"". After living in Turkey for almost three years, Farah paints a vivid picture of how Syrian men and women are perceived by their Turkish hosts:

> Although Turkish people group many different nationalities under the label 'Syrian', 'Syrians' tend to all have dark features and all of them look the same. They are filthy, smelly, dirty, uncultured, uneducated, and backward-thinking. They think that all Syrian women wear hijabs and would be killed by their families if they don't. They also assume that all Syrian families have many children.
>
> (Farah, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 20.10.2018)

At university, she uses several techniques to counter such negative stereotypes. For example, she purposefully speaks in English at times during class and on the phone with my family to show her upper socioeconomic class and education. She believes that demonstrating her ability to speak in English occasionally makes her classmates and professors perceive her in a better way. Farah was raised in the UAE, and her parents have an urban background coming from the city of Damascus in Syria. After the war started they had enough financial resources to resettle in Turkey and apply for the Turkish Tourist Residency and did not have to register as refugees. Farah

challenges negative stereotypes about Syrian women being weak, uncultured, forced to wear the hijab, and only interested in getting married and having children by working hard to excel academically despite the language barrier and having learned Turkish recently. Doing well makes her stand out in class and forces her professors and peers to reconsider their assumptions about Syrian women:

> I was always studying and was the only student participating in class, it helped with my image amongst my peers and professors. I had a very hard time at the beginning of each semester as our professors change with our courses and it was a struggle to prove to them that I was worthy of my place in class. I was later told by many of my classmates “I initially didn’t know what to think of you, you didn’t look like a bad person but I was unsure because you’re Syrian and later realized you’re no harm to anyone”. The intention is good but it’s racist and offensive. Most times when I receive angry comments I explain that I am not a refugee, I’m a student, and had a tourist residency which also means that I can finance my stay independently. Other times I am forced to remain silent and choose to ignore their pressing questions about my country of origin. I am an economics major and due to the nature of my department, my professors often talk about the daily economic and political struggles in Turkey, and many times the Syrians are to blame. Being the only Syrian, and Arab, in classes of 100 Turkish students, I don’t feel safe to verbally respond to angry discussions like “the Syrians are the reason we are in ruin”. My only coping mechanism was to keep quiet during such conversations and do my best to be present and ahead of my colleagues academically. Many times, especially after we received our midterm results, professors would soften and sometimes even reconsider their assumptions against Syrians.
>
> (Farah, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 20.10.2018)

In the virtual space, Farah can be more vocal about her criticisms of discrimination in Turkey towards displaced Syrians who are blamed for the country’s growing economic and social problems:

> Through my position at [name of SCSO omitted], I can use my voice more effectively to speak out and debunk stereotypes. We tackle controversial topics in Syrian society and work on correcting harmful patterns on our social media

> platforms, which I believe is crucial for empowering and strengthening our community. We also use our platform to correct misconceptions and fight against discrimination by creating easy-access content. For example, I was able to write articles in three languages (English, Arabic, and Turkish) to reach various audiences and talk about the misconceptions Syrians face in Turkey based on research done in Turkish institutions. The feedback we receive is tremendously rewarding from Syrians, and we also have received many grateful messages from Turks for our work.
>
> (Farah, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 20.10.2018)

In this example, we see how Farah's decision to make use of the new opportunities to become civically active for the first time after the war has given her a platform to counter the host discrimination that she experiences in her daily life in Turkey. She uses her language skills, educational background, and research to create online content that raises awareness and counters misconceptions and biases against Syrians in Turkey. With time, her activism continues as her SCSO becomes more established, reaching over 50,000 followers on social media, and she assumes leadership responsibilities within it.

Sabah Hallak: Practicing Multiple Critique Though Critical Networking

According to Cooke (2001), Islamic Feminists' "multiple consciousness gives them a position of strength from which to consider the possibilities of alliances others might reject." (Cooke, 2001: 123). They can forge strategic alliances with individuals with utterly different religious positions and engage in critical networking with them as long as they can "balance their religious loyalties with national, class, ethnic, or any other critical allegiances." (Cooke, 2001:121).

This research finds examples of secular feminists also practicing multiple critique and engaging in critical networking. During her interview, Sabah Hallak from the Syrian League for Citizenship (SLC) in Beirut gave an interesting example of critical networking that she attempted to forge between her secular organisation and another Islamic SCSO in Lebanon. As an educated, liberal Syrian woman from Damascus fighting for gender equality, being displaced in Lebanon gave Sabah opportunities to formalise her activism through the SLC and to make use of her connections with other feminist organisations in ways that were not open to her when she was living in Syria.

Indeed, among the sampled SCSOs in this research in both Lebanon and Turkey, the SLC was the most involved in actively promoting Syrian women's rights and gender equality. According to Sabah, in 2011 when violence in Syria escalated, she, like many other Syrians, quickly crossed the border to Lebanon and settled in Beirut. In the same year, together with 11 other co-founders (in total, seven women and five men), the Syrian League for Citizenship was established in Lebanon:

> We started in 2011 with twelve founders, mostly women. We always have five members on the board and two or three are women. Our organisational structure is horizontal not vertical, and 50% of our employees are females. It's part of our internal policies. To be honest, I received a lot of support from Lebanese feminist CSOs when we started. I already had established connections with them for years, and when we came to Beirut they did everything they could to help us start up. Two of them even applied for funds on our behalf initially. They really believed in our work on human rights, gender equality and citizenship. I don't think my identity as an educated Syrian woman and activist from Damascus was an obstacle to our work in Lebanon, to the contrary I think it helped.
>
> (Sabah al Hallak, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

As a liberal unveiled Muslim woman, however, Sabah faces challenges getting the message of her activism across to more conservative Islamic groups in Syrian society who are sceptical of her appearance and interpretation of gender equality which differs from their religious beliefs and practices. During her interview, she also spoke of her experiences in engaging with conservative Islamic CSOs in Lebanon in the Beqaa area that worked with Syrian refugee beneficiaries. She described how unlike the SLC, practices such as gender segregation, and pressuring women staff and beneficiaries to pray at work and wear the Hijab to become employed or receive support were common in such organisations. Collaborations with liberal or secular organisations like the Syrian League for Citizenship which do not support such practices are less common. Still, Sabah managed to forge an unexpected alliance with them and carry out joint projects to pass on her liberal ideas through offering training to their staff and beneficiaries:

> They [conservative Islamic SCSOs] are a part of our society, we *have* [emphasis added] to work with them. I found a way to convince them to collaborate with us. We got some funding and gave it to them in return for allowing us to give our citizenship training to their staff. Our efforts were voluntary and they got all the funding. We also let them choose which parts of our training that they wanted. Since I am not an Islamic expert, I asked them to do some research for me to use in the training about the importance of women in Islam and gender equality from the Islamic perspective, and they did this. It is important to demonstrate to these groups that you respect their beliefs and to present your arguments within that frame. We demanded that there be an equal representation of men and women receiving the training from their organisation and no gender segregation and they agreed. I went there, with another male and female trainer from the SLC and we gave the training. During the training itself, I spoke about all of the ideas I wanted to cover on gender equality and it was fine, they accepted it.
>
> (Sabah al Hallak, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

In this example, we see how as a secular activist Sabah refuses to "to get caught up in a binary secular/religious framework." and insists on forging an alliance with conservative Syrian Islamists even though they disagree with some of her arguments and beliefs about gender equality and women's rights and roles in Syrian society. According to Cook, in such alliances "Full trust may never be possible, yet the need for alliances with different groups is often necessary. What is key is to know how and when to compromise." (Cooke, 2001: 123). Sabah understands the necessity of such alliances when she stresses that civically active Secular and Islamist Syrians need to work together. We also see her willingness to compromise when she asks for the Islamic SCSO's support in providing her with research about gender equality from an Islamic perspective so she can reformulate her arguments for women's rights within an Islamic frame in the training she gives them.

Wedad: Exploiting Fissures Caused by Conflict to Support Islamist Syrian Women's Activism

Besides forging critical networks with others, Islamic feminists also practice multiple critique within the Islamic community when they locate and make use of "spaces of

empowerment" (Cooke, 2001:108) within Islamic ideology. They use "the language and logic of their male counterparts" (Cooke, 2001:108) and "exploit fissures in the system even while seeming to accede to its traditional norms and expectations." (Cooke, 2001:109) to further their activism.

We can see an example of such multiple critique in action through the case of Wedad, who was discussed in Chapter 5 as a case of a civically engaged Syrian woman without any previous involvement in CSOs or working experience before the war. After being displaced in Turkey in 2014, Wedad became a beneficiary of aid given by an Islamic Syrian CSO there. Eventually, she started volunteering in the Islamic SCSO and negotiated a role for herself as a manager of a new center focusing on activities for women and children in Istanbul. During her interview, Wedad stressed that ultimately the mission of her center was to support Syrian women to make use of the new opportunities available to them in Turkey that were not available in Syria. These opportunities included the legal environment that allows Syrians to establish CSOs, educational opportunities, Turkish language opportunities, and benefitting from training for women being provided by CSOs. In such a nurturing environment, Wedad believes that Syrian women can better realize their goals of self-actualization:

> Syrian women are not raised to be productive; they are raised to be a wife. They have no awareness of their role, and that with focus and effort, they can become influential and make a difference in their society.
>
> (Wedad, Interview, 19.10.2018)

From this quote, we see Wedad's sharp criticism of Syrian women that remain confined in the private space, and that in her view a woman's self-actualisation necessitates her becoming active in the service of society as well. Still, Wedad, who is veiled, married and has two children, holds conservative Islamic views that she maintains as the basis for her own involvement in civil society, and for the projects and activities at her center. Religious instruction is present in all activities run by the centre. Through the activities, Wedad attempts to spread religious awareness and moral instruction among Syrian women and girls who she feels suffer from a feeling of estrangement and emptiness after being displaced to Turkey. In doing so, she is an example of Islamist women who label the identity of their activism and efforts "within

Islamism and therefore imbued with the force of the sacred." (Cooke, 2001:108). They are able to become more active in the public space and to challenge traditional ideas about women in the private space, husbands, and family needs because they are serving their society and spreading the word of God, and "Loyalty to God supersedes all else" (Cooke, 2001:120).

At the same time, when speaking of women's roles at home, Wedad appears to agree with the "traditional norms and expectations." of her society (Cooke, 2001:109). She does not directly challenge Syrian women's role as the primary caretaker at home, nor does she call for sharing household responsibilities with men. Instead, Wedad talks about how the increased pressures of life as refugees drive Syrian women to assume additional responsibilities outside of the household to support their husbands who are overburdened with work and can no longer earn enough to support their family as they once did in Syria. A wife and mother herself, Wedad speaks of the pressures she faces when trying to balance responsibilities in both private and public spaces, and that ultimately women need to find ways to do it all. The support her husband provides her when he helps with the housework is seen as a favour he does for her rather than his duty:

> My husband doesn't prefer that a woman works for eight hours and also has duties towards a husband and children. But he can't say anything to object to my work, we are all women here. Yes, it [working] means the effort is double, and it is not possible if you are not able to balance both. But he feels the importance of my work to me, poor him, he helps and is cooperative if I can't keep up with the duties at home, he says it's ok, don't think about it, you can do them later.
>
> (Wedad, Interview, 19.10.2018)

In this quote, we see how Wedad makes use of the 'fissure' in social norms created by the war that made it impossible for men to support their families financially on one income. She makes use of the urgent need for Syrian women to work to support their families financially, and the need to provide social support for their community through civic engagement to encourage Syrian women in Turkey to participate in CSOs. It might not be apparent at first how she actively challenges traditional ideas that encourage Syrian women to stay at home by using Islamist male logic and language

against itself. Especially that a good deal of the training offered at her centre attempts to prepare women and young girls to be caretakers and wives. Besides religious instruction, Wedad organizes training in first aid, handwork, calligraphy, beauty, etiquette, hosting, childcare, and marriage. At the same time during her interview, she was very critical of women who do not exert effort beyond their traditional roles as housewives, arguing that women are spending too much time on Facebook or other shallow pursuits instead of working harder to invest in their full potential and contribute to the benefit of their societies through voluntary work and spreading the word of God. Through her SCSO, she creates a woman-only and therefore 'safe' space that men cannot object to, thus enabling other Islamist women to challenge limitations on their civic engagement by their families and husbands.

Reactions to Gender Dynamics in Host Contexts

The fact that the Turkish legal system is based on civil law and the equality of citizens means that Syrian women living in Turkey experience more differences in social gender dynamics and women's rights compared to Syria or Lebanon where legal systems are based on Sharia law. For example, in Turkey practices such as polygamy and underage marriage are illegal (Cloeters et al. 2018). Syrian women who enter into polygamous marriages with Turkish men through religious marriage ceremonies, have no legal marital rights because their marriage is not legally recognized (Cloeters et al., 2018, Özden & Ramadan, 2019). Despite having more gender-equal civil laws in Turkey, Turkish society is still characterized as a "liberal patriarchal formation"(Özgür Keysan and Şentürk 2021:157), where violence against women occurs at high rates (Human Rights Watch, 2019). In the interviews, Syrian women spoke of taking note of these differences in women's rights between Turkish and Syrian communities and the impact of these differences on their lives, especially in regards to sharing domestic duties, accessing education, and being able to resort to authorities to protect themselves in public spaces:

> My sister married a Turkish man, they share everything. They share responsibilities at home, half half. In matters related to selling or buying, they [Turkish men] ask for the wife's permission, [and] here a single woman is enough as a witness [referring to the Sharia-based legal practice in Syria where two women witnesses are required instead of one].

(Salwa, Participant Interview. Ankara, Turkey. 14.09.2018)

> Women are directed towards certain majors in Syria. Turkish women travel to other countries for university, and their family allows them, how am I less than them?? We were exposed to another society, a more open one, where a girl's education is just like a boy's and their education is more advanced. In Syria they say "enough studying, in the end how does it matter, your role is at home". Only after I graduate from university will I be considering marriage.

(Leila, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 19.10.2018)

> In the street there is verbal sexual harassment. They [Syrian women] are afraid of walking in the street because of that. The law is with us, and I protect myself. I can go to the police if I faced a problem. The street, the bus, we have to get used to this and protect ourselves and not to be afraid of this.

(Mira, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 25.09.2018)

Mira is another representative example of a young Syrian woman who gained more autonomy in her personal life choices after she became displaced in Turkey and started working for a CSO. At the time the interview was conducted, she was 20 years old and had been working as a translator for a Turkish CSO for two years. She left her village in rural Aleppo, Syria five years before with her family to Gaziantep at the Turkish-Syrian border then migrated again to Istanbul where more job opportunities were available. She managed to finish her high school degree in Turkey and learned Turkish. She decided to work so she could help her family become financially self-reliant and not stay at home. While in Aleppo, Mira was engaged to marry her cousin when she was 15 years old. She refused him and this caused a problem for her parents among extended family. Mira feared being forced to marry, however, the experience of displacement gave her the advantage of moving far away from their extended family in Syria and she is no longer pressured to marry her cousin. In her own words, she states:

> The Turkish government has lots of facilities to support women's rights, and I deleted the idea that I might marry before I graduate from university. If I was in Syria I would have had to marry, they would have killed me. I had all sorts of

> opportunities after I started this job, I attended lectures and trainings, about diseases, early marriage, and psychological therapy sessions, I developed the ability to think from my perspective and yours, I can understand people more, my social life is better. I can do anything I want now, in Syria in the future I can work in NGOs or start my own.
>
> (Mira, Participant Interview. Istanbul, Turkey.25.09.2018)

These quotes demonstrate a growing awareness among Syrian women displaced in Turkey of gender injustices inflicted upon them by their societies. By forcibly removing them from their social context in Syria, the conflict appears to have weakened the influence of social pressure to conform to societal expectations of marriage and domestic responsibilities. Embedded in a new context that is primarily Islamic like their own society but at the same time a place where women and men have equal civil rights, appears to have ignited their feminist awareness and also their refusal as young Syrian women from both urban and rural backgrounds to challenge societal norms. In the quotes above we see how these Syrian women state their refusal to marry early or to remain at home, and instead choose to continue their education, remain civically engaged, resist sexual harassment in the street, and share domestic responsibilities with men.

There was little evidence of organized feminist activism or talk of women's rights among sampled Syrian CSOs in Turkey. Similarly, a study conducted on a larger sample (270) of Syrian CSOs in Turkey in 2018 found that only 21 of these CSOs addressed women's rights in their organisational mandate (Building Marekts, 2018). Based on her research with members from 76 Syrian feminist or women's organisations inside Syria and in the region of Gaziantep in Turkey, Taweel claims that the lack of security is a major obstacle confronting active Syrian women in these organisations and that they are often victims of threats, verbal and sexual abuse and even detention which "generates fear of stigma and harm amongst other women, leading them to remain distant from any public work" (Taweel, 2020: 21).

There were cases of civically active Syrian women in the sample in leadership positions who did not openly reject all forms of gender-based inequalities in their societies. An illustration of this was the case of Weded, who we met earlier. There were also other examples of Islamist Syrian women challenging identity-based

discrimination by Turkish or Lebanese CSOs institutions and INGOs. One example is Khuloud, who we encountered above. In her interview, she was very critical of the influence of INGOs in directing the projects and services that they provided for women. As the leader of an Islamic CSO in Turkey, Khuloud identifies as a conservative Muslim and wears a hijab. She is highly educated with a background in medicine, and in Syria grew up in an urban, middle socioeconomic background. She criticizes the heavy reliance on INGO funding, and how this forces Syrian CSOs in Turkey to adapt their development agendas and approaches. In particular, she was angered at the INGO's focus on funding gender and violence training, which is linked to their assumption that Syrian women are necessarily victims of gender-based violence because of their religion, ethnicity, and gender:

> INGOs are planting negative things, the negativity we lived through is enough. We should not be telling women that they are oppressed, their circumstances here are just different. Hate does not build. Making a woman hate her husband and society does not help, within her family she is alright and living. We should be teaching collaboration “Me and my husband”. They [INGOs] let her explode her frustration on her husband and children. Many foreigners see my hijab and feel sorry for me, they don’t know that this is my decision. Yes, there are people that are oppressed and their rights are eaten. Even among American women this happens, there are double standards, and they suffer from violence, but they focus on the violence that they assume I suffer from. In Turkish society women also suffer from violence.
>
> (Khuloud, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 27.10.2018)

Khuloud confronts INGO representatives with these same criticisms whenever she has the opportunity to do so. She does not attempt to hide her Islamic identity and instead tries to destroy negative stereotypes associated with displaced Muslim Syrian women by being a contrary example to the image of the disempowered, uneducated, poor, Muslim Syrian women who need saving by Western NGOs. However, to achieve the goals of her organisation, she still needs to forge a strategic alliance with them and accepts financial support from INGOs with the promise of carrying out gender-related training for women. She does however perform her own alteration to their

recommended training material to make it more compatible with the needs of her community and less biased against Arab Muslim women.

Syrian Urban Elites Engage in Feminist Peace Activism in Beirut

The interviews with Syrian men and women in Lebanon contained much more dialogue about Syrian women's rights and feminist activism. This is probably related to the fact that Lebanon offers Syrian feminist activists a number of advantages to support their cause compared to the Turkish context. Most importantly, the common native language enables them to engage more with other Lebanese feminist organisations and learn from their experiences. In addition, Lebanon and Syria have a shared history under French Mandate and inherited the same personal status law which discriminates against women and awards religious patriarchs the power to legally discriminate against women. Furthermore, women's rights activism in Lebanon was not centralised by the state as it was in Syria. The result is that today there are an estimated 160 Lebanese women's organisations involved in women's rights and human rights issues under the umbrella of the Lebanese Council of Women. This council is officially represented in the Lebanese parliament and works to address Lebanese women's political rights, and to eliminate discrepancies between Lebanese laws and the CEDAW's (UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) agenda (Stephan 2012). Below are sample quotes from research participants in Lebanon who spoke of the influence of Lebanese women's rights activism on Syrian feminists:

> In Lebanon there is an active civil society that is a lot more active than ours [in Syria] and from a long time. There are female activist authorities, maybe they inspired each other, the Syrian women that came and worked in CSOs in Lebanon after the war. They started to develop more, become more like the Lebanese women around them. Lebanon is suitable for CSO activity because it's progressive. There is women's activism, sometimes connected to LGBTQ and lesbian feminism. This is not present in Turkey. There is more freedom for expression and thought.
>
> (Ali, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 04.12.2018)

> War is very bad, but women were able to become more active. Women are very active in Lebanon, a woman is aware of her rights, that she has the right to be

> active. Syrian women in Lebanon are aware of this too or they would not have gotten to the peace talks. In Lebanon, women are very empowered, Syria is different, but they [Syrian women] have a chance now. How can the Syrian women benefit from this chance?
>
> (Denis, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 07.12.2018)

> There is good communication with the Syrian interior from here [Lebanon] too, better than from elsewhere [Turkey/Europe].
>
> (Talal, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 04.12.2018)

Sabah Hallak, from the Syrian League for Citizenship in Beirut, was one of the Syrian women who made it into the Syrian Geneva Peace negotiations mentioned by Denis in the quote above and advocated for Syrian women's rights at the international level. She made use of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, which gave international recognition to the impacts of conflict on women and girls in the year 2000, and stressed the importance of women's "participation in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction."[41] Since then, various UN bodies have exerted efforts to support a greater female participation in peace negotiations and constitution drafting processes in conflicts worldwide.

In our interview, she told me the story of how, together with four other activist Syrian women, she met with Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN appointed peace envoy to Syria during 2013-2014, and requested that Syrian women also be included in the peace negotiations. Brahimi approved of and supported their demands, and they were later invited to speak at the UN in New York in 2014. There, they met with UNWomen representatives who adopted their initiative and promised to support them. Brahimi's successor De Mistura, would continue to offer support and was behind the creation of the Women's Advisory Board (WAB) in 2019, a board of 12 Syrian women civil society representatives whose purpose was not to participate directly in the peace negotiations but "to advise de Mistura, to specifically raise important matters missing

[41] https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-1325-2000-sres1325-2000

from the UN Special Envoy's agenda to propose gender-responsive perspectives and channel relevant civil society expertise" (Asad 2022).

Sabah believes that Syrian women from civil society can make an important contribution to the peace process, and to ensuring a greater presence for women in decision-making positions in the post-conflict era. In her view, cross-cutting participation is the key to solving the problem and creating the conditions for lasting gains for women in Syrian society. She adds we need to work to increase "female participation at all decision-making levels. From the smallest to biggest levels including the Geneva negotiation table, the formation of the government, and the country's leadership."[42]

She is not alone in her belief. Some empirical studies claim that including women in peace negotiations raises the odds of reaching and maintaining peace in the long-run (Bell 2013; O'reilly et al. 2015; Stone 2015), and of achieving more gender equal outcomes in post-conflict societies (Bell, 2013). Following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, UN agencies have exerted greater efforts to support the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, management and peace programmes and interventions worldwide (Richter-Devroe 2008). Their support for female participation in peace negotiations and the constitution drafting process can also lead to higher rates of female participation in political institutions in post-conflict settings due to imposed gender quotas in constitutions or national legislation (Grenfell 2016). In the context of Arab countries affected by the Arab Spring Revolts, UN efforts to include women in peace negotiations have produced mixed results. For example, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) constitutional assistance projects directly supported women candidates and members in constitutional bodies in Tunisia in 2013 resulting in women getting almost a quarter of the seats in its National Constituent Assembly- the largest proportion in MENA to date. The UN also supported local women CSOs in Egypt in drafting the 2011 Egyptian Woman's Charter demanding that women have equal representation in the constitution drafting committee and the formulation of a representative constitution. These efforts however

[42] Sabah Al Hallak, Beirut, Lebanon. Interview, 15.11.2018

were unsuccessful, and no women were included in Egypt's Expert Committee, which prepared recommendations on constitutional amendments (Grenfell, 2016).

Sabah describes her experience with the Women's Advisory Board (WAB) and her ability to advise ongoing peace negotiations, positively:

> As women, we have been the most successful at reaching an understanding compared to the politicians. Even with our differences, we still agree on women's rights in a democratic state, and we are coming to agreements. We all want a political solution, not violence, sustained peace, equality, justice, and to amend the laws. We want to be moderators in this peace process. 130 Syrian women agreed on having a minimum 30% quota in the constitution committee, from the Salafi to the secular ones. So de Mistura submitted our recommendation to the constitution committee.
>
> (Sabah al Hallak, Management Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 15.11.2018)

However, the formation of the WAB and their advisory contributions to the peace negotiations are not free of criticism. For example, Asad critically writes, "the opaqueness in the selection process caused a lot of divisions and anger within Syrian women movements and groups as the role played by international Western entities in forming the WAB consisted of a lot of stereotyping and re-stereotyping of Syrian women that is so common when it comes to women from the Global South. As stated it seemed like a simplistic box ticking choosing women based on being female, coming from certain religions and sects, certain different political affiliations and geographical locations" (Asad 2022). Still, women wanting to participate in peace negotiations face higher exclusionary requirements regarding their expertise, qualifications, and grassroots constituencies, compared to men who can participate based on their direct involvement in the fighting alone (O'reilly et al., 2015). With regard to the ongoing Syrian peace talks, Kapur (2017) makes note of the gender-based discriminatory requirements that prevent Syrian women from participating in peace negotiations:

> the Syrian experience illustrates the 'requirement' for women to demonstrate that they can work cross-party/ideology and come up with common positions before they are taken seriously in relation to their participation in formal peace processes. These expectations are not required or expected of potential male

> participants and result in the creation of unintended – and intended – obstacles to the participation of women.
>
> (Kapur 2017:6)

Perhaps Sabah's story demonstrates the plight of many feminists who fall into the trap of speaking on behalf of all women because they believe that their interests and burdens are the same. Perhaps it also demonstrates how women's rights activists in the Arab region are forced to look outside their local contexts and forge international alliances to gain voice and support for their cause at the expense of being accused of selling out to the West. For Syrian feminist activists who moved to Lebanon after 2011, displacement in Lebanon may have initially enabled them to benefit from the Lebanese context as outlined above. However, with the passing of time, worsening living conditions and rising xenophobic discrimination, it became increasingly difficult to remain. Even in 2018, one of the interviewed participants spoke of how secular Syrian feminists were gradually leaving Lebanon for Europe:

> I came in 2013 to Beirut, there were many active Syrian women like Ola Ramadan, Salma Kahaleh, Marcel Shehwaro, Sabah Hallak, Maria Abdi, Maya who founded Mosawat [Arabic term meaning equality] in Paris. They start in Lebanon, then go to Turkey, then Berlin. I totally wouldn't buy into the helpless or traditional view of Syrian women who are not participating in society. The participation of women is a lot, a lot. All these women I mentioned. They all have strong personalities, they have lots of enemies, they are not traditional people, they are very liberated, not religious, all of them.
>
> (Lima, Participant Interview. Beirut, Lebanon. 04.11.2018)

Sabah Hallak was one of these women who eventually had to escape the rising hostility of the Lebanese context. She became displaced once again in Berlin, where she had some family and was working with her colleagues to re-register the Syrian League for Citizenship there and continue their mission of spreading awareness of democratic and gender-equal values among Syrians. However, the events of December 8th and the sudden liberation of Syria from Asad rule via Islamist opposition groups led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) without peace negotiations meant that neither the WAB or any other representative committee of Syrian women had the

opportunity to secure more gender equal outcomes and representation for Syrian women in future constitutional bodies and political institutions.

A few weeks following independence Syrians, remain vigilant of the actions of the HTS's Islamist transitional authority which has assumed the responsibility of leading the country until March 2025. Many are weary of new laws or polices that may limit their freedoms and rights under the current Islamist leaderships. Leader of the HTS, Ahmad al Sharaa, has repeatedly promised to protect the rights of minorities in Syria (BBC News 2024). Concerning Syrian women's rights in the areas of political participation or freedom of dress however, his statements have been vague and a cause for concern, especially among secular Syrians, academics and women's rights activists. In a recent interview with the BBC, for example, al Sharaa stated clearly that he supported women's right to education. Concerning women's right to go out into public spaces unveiled however, he deflected the decision to the legislative committee of legal experts that would redraft the Syrian constitution and define women's roles and rights legally in the country (BBC News 2024). Statements by the transitional authority's spokesman for the political administration, Obeida al Arnaout during an interview with the Lebanese TV channel Al-Jadeed about women's biological and psychological fitness for some roles and not others such as Minister of Defence sparked an outrage on social media (The Arab Weekly 2024; The New Arab 2024). Like al Sharaa, al Arnaout also stated that a future constitutional committee would specify the roles that Syrian women can assume in public life (The New Arab 2024).

The current transitional authority's government contains only one woman, Aisha al-Dibs, who was appointed head of the Women's Affairs Office. During a television interview, al Dibs claimed that the interim government is "committed to engaging Syrian women in social, cultural and political institutions, and recruiting qualified women in healthcare and education sectors."(Aljazeera 2024b). Following such statements, hundreds of concerned Syrians protested in Umayyad Square in Damascus on December 19th, 2024, demanding a secular and civil democratic state that does not differentiate between Syrian men and women (The Arab Weekly 2024).

Alongside protests, the topic of women's rights and future roles in Syrian society is being strongly debated by Syrians with differing views on social media. Women's rights

and gender equality are being discussed in connection to political systems and democratic, civil, or secular states, and to fears of women being pushed into the labour market, and fears of negative impacts on Syrian society if gender equality ultimately leads to gay rights. Some Syrian women on social media are making arguments against gender equality primarily because they associate it with having to work. One such example is a photo of a young Syrian woman protesting against gender equality that was posted on a page on Facebook on December 24th. In the photo, the woman holds a poster in Arabic saying "I don't want equality, I want to be # spoiled"[43]. This statement reminds us of similar concerns stated in quotes above by women in this sample who highlighted the negative consequences of work for Syrian women. Challenges related to the persistence of care roles being assigned to women that lead to double burden pressures for those who work, in addition to the exposure of women to sexual harassment and exploitation at the workplace, the lack of protection for women in working environments, and generally the lack of policies to support working women through for example the provision of adequate child care services. We are reminded of the quote made by Khuloud above "In Europe, women participate more, so they affect policies and this leads to better outcomes."[44] But are there going to be opportunities for Syrian women to participate in policymaking? This remains to be seen in the coming months, following an announcement made by al Sharaa at the end of 2024 that drafting the new Syrian constitution could take up to three years, and national elections up to four. In the meantime, Syrians await a promised a national dialogue to take place in March 2025 that will define Syria's political future and transitional government (Blackburn 2024).

Conclusion

The previous two chapters of this thesis focused on addressing the main research questions and presenting the empirical findings. Together, Chapters Five and Six demonstrate the changes driven by war and displacement in the civic engagement of interviewed Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey from 2011 to 2018. They also clarify

[43] Image Source: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AhcQxAPop/
[44] (Khuloud, Management Interview. Istanbul, Turkey. 27.10.18)

how different host policies and rising discrimination are influencing this civic engagement in each context. By featuring the voices of the Syrian women in the sample and sharing their experiences, these chapters also shed light on occurring shifts in Syrian women's feminist consciousness and activism, linking these changes to their identities and gender norms within each context. The following chapter aims to re-engage with the main theoretical concepts used in this thesis—hostipitality, intersectionality, and multiple critique—to present cross-cutting themes derived from the empirical evidence discussed in Chapters 2, 5, and 6.

Chapter 7: Discussion: A Growing Civic Participation Shaped by Conflict, Hosting Context, & Identity

The main inquiry of this thesis is understanding how experiences of conflict and displacement affected the civic engagement of Syrian women after the outbreak of war. The interviews conducted with civically active displaced Syrian women in Lebanon and Turkey reveal a clear trend that was presented in Chapter 5: despite their diverse identities and varying circumstances of displacement in different host environments, there has been a noticeable increase in their civic participation after the war. Furthermore, these women demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of civil society organizations (CSOs) and their functions. Chapter 6 also highlights how for many of these interviewed women, this civic activism has had empowering experiences affecting their private lives and giving them opportunities to contest discrimination exerted against them by their hosts and own societies in different ways.

While women's increased civic engagement can be an anticipated outcome of war, re-examining this trend through the theoretical framework of this thesis which engages with: Derrida's notion of hostipitality (2000), intersectionality, and Cook's (2001) multiple critique — provides a deeper understanding of how and why this increase in civic participation occurs. Furthermore, it is easier to recognise how civic participation is shaped by an interaction between the intersectional identities of displaced Syrian women and their host contexts. This understanding provides valuable insights to policymakers and development practitioners who aim to support women impacted by war and their civic participation.

The analysis identifies three main factors that drove or 'pushed' displaced Syrian women toward civic involvement in Lebanon and Turkey. Depicted in the figure below, these influences are: 1- the growth of CSO activity in response to conflict, displacement, and the resulting humanitarian crisis in host countries, 2- the influence of international aid funding on CSO organisational structures and activities 3- host contexts which presented displaced Syrian women with new opportunities and restrictions or 'hostipitality':

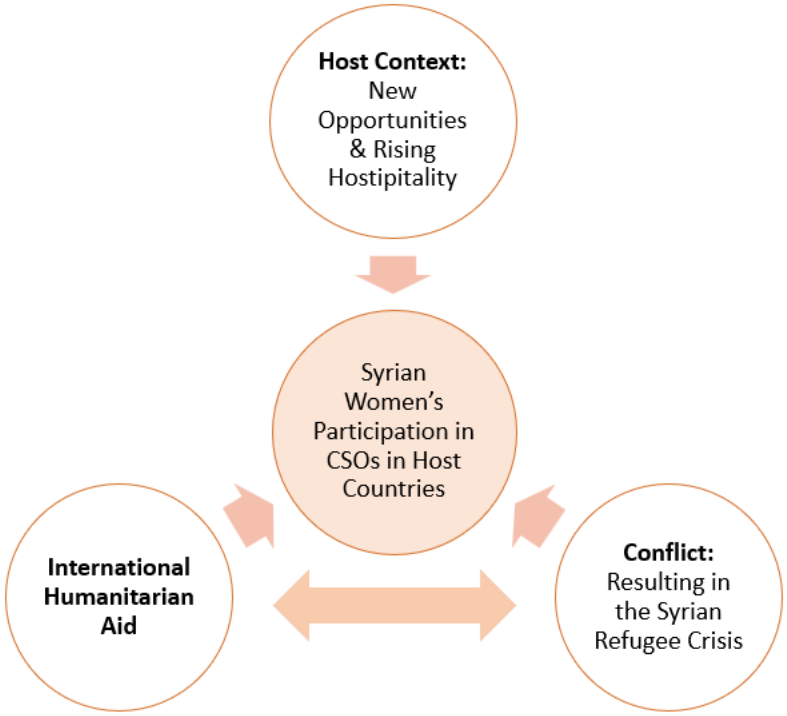

Figure 3: Factors Driving Syrian Women's Involvement in CSOs in Lebanon & Turkey (2011-2018)

For many of the displaced Syrian women in this sample, their initial decision to become civically involved in host contexts was a result of the conditions related to their conflict and displacement experiences that in some cases 'pushed' them towards the sector, or conditions that enabled their participation by creating a demand for them in these organisations. On the one hand, the violence of the Syrian conflict and the resulting scale of displacement of Syrians to neighbouring countries activated the international aid and local humanitarian sectors in these host countries, which translated into new job opportunities for Syrian women in international, host, and Syrian CSOs in Lebanon and Turkey. Here we can see the impact of international aid policies when they include funding priorities that target women. The majority of Syrian women in this research stated that their gender enhanced their chances of participation and employment in CSOs. Job opportunities in the sector tended to target women rather than men in the Lebanese and Turkish context for several reasons. These included the need to demonstrate gender equality at the organisational level and satisfy international donor requirements, the nature of the expertise needed for the jobs which were more available among women, and the fact that the primary beneficiary group was mainly Syrian women and children who communicated more easily with other Syrian women.

The poor financial conditions of many displaced Syrian families in Lebanon and Turkey was another important reason why for many of the Syrian women in this research sample, their first-time civic participation coincided with their first-time employment as they were 'pushed' to work due to financial need. Syrian women were also more exposed to such organisations after 2011 as beneficiaries, which broadened their understanding of the different types of activities and services CSOs provide, and also created opportunities for them to join them, or to create their organisations with INGO funding and training support.

Each hosting context presented civically engaged Syrian women with different kinds of opportunities and limitations for their activism. Opportunities presented themselves in the greater freedom to engage civically in Lebanon and Turkey relative to Syria in the pre-2011 context. Comparing the host contexts to each other, Turkey which allowed Syrians to register their CSOs and operate easily, had a much larger number of officially registered Syrian CSOs than Lebanon. Lebanon, where CSOs are not allowed to be formally registered had a smaller number of Syrian CSOs that operated either informally, registered as non-profit private companies, or registered in other countries first and then registered as a branch of a foreign NGO in Lebanon. Thus, Syrian CSOs included in this sample included both formal and informal entities working under different labels (civil society organisations, native society organisations, non-profit organisations, associations, etc) and were involved in a wide range of activities (research, human rights, women's rights, arts and culture, aid, education, psychosocial support, religious teaching, and livelihood support). While the variation in labelling and activity reflects the political views of these organizations' leaderships, they are also a reflection of the legal challenges confronting Syrian civic initiatives in host contexts and of creative solutions they came up with to counter restrictions in their context.

Chapter 2, which outlines the policy responses of Lebanon and Turkey to the Syrian refugee crisis shows evidence of rising 'hostipitality' as the refugee crisis prolonged. It also shows how this hostipitality is linked to perceived differences in identity between Syrians and their host communities in each context, taking the form of increased political and legal restrictions on displaced Syrians, and rising social discrimination against them. Rising hostipitality and discrimination in both host contexts were also

reasons that drove Syrian women to look for opportunities in CSO working environments which were more attractive compared to the private sector in host countries. CSO environments offered displaced Syrian women better pay, more socially acceptable and safer working environments, training opportunities, enough flexibility to manage double burden pressures, and in the case of Syrian CSOs, opportunities to meet with other members of the Syrian community in displacement. As such, CSOs and to a greater extent SCSOs in Lebanon and Turkey provided displaced Syrian women during 2011-2018 with spaces where they could mitigate or avoid various forms of political and social hostilities in their host contexts. During the process of their engagement and exposure to CSO environments, they become more financially self-reliant and empowered. This is not to say that all CSO environments were safe havens that were free of discrimination. Syrian women still faced identity-based discriminatory practices in host CSOs that discriminated against them due to their nationality, ethnicity, and residency status, and that refused to employ them in favour of local staff or to employ them informally limiting their opportunities for advancement within the organisation.

Indeed, another important objective of this research is to demonstrate the role identity plays in shaping different Syrian women's civic participation in displacement contexts. In doing so it also highlights diversity within the group and counters representations that homogenise Syrian women's identities and experiences. An inductive analysis of the interviews and collected data shows that these women's gender, ethnicity (in Turkey), nationality (in Lebanon), socioeconomic status, education, age, religion, residency status, urban/rural background and care duties intersected in different ways with each host environment to shape their civic participation in that context.

In Lebanon, higher levels of hostipitality resulted in a more restricted, elitist activism by displaced Syrian women. Elitist leaderships in SCSOs composed of Syrians coming from mostly educated, urban, upper socioeconomic classes who were more likely to have the resources necessary to overcome discrimination. These women tended to be highly educated and come from urban backgrounds in Syria where they also had opportunities to accumulate CSO experience before 2011. They were therefore better equipped to compete with their Lebanese counterparts for CSO jobs or to start their own CSOs. Wealthy Syrian women with no previous CSO experience, or the 'ladies with the white hands', were able to use their wealth and often their dual citizenship to

overcome legal restrictions and join the wave of Syrian civic activity that started after 2011 by forming charitable organisations. Among these elites of civically active Syrian women in the Lebanese context, religion did not appear to be an influencing factor. They had diverse religious identities and beliefs ranging from secular to conservative and were able to find a space to operate within the backdrop of Lebanon's religious diversity. On the other hand, displaced Syrian women who came from poor rural backgrounds had problems with their residency statuses, had little or poor education, and hardly any NGO lingo skills had fewer chances to participate in CSOs in Lebanon. Those who found a way in were limited to taking unskilled employment opportunities such as cleaning jobs, or joining handwork income-generating projects run by Syrian women elites. Sharing a common mother tongue with their hosts enabled civically active Syrian women in Lebanon to communicate and network with the country's extensive and diverse CSO sector compared to Turkey. CSOs in Lebanon are also more involved in activities related to education, arts and culture, and women's rights and this influenced the activities of SCOs as well.

In contrast, Syrian women were confronted with less hostipitality in the face of their civic engagement in Turkey where Syrians were allowed to work in CSOs and register their civic organisations. This means that compared to Lebanon, Syrian civic activity in Turkey was less elitist. In Turkey, the language barrier worked to the advantage of young Syrian women from disadvantaged backgrounds as it created opportunities for Syrian women who were fluent in both Arabic and Turkish to join Turkish CSOs in a variety of functions including coordinators, translators, financial controllers, social workers and teachers despite lacking previous CSO experience and even university degrees. Indeed, the majority of sampled Syrian women who were working in Turkish CSOs were not urban highly educated elites. Many of them came from rural and poorer backgrounds compared to their Lebanese counterparts. Their education levels varied from those who only completed high school degrees to university degrees. Many of them also belonged to younger age categories and were unmarried, which made it easier for them learn Turkish and find employment with their language skill. Furthermore, Syrians that wanted to establish Islamic CSOs were also able to take advantage of the Turkish government's tolerance towards Islamic organisations and of funding opportunities provided by Arab Gulf states for Islamic CSOs. This meant

that Islamist Syrian women without experience or skills to apply for INGO funds could make use of other funding opportunities.

These findings demonstrate the importance of using intersectionality more extensively when studying women from the Arab or Islamic world like Syrian women to avoid reproducing biased interpretations that reduce their experiences to intersections of their nationality/religion and gender. In addition, when studying these women in displacement contexts, it is important to understand how their host contexts interact with their identities and construct differences that are used to discriminate against them. Here Derrida's hostipitality in combination with feminist intersectional frameworks helps create a clearer picture of how identity shapes Syrian women's civic participation in Lebanon and Turkey. These two theoretical approaches however remain passive and do not capture how different displaced Syrian women respond and contest exclusionary practices that confront them in host contexts. Searching for evidence of changes in feminist consciousness and multiple critique highlights examples of changed awareness, resistance, and activism by Syrian women from both displacement contexts that were presented in Chapter 6. Just as intersectionality helps counter essentialist representations of Syrian women after 2011 that homogenise them, applying the concept of multiple critique to the analysis of their activism counters representations of their powerlessness and victimisation.

In conclusion, the applied theoretical framework of this thesis creates possibilities for researching Syrian women in the post-2011 that presents them in a new light as it looks beyond their gender and displacement as factors that necessitate disempowerment. Reflecting on the significance of identity in constructing otherness and legitimising host hostility towards refugees, it becomes crucial to consider the role of academia and development discourses when studying refugee women. In the case of displaced Syrian women, these discourses have tended to oversimplify their realities and perpetuate negative stereotypes, portraying them as powerless. Although these narratives aim to garner support for refugee women and emphasize their vulnerabilities in conflict situations, they can inadvertently reinforce discriminatory views. For example, through constructing images of these women as part of communities that are considered backward or uncultured, thus justifying unequal treatment.

Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the experiences of Syrian women affected by war in Syria that began in 2011. It examines the connections between conflict, identity, and women's civic participation to address the main research question: How have conflict and subsequent displacement to Lebanon and Turkey influenced Syrian women's civic engagement and feminist activism in these host countries from 2011 to 2018?

Using a feminist critical realist ontology and a comparative case study approach this thesis examines the experiences of civically active Syrian women who were displaced in Lebanon and Turkey after 2011. It focuses on their involvement in various Civil Society Organisations, including local Lebanese and Turkish groups, as well as Syrian civil organisations (SCSOs) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) operating in these host countries. By utilizing feminist qualitative methodologies, this research prioritizes the experiences of women, enabling a deeper understanding of their identities, the specific challenges they face in their civic activism, and the numerous ways they resist and challenge discrimination in Lebanon and Turkey. The findings of this research highlight the multiple identities of Syrian women, countering essentialist portrayals that have emerged since 2011, which often oversimplify and homogenize them into a single group labelled 'Syrian women refugees.' Furthermore, following an inductive method during the analysis of interview data has led to the identification of several key identity categories found to significantly influence the civic participation of interviewed Syrian women. These categories include gender, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, education, age, religion, residency status, and urban or rural background. Thus, this research makes important contributions to post-2011 intersectional studies of Syrian women, addressing the tendency to oversimplify their experiences by focusing mainly on gender and nationality or refugee status in displacement contexts and shedding light on the impacts of other categories.

Although the theoretical approach applied in this thesis draws on existing theoretical concepts: 'hostipitality' (Derrida 2000; O'Gorman 2006), intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 2000; Collins and Bilge 2016; Lykke 2010; Mohanty 1984), and multiple critique (Cooke 2001). Their combined use in a multi-layered theoretical approach is new, and allows them to be used in ways that can

further deepen our understanding of the challenges and identities of forcibly displaced Arab women in host contexts. Thus, this thesis argues that its theoretical approach supports social research that is less prone to biases of essentialism when studying women impacted by conflict generally, and Arab Muslim women more specifically.

Going back to its primary questions, this research finds that despite differences in identity, conflict experiences did lead to an overall increase in civic participation and experiences of empowerment among the Syrian women who were part of its sample. Chapter 5 above explains the forces driving this increase in civic participation in both contexts and how participation in CSOs enables Syrian women to avoid discrimination in host contexts. A closer look at the identities of these women together with the political and social hostilities of each context shows that higher levels of discrimination in Lebanon place more restrictions on Syrian women's civic participation and results in an elitist participation made up mostly of Syrian women from wealthy, educated, urban backgrounds. The Turkish context on the other hand, which places fewer restrictions on Syrian women's civic engagement enables more Syrian women from socially disadvantaged, rural poorer backgrounds, and Islamist women to engage civically. These identity differences naturally impact the activities of these Syrian CSOs and their priorities.

Conflict and displacement in new societies have led to significant shifts in feminist consciousness and activism among interviewed Syrian women from both contexts. This thesis utilizes the framework developed by Badran & Cooke (2004) to categorize these shifts into three stages or levels of feminism: 'awareness,' 'rejection,' and 'activism.' Chapter 6 provides numerous examples of these shifts, highlighting how Syrian women in the Turkish context exhibited greater feminist awareness and resistance. In contrast, Syrian women elites in the Lebanese context engaged in more proactive feminist activism, advocating for women's rights through political and legal reforms in the post-war period.

These findings counter representations of the powerlessness of Syrian refugee women by underlining how different Syrian women resist discrimination in their contexts. In light of recent developments in Syria, including the end of fourteen years of brutal conflict and over fifty years of Asad family rule, the growth and evolution of Syrian feminist activism since 2011 outlined in this thesis, as well as the information it

provides on its diverse leadership in terms of identity and feminist awareness, offer valuable insights into the ongoing discussions among different Syrian stakeholders regarding the role of women and their rights in Syria. Furthermore, these insights can guide future research on Syrian women, as well as assist policymakers, foreign governments, and international NGOs interested in fostering inclusive rebuilding efforts in Syria that actively involve Syrian women and civil society.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview Guides

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Participant Interview Discussion Guide (Male/Female)

Research Topic: Participation of Syrian Women in Civil Society Organisations following the Syrian Conflict: Investigating participation in Turkey, Lebanon and Germany.

Date:	
Time & Duration of Interview:	
Country:	
Place of Interview:	
Interviewer Name:	
Interviewee Code:	
Interviewee Position:	
Name of CSO:	

Section A: Background information on Interviewee: *(To be completed by Interviewer while interviewee answers questions during interview, missing information will be asked directly at the end of the interview.)*

Age: _____ Gender: □ Male □ Female

Marital Status: □Single □Married □Divorced □Widowed

Number of Children: _____

Highest Education Achievement:

□Illiterate □Primary □Basic □Secondary □College □Bachelor's □Master's □PhD

Religion: _____

City of Origin in Syria: _____

Place of birth outside Syria/other nationalities besides Syrian: _____

Year of leaving Syria following conflict in 2011:_____ □Not Applicable

Years spent in current location (Turkey/Lebanon/Germany): _____

Type of involvement at CSO:

□ Volunteer □Part-time employee □Full-time employee □Consultant □Board of Directors

Section B: Background Information on CSO: *(To be completed by interviewer prior to interview by reviewing information about CSO on their website and annual reports. Interviewee will be asked about missing information at the end of the interview.)*

Full name of CSO:

Type of CSO (Select all that apply):

□International □Local □Formal □Informal □Private Citizens □Semi-Government □Religious □Professional □Business

Primary activity of CSO (Tick all that apply):

□Education & Learning □Children □Youth □Health □Women □Entrepreneurship & Employment □Humanitarian Aid □Networking □Culture & Arts □Research □Funding

□Capacity-Building □Human rights □Other: _____

Year CSO was founded: _____

Ratio of female to male Board members: _____

Ratio of female to male Managers/Project Managers: _____

Topics:

Interviewee Background:

- When/how arrived at research country?
- Education
- Work/volunteering history
- Motivation for working in this CSO

Roles & Responsibilities within CSO

- Role within CSO
- Daily responsibilities & tasks
- Projects
- Future growth within CSO

Risks & Opportunities

- Opportunities (capacity development/ learning/better job opportunities etc)
- Risks or dangers faced because of work (working in conflict areas? Negative experiences/ exploitation)

CSO Support for Syrian Female Engagement

- Internal policies to support female employment in CSO?
- Special effort to employ Syrian female staff?
- Undertaking research related to gender or female participation?
- Projects supporting participation of Syrian women in CSOs? Or related to Syrian women in general?

Factors Influencing Participation

- Internal positive factors (policies, work environment etc)
- Internal negative factors (discrimination etc)
- External positive factors (family support, government policies etc)
- External negative factors (policies, work/family balance etc)

Reflections on Change in Syrian Female Participation after Conflict in 2011

- Opinion on low female participation rate in 2010 (13% of Labour Force)
- Change in engagement of Syrian women in CSOs (examples)
- Change in perceptions on Women's rights
- How CSOs in (research location) differ from those in Syria
- Why participation is important?
- In what ways should they participate?

Go back to Section A & B and ask about missing information.

Closing questions:

a. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
b. Would you like to review any of your responses, or do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for your time!

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Center for
Development Research
University of Bonn

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CSO Management Discussion Guide

Research Topic: Participation of Syrian Women in Civil Society Organisations following the Syrian Conflict: Investigating participation in Turkey, Lebanon and Germany.

Date:	
Time & Duration of Interview:	
Country:	
Place of Interview:	
Interviewer Name:	
Interviewee Code:	
Interviewee Position:	
Name of CSO:	

Section A: Background information on Interviewee: *(To be completed by Interviewer while interviewee answers questions during interview, missing information will be asked directly at the end of the interview.)*

Age: _____ Gender: □ Male □ Female

Highest Education Achievement:

□Illiterate □Primary □Basic □Secondary □College □Bachelor's □Master's □PhD

Religion: _____

Nationality:_____-

If Syrian, City of Origin in Syria: _____

Year of leaving Syria following conflict in 2011:_____ □Not Applicable

Years spent in current location (Turkey/Lebanon/Germany): _____

Managerial Title in CSO:

Section B: Background Information on CSO: *(To be completed by interviewer prior to interview by reviewing information about CSO on their website and annual reports. Interviewee will be asked about missing information at the end of the interview.)*

Full name of CSO:

Type of CSO (Select all that apply):

□International □Local □Formal □Informal □Private Citizens □Semi-Government □Religious □Professional □Business

Primary activity of CSO (Tick all that apply):

□Education & Learning □Children □Youth □Health □Women □Entrepreneurship & Employment □Humanitarian Aid □Networking □Culture & Arts □Research □Funding

□Capacity-Building □Human rights □Other: _____

Year CSO was founded: _____

Ratio of female to male Board members: _____

Ratio of female to male Managers/Project Managers: _____

Topics:

CSO Background & Female Participation

- Organization's history & motivation
- Overall % of female employees
- Syrian females in leadership positions
- Duties/responsibilities of Syrian staff
- Is Lack of participation by Syrian females in this CSO an issue? Why?
- Do Syrian women have a preference for working in CSOs vs. private sector? Why?

CSO Policies and Focus on Gender

- Internal policies to support female staff
- Training/career development opportunities
- Special efforts to recruit Syrian female staff
- Research on gender or female participation
- Projects with gender focus

Reflections on Change in Syrian Female Participation & Rights after Conflict in 2011

- Opinion on low female participation rate in 2010 (13% of Labour Force)
- Change in engagement of Syrian women in CSOs (examples)
- How being in (research area) effects participation by Syrian women in CSOs
- Any change in perceptions of Syrian women of their rights
- How working CSOs in (research location) may differ from those in Syria for a Syrian women (working conditions/work focus etc)
- Why participation is important?
- In what ways should they participate?

Go back to Section A and ask about missing information.

Go back to Section B and ask about missing information.

Closing questions:

a. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
b. Would you like to review any of your responses, or do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for your time

Appendix II: Berlin Pilot

According to the Federal Statistical Office in Germany (Destatis), there were 698,950 Syrians citizens in Germany at the end of 2017. Of these, 38.6% were women (Destatis-The Federal Statistical Office of Germany 2017). Following the Syrian civil war in 2011 a number of Syrian CSOs were established in major German cities where large numbers of Syrian citizens lived including Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Hanover and Munich. By the end of 2016, 84 Syrian CSOs were listed in a mapping, of which 73% were registered associations, and 31% based in Berlin (Citizens For Syria 2016).

This provided an opportunity to meet with a sample of Syrian women from CSOs in Berlin prior to travelling to Turkey and Lebanon to conduct field research. Besides allowing me to become more familiar with my prepared discussion guides, the main objectives of the pilot was to test the overall research approach, further refine the interview tool as needed, and to collect more background information on the topic.

Beginning with information from a mapping of Syrian CSOs conducted by Citizens of Syria, eight Berlin CSOs were contacted via email. In the email I introduced myself and my research and requested to meet them in Berlin. From the responses received I was able to conduct four interviews with women (three from Syria and one from Germany) working in three Syrian CSOs in Berlin.

The CSOs were selected purposefully for the pilot, based on their connections with large numbers of other Syrian CSOs. *Verband Deutsch-Syricher Hilfsvereine (VDSH)* for example, is German Syrian CSO that acts as an umbrella organisation for 23 other Syrian clubs or CSOs all over Germany. Its board of directors is formed from the boards of its member clubs. They were the first to reply to my email and their Project Leader, whom I later interviewed, expressed great interest in my topic and willingness to cooperate because they were tackling the issue of gender inequality in the representation of Syrian women in their boards. I also interviewed a woman working at the VDSH, and she described to me her experience of working in CSOs in Germany, as a German of Syrian origin and some of the difficulties she faced that were linked to her identity.

The second CSO I visited*, Citizens of Syria*, was established in 2013, is one of the clubs under the VDSH umbrella. They have projects in Turkey and Syria and engage mainly in capacity building and networking for Syrian and other CSOs to encourage

collaboration and knowledge sharing. They are also in contact with large numbers of Syrian CSOs in Syria, neighbouring countries, and Germany through their ongoing research activities and mapping of Syrian civil society actors. Finally, the *Salam Förderverein e.V*., is a Syrian-German CSO that works to support integration of Syrian refugee families in Germany. The participant I interviewed was selected because of her long history of participation in CSOs in Syria.

I did not audio record interviews, but instead took extensive notes of their responses which I later expanded and converted to Word Documents which could be uploaded into ATLAS.ti for analysis. I did this on purpose in order to test my ability to take sufficiently detailed notes while maintaining eye contact and focusing on interview questions to prepare for interviews in the field.

Appendix III: Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITÄT BONN

UNIVERSITY OF BONN - The Center for Development Research (ZEF)
CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Research Title: Participation of Syrian Women in Civil Society Organisations following the Syrian Conflict: Investigating participation in Turkey, Lebanon and Germany
Research Investigator: Dima Al Munajed
Research Participant:

1. **Introduction**
   - Dima Al Munajed, a doctoral student at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany is conducting a survey to gather data for her doctoral research titled 'Participation of Syrian Women in Civil Society Organisations following the Syrian Conflict', funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).
2. **Purpose of Study**
   - The study aims to understand how Syrian women are currently participating in Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Turkey and Lebanon.
   - Ultimately, this research or parts of it may be published as a dissertation, in academic journals, on the ZEF website, or presented in international conferences.
3. **Description of Research Study Procedures**
   - If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked a set of questions in an interview that may last for approximately one hour. The researcher will write down your responses, and may audio record your responses with an audio recorder if you agree to this. If the interview is audio recorded a transcript will be produced to support data analysis later on by the research investigator.
   - Access to the interview transcript and interview notes will be limited to the research investigator and academic colleagues and researchers with whom she might collaborate with as part of the research process
4. **Benefits and Potential Risks of the Study**
   - There will be no direct benefit or risk to you from participating in this research and there is no paid compensation for your time, but we acknowledge your contribution in sparing time for us in answering the questions. There will be no cost to you.
5. **Appreciation**
   - Your participation in this research is highly appreciated. Your answers will help provide information that may be relevant in supporting a greater role for Syrian women in the peace process and policies through their participation in civil society, and later on in national reconstruction and development projects in Syria.
6. **Confidentiality**

- This study is conducted anonymously. That means, that any information which may lead to you will be anonymized. Thus, a researcher who uses the data will never be able to identify you, except with your explicit permission (see below). This is strictly demanded by national and international law, and ZEF / Uni Bonn will never infringe that law!

7. Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and to stop answering these questions at any time, even after the interview. At the end of the interview you can also review your remarks, and modify them as you wish.

8. Use of the data gained from your answers

☐ Your anonymized answers will only be used for the purpose of research. In any scientific publication the data will be anonymized.

☐ You agree to be quoted directly in the research publications without a made-up name (pseudonym) after you review the quote and consent to it.

☐ You allow ZEF to potentially make a second survey round in order to generate panel data. Should ZEF seek to do this, the new interviewer would get only your name from me. The new interviewer would have to prove his identity to you, using an authorization signed by me.

CONTACT PERSON:

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions or concerns you may contact:

Dima Al Munajed
[dima.almunajed@gmail.com]
[00491523715XXXX].

INFORMED CONSENT:

The above statement has been read to me (or I have read it myself) and its meaning has been explained by the research staff. I agree to take part in this research. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I so choose and that the research staff/contact person will answer any questions that arise during the course of the survey.

____Yes, I agree to participate, ____I would also like a copy of the main research findings to be sent to me via mail/email on the following address:

____ No, I do not wish to participate.

Print name of the participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of the Research Investigator: _____

Appendix IV: File Naming Protocol

1. **Location of Data Source:**

GER Germany
LEB Lebanon
TKA Turkey Ankara
TKI Turkey Istanbul

2. **Data Type:**

Primary Data:
INT Interview Transcript
RN Field Diary Researcher Notes
PO Participant Observation
PHDM Photos taken by Dima Al Munajed
Secondary Data:
ART Articles published by CSOs
REP Reports produced by CSOs
IMG Images not taken by Dima Al Munajed
Stat CSO Statute
JD CSO Job Description
COM CSO Communication materials (brochures, clips)

3. **Type of Interview:**

PART Participant Interview
Man Management Interview
KE Key Expert Interview
G Group Interview

4. **Type of Organisation:**

SCSO Syrian CSO
LCSO Local CSO
INGO International NGO
ACA Academia
RES Research
GOV Government
LAW legal entities (Legal documents and laws)

5. **Gender of Data Source:**

M Male
F Female

6. **Unique Interview Code:**

Example: B001
Location (B for Berlin) plus interview number (first interview = 001)

Appendix V: Table of ATLAS.ti Families

Characteristic of Interest		ATLAS.ti Families
Data Classification	Primary Data Type	Expert Interview – Participant Interview – Management Interview – Participant Observation – Field Diary Notes – Photographs_DM
	Secondary Data Type	Legal – Brochure – Report-Announcement -Poster -Photograph – Web content
	Data Site	Data_Site_Lebanon Data_Site_Turkey
CSO Identity	National Identity of Sampled CSOs	CSO_Identity_INGO CSO_Identity_Syrian CSO_Identity_Turkish CSO_Identity_Lebanese
Interviewee National Identity	Nationality of Interviewees (Including Expert Interviews)	Nat_Interviewee_Lebanese Nat_Interviewee_Turkish Nat_Interviewee_Syrian Nat_Interviewee_Syrian_DoublePP (Syrians that have second nationalities) Nat_Interviewee_Other
Characteristics of Interviewed Syrians in CSOs (Management & Participants)	Age Group (Syrian Interviewees engaged in civil society)	Age_G1_16-22 Age__G2_23-30 Age__G3_31-40 Age__G4_41-50 Age__G5_51+
	Education	Education_highschool Education_BA Education_Master's Education_PHD
	Gender	Gender_Female_Interviewee Gender_Male_Interviewee
	Marital Status	Marital Status_Single(never married) Marital Status_Married Marital Status_Divorced/Widowed
	Work Experience	Never Worked Before Previous CSO Experience_Yes Previous CSO Experience_No
	Religious Identity	Religion_Christian Religion_Muslim_Conservative Religion_Muslim_Secular Religion_Durzi Religion_Ismaeli
	Ethnic Identity	Syrian_Ethnicity_Turkmani
	Urban Rural Origins	Syrian_Urban Syrian_Rural

Appendix VI: Conducted Participant Observations in Turkey & Lebanon

	Event	Participation Level[45]	Setting	Duration	Date and time	Main Observation Topics
1	'Sa'et Qahweh' *(Coffee Hour)* Attended by 7 Syrian women including myself and two children	Complete Participant (Participants were aware of my identity as a researcher and I participated fully in the session as a Syrian woman sharing difficulties I was facing in my own life that were caused by conflict and displacement experiences)	Istanbul, Turkey. A weekly support group meeting organized by a Turkish CSO for Syrian refugee women. The meeting is led by a Syrian sociologist working at the organisation with the purpose of providing Syrian women in Istanbul with the opportunity to unburden and discuss in safe environment some of the main problems they were facing including family issues, health issues and difficulties in adapting to their new environment	1 hour	19.9.2018, 11:00- 12:00	• Living conditions of Syrian women in Istanbul • Barriers to integration including discrimination and the language barrier • Poor physical and mental health • Financial difficulties faced by Syrian families in Turkey
2	Annual Board Meeting of a Turkish CSO Attended by 9 Turkish women who were members of the CSO	Observer as participant (Participants were aware of my identity as a researcher, I sat with them and took notes but did not participate in their meeting. Following the conclusion of their meeting I proceeded to ask questions and take notes of their responses)	Izmit, Turkey. The CSO provides scholarships to female Turkish University students. Members are all women. At their annual board meeting, members discuss financial and budgetary issues, and then go through and select scholarship candidates	2 hours	22.10.2018, 14:00- 16:00	• Turkish laws and regulations regarding CSO setup and registration requirements • Official CSO reporting requirements and procedures in Turkey • Decision-making dynamics among members of female Turkish CSOs
3	Day at Sewing Workshop of a Syrian CSO Spent with 5 Syrian women working at the workshop and myself	Observer as participant (Participants were aware of my presence and identity, I spent a working day with them in their sewing	Istanbul, Turkey. A small sewing workshop created to provide employment opportunities for Syrian in Istanbul by a Syrian CSO. The workshop is in the same building as the CSO premises in the	6 hours	25.10.2018, 10:00- 16:00	• Employment of Syrian women in Istanbul due to financial need • Importance of working environments to Syrian women seeking employment, in particular concerns of safety, flexible working hours and gender segregated spaces

[45] Based on the typology by Raymond L. Gold (Given 2008).

		workshop observing their work and asking them questions about their lives in Istanbul and their working environment at the CSO	area of Fatih in Istanbul.			
3	Donor Meeting between a Lebanese CSO and an international donor Meeting was attended by 3 international donor staff and 5 members from the local CSO including myself	Participant as observer (Participants were aware of my identity as a researcher, I took notes and participated in the meeting as volunteer supporting the Lebanese CSO)	Ouzai, Lebanon. In the meeting, the Lebanese CSO gave the international donor organisation a tour of their CSO facilities, explaining their current projects and needs for financial resources. After the tour a meeting was held where the international donor clarified some concerns and elaborated on their funding requirements	2.5 hours	14.11.2018, 10:30-13:00	• Long term financial vulnerability of local CSOs that cannot meet international donor standards and requirements • Importance of beneficiary numbers and categories to international donors rather than quality or relevance of work • Lack of respect by both local CSO staff and international donors towards beneficiaries in the treatment and discussion
4	Launch event for the report by Dawlaty and Women Now titled," Shadows of the Disappeared: Testimonies of Female Syrian Relatives Left with Loss and Ambiguity" This was a public event with approximately 50 participants including Syrian CSO members who organized and presented at the event. Around 7 Syrians provided testimonies for the report and other individuals and press attended the event.	Complete observer (I attended the event as a member of the public, other people at the event were not aware of my identity as a researcher or that I was observing their behaviour)	The event was organized by two Syrian CSOs in Lebanon and held at the Issam Fares Institute, of the American University of Beirut. It was a public event to launch a report that discusses the impact of the disappearance of family members of Syrian women during the conflict. The event included a presentation of the report's main findings and a discussion	All Day event	13.11.2018, 9:30-17:00	• Information on some of the challenges and security concerns faced by Syrian women in Lebanon • Dynamics in relationship between Syrian CSO management and its beneficiaries who provided the information for the report were very asymmetrical. At the event, Syrian beneficiary women were mostly overlooked and their security concerns and desire to not be photographed to protect their identities were completely ignored
5	'Handcraft Bazar'	Participant as observer (I participated as a volunteer for a Syrian CSO that had a stall at the event. I assisted the CSO founder in	Beirut, Lebanon. Event organized by the Brazilian Embassy in Beirut for local CSOs to sell handcrafts made by beneficiaries	3.5 hours	6.12.2018, 17:00-20:30	• CSO participants were mostly women, included both Lebanese and Syrian CSOs • Exchanges between CSO participants showed that they were quite familiar with each other as a network • It appears that handcraft projects are a major activity

		setting up the stall and selling products. She was aware of my identity as researcher and I interviewed her and took notes of her responses while assisting her)				across these organisations, with CSO managements engaging in the design of products, and Syrian female beneficiaries making the handicrafts
6	Day observing educational activities and conditions at a Lebanese CSO providing services to Syrian refugee children	Observer as participant (Participants were aware of my identity as a researcher. I took notes in my diary of observations on front of them but did not participate directly in any of the activities myself)	Akkar, Lebanon. During the day I was accompanied by the organisation's head teacher. I attended several of the classes that were provided to young Syrian children mainly in grades 1-4. During their daily lunch break the students were given a warm meal cooked by two refugee Syrian mothers in the organisation's kitchen	All day	27.11.2018, 07:30-15:00	• Information on poor living conditions of Syrians living in informal comps in Lebanon and difficulties faced by Syrian children in accessing education • Discriminatory employment policies in Lebanese CSOs that provide employment opportunities for Lebanese staff only • Discriminatory attitudes by Lebanese CSO management towards Syrian refugee communities

Appendix VII: Quoted Interviewees

The following table provides information on the Interviewees that are quoted in this research. The interviews took place between September and December 2018 in Lebanon and Turkey. To protect the anonymity of interviewees, any information that can be used to identify them has been omitted (with the exception of Sabah al Hallak who has given permission to reveal her identity in this research).

Germany:

Date	Pseudonym	Interview	Location	Nationality	Affiliation	Brief Biography
15.08.2018	Fedaa	Management	Berlin	Syrian	Founder (SCSO)	A 48 year-old divorced, Syrian woman with children. Fedaa holds a university degree and comes from a rural, middle socioeconomic background. She belongs to the Ismaeli religious sect and has a long history of volunteering in CSOs in her village before conflict broke out in 2011.
16.08.2018	Rosa	Management	Berlin	Syrian	Department Head (SCSO)	A 32 year-old single, Syrian woman with an urban, middle socioeconomic background. Rosa is a Muslim with liberal views and holds a bachelor's degree. She had no CSO experience before 2011, and was first displaced to Turkey where she began working in CSOs and then moved to Germany.

Lebanon:

Date	Pseudonym	Interview	Location	Nationality	Affiliation	Brief Biography
04.12.2018	Ali	Management	Beirut	Syrian	Executive Manager (SCSO)	35 year-old single, Syrian male with an urban, middle socioeconomic background. Ali has completed a university degree, and has CSO working experience prior to 2011. Ali identifies as a liberal Muslim.
08.12.2018	Anwar	Participant	Beirut	Syrian	Coordinator (SCSO)	27 year-old single, Syrian male who belongs to the Christian Syrian community. Anwar had no CSO experience prior to 2011. He has a university bachelor's degree and has an urban, middle socioeconomic class background.

07.12.2018	Denis	Management	Beirut	Turkish/ Lebanese	General Manager (INGO)	42 year-old woman. Highly educated (doctorate degree) and speaks foreign languages. She is also a human rights activist.
10.12.2018	Faten	Expert	Beirut	Syrian	Retired Government Employee	Retired female government employee and Syrian Member of Parliament who worked to reform Syrian personal statutes laws.
29.11.2018	Fouad	Expert	Beirut	Lebanese	Legal Advisor	A legal advisor at a private law firm that specialises in CSO registration in Lebanon.
04.11.2018	Lima	Participant	Beirut	Syrian/German	Staff (INGO)	38 year-old, single woman. Rima is highly educated and speaks foreign languages. She has an urban and upper socioeconomic background and was working in CSOs in Syria before 2011. Rima is a secular Muslim.
06.11.2018	Maya	Management	Akkar	Lebanese/ Syrian	Founder (Lebanese CSO)	Highly educated, upper socioeconomic class, married. Belongs to the Druze community and had her first experience with CSOs after 2011.
28.11.2018	Mike	Expert	Beirut	European	Programme Manager (INGO)	European programme manager at an INGO in Beirut working on projects to support local CSOs.
05.12.2018	Nawal	Management	Beirut	Lebanese	Academic Programme Director	45-year-old married Lebanese woman working in a Syrian CSO.
17.11.2018	Noor	Management	Beirut	Syrian/ Lebanese	Cofounder (SCSO)	48-year-old female. Highly educated with an urban, upper socioeconomic background. Married with children. Her first civic participation experience was after 2011. Noor grew up in Syria and belongs to the Christian Syrian community. She has is a dual citizen (Syrian/Lebanese).
04.12.2018	Riham	Management	Beirut	Syrian	Founder	Founder of an informal women's SCSO that operates between Syria and Lebanon. 45-year-old woman from the Druze community. She is educated and has a middle socioeconomic status.
15.11.2018	Sabah al Hallak	Management	Beirut	Syrian	Cofounder (SCSO)	58-year-old woman with an urban, educated middle socioeconomic background. Lifelong

						human and women's rights activist in Syria. Became displaced in Lebanon in 2013.
08.11.2018	Saleem	Management	Beirut	Syrian	Cofounder (SCSO)	38 year-old male, belongs to the Druze community. Saleem is highly educated, has a middle socioeconomic status background, and had CSO working experience before 2011.
06.12.2018	Sarah	Management	Beirut	Syrian/ Canadian	Cofounder (SCSO)	37-year-old, married with children. Has an upper socioeconomic urban background. She is highly educated.
04.12.2018	Talal	Management	Beirut	Syrian	Cofounder (SCSO)	Single male and cofounder of an informal SCSO in Lebanon. Talal is 25 years old and has an urban middle socioeconomic background. He had no CSO experience before 2011.

Turkey:

Date	Pseudonym	Interview	Location	Nationality	Affiliation	Brief Biography
19.11.2018	Ahmad	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Officer (SCSO)	35 year-old married male. Urban, middle socioeconomic background and hold a bachelor's degree.
12.09.2018	Ahmet	Expert	Ankara	Turkish	Researcher	Researcher and advisor to the Turkish government.
19.11.2018	Amani	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Officer (SCSO)	27 year-old, divorced Syrian woman with one child. She holds a bachelor's degree and comes from an urban middle socioeconomic background. She had no CSO experience before 2011.
15.09.2018	Ayham	Management	Istanbul	Syrian	PR Manager (Turkish CSO)	Divorced, 54 year-old male. He holds a bachelor's degree and worked in the CSO sector before 2011.
18.10.2018	Elif	Participant	Istanbul	Turkish	Project Assistant	24 year-old, single woman working in a Turkish CSO.
20.10.2018	Farah	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Volunteer (SCSO)	Single, 20 year-old university student coming from an urban upper socioeconomic background. Her first

						experience with CSOs occurred after 2011.
14.09.2018	Fareeda	Participant	Ankara	Syrian	Psychologist (Turkish CSO)	28 year-old woman coming from urban and lower socioeconomic background. Fareeda holds a bachelor's degree and identifies as a Muslim woman. She is married without children.
11.09.2018	Fatma	Expert	Ankara	Turkish	Government Advisor	Advisor in the Turkish government & researcher. Fatma is a 28 year-old, single woman.
26.10.2018	Hala	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Financial Officer	27 year-old, married, woman coming from an urban, educated, middle socioeconomic background. No previous CSO experience in Syria.
18.10.2018	Illayda	Management	Istanbul	Turkish	Senior Field Officer	25 year-old, single, educated woman.
25.09.2018	Ipek	Participant	Istanbul	Turkish	Staff (Turkish CSO)	Single woman. Holds a bachelor's degree.
27.10.2018	Khuloud	Management	Istanbul	Syrian	Manager (SCSO)	Single woman and manager of Woman and Child Division in SCOS. She is 36 years-old, educated, and comes from an urban middle socioeconomic and urban background, Muslim
19.10.2018	Leila	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Volunteer (SCSO)	Single, Syrian student completing a bachelor's degree at a Turkish University. She has a rural background and a middle socioeconomic class. She wears a hijab and volunteers for an Islamic CSO in Istanbul.
19.09.2018	Malek	Participant	Ankara	Syrian	Researcher (Turkish CSO)	Single, educated male coming from an urban, upper socioeconomic background
25.09.2018	Manal	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Translator (Turkish CSO)	Single, Syrian 26 year-old woman with a bachelor's degree. Comes from an urban, middle socioeconomic background in Syria and had no previous CSO experience before 2011
25.09.2018	Mira	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Translator (Turkish CSO)	Single, Syrian 20 year-old woman with a high school degree. Comes from a rural lower socioeconomic

						background in Syria and had no CSO experience before 2011.
18.10.2018	Mutlu	Management	Istanbul	Turkish	Project Manager (Turkish CSO)	32 year-old man, Works as a manager of a Turkish CSO.
19.09.2018	Nada	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Social Worker at a Turkish CSO	Married, 53 year old Syrian woman from the city of Aleppo. She has six children and her eldest is 32 years old. She has a high school diploma degree and her husband is unemployed.
25.10.2018	Rami	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Legal Advisor (Turkish CSO)	Male, married with no children. Fluent in Turkish, educated, urban, middle socioeconomic background. Civically engaged in CSOs before 2011.
12.09.2018	Sabet	Expert	Ankara	Turkish	Specialist	Turkish Government employee
19.10.2018	Salma	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Volunteer (SCSO)	Single Syrian student completing a master's degree at a Turkish University. She has an urban and middle socioeconomic background. She identifies as a conservative Muslim woman and volunteers for an Islamic CSO in Istanbul.
14.09.2018	Salwa	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Translator (Turkish CSO)	26 year-old, Syrian, Muslim, unmarried woman working in a Turkish CSO in Ankara. Her first CSO experience was as a volunteer in Damascus after conflict broke out.
26.10.2018	Sameeha	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Sewing Workshop Manager (SCSO)	65 year-old widow with 5 children. She holds a high school diploma and has an urban middle socioeconomic background. She identifies as a conservative Muslim woman.
25.10.2018	Sanaa	Participant	Istanbul	Syrian	Teacher (Turkish CSO)	35 year-old, married Syrian woman. Belongs to the Ismaeli sect in Syria, and comes from a rural middle socioeconomic background. She holds a High school diploma and teaches Arabic to young Syrian children at a

						Turkish CSO. Her first experience with CSOs occurred after 2011.
17.10.2018	Wedad	Management	Istanbul	Syrian	Center Manager (SCSO)	Married, 36 year-old Syrian woman with children. Identifies a s a conservative Muslim. She holds a bachelor's degree and comes from an urban middle socioeconomic background.