



KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

**LOCAL HUMANITARIAN WORKERS IN TURKEY UNDER THE EU-  
TURKEY STATEMENT**  
A NARRATIVE STUDY ON POLITICS AND ANTI-POLITICS IN  
HUMANITARIAN WORK

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. DR. ASKER KARTARI

MASTER'S THESIS

ISTANBUL, JUNE 2020

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Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Kadir Has University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's in the Discipline Area of Communication Studies under the Double Degree Program of Intercultural/Transcultural Communication.

ISTANBUL, JUNE 2020

I, HELENE NOZON;

Hereby declare that this Master's Thesis is my own original work and that due references have been appropriately provided on all supporting literature and resources.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Nozon", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Helene Nozon

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JUNE 11, 2020

## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This work entitled **LOCAL HUMANITARIAN WORKERS IN TURKEY UNDER THE EU-TURKEY STATEMENT: A NARRATIVE STUDY ON POLITICS AND ANTI-POLITICS IN HUMANITARIAN WORK** prepared by **HELENE NOZON** has been judged to be successful at the defense exam held on **JUNE 11, 2020** and accepted by our jury as **MASTER'S THESIS**.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
CSO	civil society organization
(DG) ECHO	(Directorate-General for) European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations; manages the humanitarian budget of →FRiT
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net (cash assistance project under →FRiT)
EU	European Union
FRiT	Facility for Refugees in Turkey; coordinates the disbursement of the €6 billion designated in the EU-Turkey Statement for humanitarian and development assistance in Turkey
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGO	intergovernmental organization, e.g. →IOM
INGO	international non-governmental organization
IO	international organization, incl. IGO and INGO
IOM	International Organization for Migration (UN Migration Agency)
LFIP	Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Turkey)
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



## ABSTRACT

NOZON; HELENE. *LOCAL HUMANITARIAN WORKERS IN TURKEY UNDER THE EU-TURKEY STATEMENT. A NARRATIVE STUDY ON POLITICS AND ANTI-POLITICS IN HUMANITARIAN WORK*, MASTER'S THESIS, Istanbul, 2020.

This qualitative research analyzes the perspectives of local humanitarian workers in Turkey on their own humanitarian work, in relation to politics in general, and the EU-Turkey Statement of 2016 in particular. Relying on methods of narrative analysis, the thesis demonstrates that the interviewees are active protagonists in a set of complex power relations. It shows how they draw on similar discourses of humanitarian ethics and professionalism as international humanitarians, but also establish their own principles and standards locally. The alleged separation between “unethical” politics and “ethical” humanitarianism emerged as a key issue in the interviews. By tracing the ways in which interviewees still recount the intersections of the two realms in their work, the analysis presents local humanitarian workers as both political and anti-political agents. Through their perspectives, it becomes apparent that the EU-Turkey Statement led to a temporary inflation of the humanitarian sector, as well as its professionalization. The latter was perceived to have a more sustainable effect. Despite these apparent impacts on the humanitarian sector, the Statement did not qualify as a humanitarian endeavor in the eyes of the humanitarian workers funded through it. Thereby, the perspectives of these workers sustain a more critical evaluation of the Statement in opposition to official accounts.

**Keywords: humanitarianism, humanitarian workers, politics, anti-politics, EU-Turkey Statement, standardization, glocalization**

## ÖZET

NOZON; HELENE. *AB-TÜRKİYE BİLDİRİSİ ALTINDA TÜRKİYE'DEKİ YEREL İNSANİ YARDIM ÇALIŞANLARI. İNSANİ YARDIMDA SİYASET VE ANTI-POLİTİKA ÜZERİNE BİR ANLATI ÇALIŞMASI*, YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, İstanbul, 2020.

Bu nitel araştırma, Türkiye'deki yerel insani yardım çalışanlarının kendi çalışmalarını genel olarak siyasetle, özel olarak ise 2016 AB-Türkiye Bildirisi ile ilişki içerisinde analiz ediyor. Tez, anlatı analizi metoduna dayanarak, görüşme yapılan kişilerin bir dizi karmaşık güç ilişkisi içerisindeki aktif aktörler olduğunu kanıtıyor. Onların uluslararası yardım çalışanları olarak insani yardım etiği ve profesyonellik hakkında nasıl benzer söylemler ürettiklerini, ama aynı zamanda kendi yerel ilke ve standartlarını nasıl kurduklarını gösteriyor. “Etik olmayan” siyaset ve “etik” insani yardımcılık arasında var olduğu iddia edilen ayrılık, görüşmelerde kilit bir konu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışma, görüşme yapılan kişilerin kendi çalışmalarında bu iki alanın kesişme noktaları hakkında söylediklerini analiz ediyor ve böylece yerel insani yardım çalışanlarını hem siyasi hem de anti-politik aktörler olarak sunuyor. Onların perspektifleri aracılığıyla, AB-Türkiye Bildirisi'nin insani yardım sektörünü hem geçici bir şişirmeye hem de profesyonelleşmeye götürdüğü anlaşılmıştır. İkincisinin daha sürdürülebilir bir etkisi olduğu algılanmıştır. Bildiri, insani yardım sektörü üzerindeki belirgin etkilerine rağmen, onun aracılığı ile fonlanan insani yardım çalışanlarının gözünde bir insancıl çaba olarak nitelendirilmemiştir. Böylece, resmi değerlendirmelerin aksine, bu çalışanların görüşleri Bildiri'nin daha eleştirel bir değerlendirmesini sürdürmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** insani yardımcılık, insani yardım çalışanları, siyaset, anti-politika, AB-Türkiye Bildirisi, standartlaşma, glokalleşme

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

In public discourse, humanitarian aid in the face of mediatised “crisis” has become the taken-for-granted call for action,<sup>1</sup> and its underlying reasoning is considered to be “beyond debate[, ...] morally untouchable” (Fassin, 2011, p.244). In this new political rhetoric of compassion, “[i]nequality is replaced by exclusion, domination is transformed into misfortune, injustice is articulated as suffering, violence is expressed in terms of trauma” (Fassin, 2011, p.6). Structural inequalities are thus rendered apolitical, and because humanitarian and developmental aid usually function along the lines of this rhetoric, they have been charged of being an “anti-politics machine” (Ferguson, 1994b).

Consequently, a number of academics, activists as well as some practitioners have long problematized the in-built power relations inscribed into – or perpetuated by – humanitarianism (see Harrell-Bond, 1986; Malkki, 1996; Barnett & Weiss, 2011; Omwenyeye, 2016; J., 2016). For a start, the humanitarian regime<sup>2</sup> is still largely under the command of actors from former colonial powers, which is why scholars have criticized it to be “Western”<sup>3</sup>-dominated (see Donini, 2016; Barnett, 2013). This is evident in the funding figures<sup>4</sup> and made more glaring in the decision-making power (see Donini, 2016; Baguios, 2017). Efforts to change this power imbalance have been insufficient so far (see Development Initiatives, 2019; Adeso, 2015), and therefore, incentives for small, local stakeholders to play along the lines of dominant actors remain

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Shearlaw (2013); “Humanitarian crisis” (2017).

<sup>2</sup> The regime concept will be elaborated in Chapter 2.3.3.

<sup>3</sup> Even though the term “Western” is inaccurate and perpetuates a dichotomy between “Eastern” and “Western” worlds, it is commonly used and understood in literature, and will therefore also be used in this thesis. What it generally describes, though, is the realm of the aforementioned former colonial powers.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. in 2018 out of the 20 largest donor countries for international governmental humanitarian funding (making for 97 % of this kind of funding) the majority were former colonial powers; with the USA, Germany and the UK alone accounting for more than half of the total USD21.9 billion of international governmental funding (Development Initiatives, 2019, p.36). And of all the humanitarian assistance worldwide, only 3.1 % were directly disbursed to local and national responders (2.6 % to national governments, 0.4 % to local/national non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) (Development Initiatives, 2019, p.64); whereas the majority of funding gets channeled through multilateral organizations and International NGOs (INGOs) (Development Initiatives, 2019, p.64). See also Barbière (2015) for an overview of the entanglement of developmental aid with colonial legacies.

strong (Donini, 2016; Barnett, 2013, p.388). But the basis for the Western model of humanitarianism is in itself questionable: Fassin (2011) points out that the politics of compassion, which are at the heart of (Western) humanitarianism, entail a paradox. On the one hand, they are a “politics of solidarity” – in that the “possibility of moral sentiments [...] generally [presupposes] the recognition of others as fellows” (p.3). But on the other hand, they are also a “politics of inequality,” because those moral sentiments are usually “focused on the poorest, most unfortunate, most vulnerable individuals” and thereby imply a relation of dominance between the “giving” and the “receiving” party (ibid.). This domination and inequality is “political rather than psychological” (Fassin, 2011, p.4), meaning that the asymmetry is not necessarily representative of the individual attitudes of “givers” or “receivers,” but instead rooted in the social circumstances that lead to such an uneven distribution of resources.

The infallibility of humanitarian aid is further called into question when nation-states overtly employ humanitarian assistance as part of their foreign policy. Such has been the case in the EU-Turkey Statement<sup>5</sup> from March 2016. In résumé, the Statement administered on the one hand the containment of refugee migrants<sup>6</sup> inside Turkey on their way to Greece (with all the violent measures of migration control that it entails). On the other, it facilitated the disbursement of €6 billion by the European Union (EU) for humanitarian and developmental projects geared towards refugees in Turkey, coordinated through the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT)<sup>7</sup>.

The violent and exploitative reality of the Statement’s implementation raised alarm among a number of actors, including refugee activists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and scholars, who criticized and protested against it from the onset (see Gostoli, 2017; Fallon, 2020; MSF, 2019; ProAsyl, 2016; Heck & Hess, 2017). This reality was

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<sup>5</sup> From now on, in this text mostly referred to as “the Statement” (capitalized). In public debate, the Statement is also commonly referred to as the EU-Turkey Deal. For a short summary of the Statement, see Chapter 2.1.

<sup>6</sup> Following the argumentation of Hess et al. (2017), I decided to refrain from using *one* label for the heterogeneous movements of migration/flight (p.6), especially considering the normative power and distinctive connotations that labels like “refugee” or “migrant” entail. Example: In an article by Hess & Karakayalı (2016), the authors point out how an “overall Western understanding of migration,” which only sees apparently forced migration as legitimate, led to a distinctive discourse in which “migrant” became to “imply economic motifs and the freedom of decision and choice” (p.5 of the PDF), while “[‘refugee’] implies no such choices at all” (ibid.). Hess & Karakayalı (2016) propose the term “refugee migrants” instead. But throughout the paper I will mostly use the terms refugee and migrant interchangeably. (In rare cases where the legal category of (recognized) refugees is meant, this will be pointed out.)

<sup>7</sup> Throughout the thesis this will be generally called “the Facility” or FRiT.

recently brought back to public awareness when thousands of refugees were faced with exploitation and physical violence by Turkish and especially Greek authorities at the Turkish-Greek border (the latter being backed up by European leaders). This followed the order of the President of Turkey who declared the Turkish border open at the end of February 2020. Obviously, the EU-Turkey Statement is a significant example of the interlocking “regimes of securitization and humanitarianism,” which work together to “illegalize migration” (Cabot, 2019, p.262).

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In this highly political context, local humanitarian workers in Turkey find themselves in a complex network of power divides between refugees, Turkish and European governmental authorities, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). In fact, with both empowering but also constraining or disempowering potential, and access to both refugees and policy-makers, local humanitarian workers are in a crucial position in these systematic power relations. Their significance is even raised, as calls for localization of the humanitarian system are increasingly vocalized, with the proclaimed aim to decrease the dependency of local actors on international agencies.<sup>8</sup>

The problem is, that even though localization might diminish inequality among humanitarian actors, it is not for certain that the “new, localized” humanitarian system would be free of the “politics of inequality” that Fassin described, or immune to the critique of performing anti-politics, hence, of stabilizing relations of dominance unwittingly. Therefore, the position of local humanitarian workers merits closer attention. But despite their significant role in the humanitarian and migration regime, their perspective (especially with regard to the aforementioned power divides) has rarely been highlighted in research let alone public debate.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Adeso (2015), ECHO et al. (2016); Network for Aid Response (n.d.). These sources, along with Delevopment Initiatives (2019), also show, however, that calls for localization are only slowly taking effect, with funding and decision making power still largely in the hands of INGOs from former colonial powers.

<sup>9</sup> Till date, most of the scholarly literature has focused on Western NGOs or United Nations (UN) institutions (Barnett, 2013, p.386); and this is also the point of departure for most of the criticism of humanitarian aid.

It is this gap in research which this thesis aims to bridge. To make the problem accessible, this study uses the EU-Turkey Statement as a vantage point, because of its obvious connection of politics and transnational humanitarian projects. The initial guiding is how local humanitarian workers in Turkey, who are funded through FRiT, perceive their own humanitarian work in the highly political context set up by the EU-Turkey Statement.

### **1.3 PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

The objective of this research, hence, is to highlight and refine the understanding of how local humanitarian workers engage with and reflect upon major power relations, namely politics, but also the presumably Western-dominated humanitarian regime.

It is relevant to deepen that understanding, because the aforementioned dilemmas of humanitarianism will not be resolved unless deliberated. If local humanitarian workers are employing similar ethics, standards and rhetoric as their international counterparts unquestioningly – out of conviction or out of economic necessity – it is likely that they also mirror the more troublesome features of international humanitarianism.<sup>10</sup> But in the struggle for greater social justice, the unconscious perpetuation of unequal relations, especially by those wishing to “do good,”<sup>11</sup> is a considerable obstacle to be overcome. Hence, it is vital to become conscious of those relations. This research wants to contribute to this process in two ways: in investigating how local humanitarian workers reflect upon some of these relations themselves; and – in doing so – highlighting the lack of visibility of local humanitarian workers’ voices in humanitarian and scholarly discourses.

At least indirectly, such a research could also contribute to more empowering discourses and practices of (refugee) solidarity which can emerge even within a seemingly EU- and state-dominated context: It could make visible the ambivalence and daily struggles of humanitarian workers as well as their blind spots, and present them not as individual concerns but as structurally manufactured. By presenting humanitarian workers as active

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<sup>10</sup> This might, for example, mean an acceptance of the dominant position of a few Western stakeholders in the humanitarian regime - because “they know better” or “have more professional experience.” It might also mean that anti-politics stay inscribed into (local) humanitarian work; that the plight of refugees, for example, continues to be treated as isolated suffering, instead of politically facilitated.

<sup>11</sup> A common term associated with a range of ethically motivated civic engagements with a focus on compassion (see for example Murdock, 2003; Blackstone, 2009; Ainsworth & Hansen, 2012).

agents in a triangular network of “refugees – local humanitarian workers – systemic power,” the research opens up further lines of critical inquiry into the relations between these different actors and their practical consequences.

In doing this, the research provides an important contribution to studies of Intercultural Communication, Anthropology and International Relations: It sheds light on the experiences of crucial actors in the complex and globalized humanitarian field, and contextualizes their perspectives with the political and power relations surrounding them. Additionally, this study will add to existing critical literature on the EU-Turkey Statement by discussing its “humanitarian” aspect, which has received only very little critical attention until now<sup>12</sup> and has even been used by the EU and Turkey to advocate for the “success” of the Statement (European Commission, 2019, January 7).<sup>13</sup> Critical perspectives on the Statement are also important to caution against any musings of either Turkish or European politicians to re-enact similar agreements with other objects or other states.<sup>14</sup>

The research will keep its relevance even after the end of the Statement: Practices of domination and precarity, but also resistance and subversion, at the intersection of migration and humanitarian regime are not a symptom of a momentary “crisis,” but are sustained and immanent. They will continue to be relevant for people entangled in them and for matters of social justice – even when political, media and scholarly attention has moved on toward the next “big crisis.”

#### **1.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE & RESEARCH METHOD**

Personally and as a researcher wishing to engage in struggles to unsettle asymmetrical power relations for greater social justice, my research position and theoretical outlook is essentially influenced by Critical Theory. This forms the backbone of the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2.3, including the concepts of normative governmentality and the previously mentioned “anti-politics machine.” Normative

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<sup>12</sup> For more details, see Literature Review in Chapter 2.2.4.

<sup>13</sup> The only criticism repeatedly voiced by Turkish authorities has been the alleged failure of the EU to provide the funds it had promised (see for example Stevis-Gridneff & Gall, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Suggestions into this direction about the expansion of the EU migration politics in a similar manner have been made for example by the so-called “architect” of the EU-Turkey Statement, Gerald Knaus (2017).

governmentality describes an “attempt to integrate new geographic spaces and populations not by overt coercion, but by instituting a host of ‘harmonized’ regulations, codes, and standards” (Dunn, 2005, p.175). Anti-politics, on the other hand, means in essence, that development (or humanitarian) interventions cast “political questions [...] as [merely] technical ‘problems’” and enhance administrative power (Ferguson, 1994b, p. 180).

The research is based on the approach of narrative constructionism, which acknowledges “human beings as meaning-makers who use narratives to interpret, direct and communicate life and to configure and constitute their experience and their sense of who they are” (Smith, 2016, p.4). Narratives are understood as resources from the social and cultural environment, which people use to “construct their personal stories and understand the stories they hear” (ibid.). This approach conveniently accommodates the interplay between personal perspectives and the macrostructures which form the context of those perspectives.

Accordingly, the thesis employs a qualitative research approach. This allows for the collection of subjective accounts with depth and detail, and their contextualization with previous research. Methods of narrative inquiry are particularly appropriate to understand the experiences of local humanitarian workers and their relation to structural contexts without committing the fallacy of either “subjective or societal reductionism” (Göçer, 2019, p.13) by balancing individual and society as coequal analytical factors. As a narrative research, the results of this study are not intended for generalization; they aim to refine the current understanding of the interplay of local humanitarian work with macro-politics from the perspectives of the interviewees. To offer these perspectives a space to emerge, semi-structured interviews (mostly via video-call) were conducted individually with six local humanitarian workers of varying professional positions in different NGOs from different cities in Turkey - all working in projects financed through FRiT. Semi-structured interviews seem the most appropriate method to allow for the articulation of (even unexpected) subjective reflections and their contextualization, as they provide a certain independence on the side of the interviewee to direct the interview and introduce own topics, while allowing the researcher to follow those inputs and, at the same time, ask further questions to elaborate on subjects relevant for the study.



## 1.5 DELIMITATIONS & LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research focuses on the perspectives of *local humanitarian workers*, which refers to people who are: (a) employed in humanitarian projects (in the sense that they were funded through the humanitarian facility of the EU-Turkey Statement), irrespective of whether those people identify themselves as humanitarians; and (b) who have been settled in the country, where they are now working, *prior* to entering the humanitarian sector.<sup>15</sup> The research does not analyze perspectives of refugees, refugee activists, or humanitarians in Turkey who are not working in organizations funded through the EU Facility, because it aims to explore the reflections on political and power relations precisely from the point of those humanitarian workers who are at a significant “node” of systematic power relations.

Interviews were held in autumn/winter 2019, the fourth year (and projected last phase) of the Statement’s implementation. On the one hand, this allowed for reflections on both ongoing and past processes. On the other hand, it means that recent developments – especially the recent exploitative rhetoric and violent assaults against refugees at the Greek-Turkish borders which blatantly exposed the hollowness of humanitarian claims of the EU-Turkey Statement – were not yet reflected in the interviews. In any case, this research can offer only a snapshot of the perspectives of some local humanitarian workers in Turkey, since both the interviewees’ identity and the humanitarian sector with its political environment are in a constant process of change.

External limitations of the research were posed mainly by limited resources, especially a narrow time frame to conduct the research and establish contact with potential interview partners. The high workload on the side of the NGOs was a further constraint, and my own limited language skills meant that interviews had to be conducted in either English or Turkish – leading to challenges for both the interviewees and me during the interviews.

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<sup>15</sup> The original focus was on employees of Turkish NGOs, but because of the difficulty of finding interview partners, I eventually decided to also include local humanitarian workers employed by INGOs inside Turkey. For them, too, the criterion remained that they have to be directly funded through the Statement.

## **1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This paper is structured in five chapters: Chapter 1, the INTRODUCTION, laid out the context, objective, scope and relevance of this research. Chapter 2, the THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK, starts with some background information on the EU-Turkey Statement, before offering an overview of relevant literature on (transnational) humanitarianism, humanitarian workers, humanitarianism in Turkey, and the intersection of humanitarianism and the EU-Turkey Statement. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the theoretical framework through which this thesis approaches its subject, including critical conceptualizations of humanitarianism, normative governmentality & standardization, glocalization, as well as the concept of anti-politics as introduced by Ferguson. In Chapter 3, a detailed description of – and reflection on – the research METHOD will be found, including research approach, data collection and challenges, as well as the analysis process. Chapter 4, FINDINGS & DISCUSSION, finally presents the analysis of the personal narratives of the interviewees. It traces the relation between humanitarianism and politics, investigates the impact of the Statement on the humanitarian sector in Turkey as perceived by the interviewees, and analyzes how they position themselves in this complex context. The CONCLUSION in Chapter 5 summarizes main insights of this study and argues for their relevance for further research.

## 2. THEORETICAL & CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 BACKGROUND: THE EU-TURKEY STATEMENT & ITS HUMANITARIAN FACILITY<sup>16</sup>

On March 18, 2016, the members of the European Council and their Turkish counterpart “decided to end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU” in order to “break the business model of the smugglers and to offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk” (Council of the EU, 2016). The strategic steps to enforce their decision were laid open that day in the “EU-Turkey statement, 18 March 2016”<sup>17</sup> (see Appendix A).

The Statement was part of an effort to try and restore the stability of the European border regime through externalization (see Hess et al., 2017, p.7). Prior to the agreement, the civil war in Syria, started in 2011, had displaced more than 12 million people both internally and externally (Connor & Krogstad, 2016). As a result, more than three million Syrians along with people from other countries sought refuge in Turkey (UNHCR, 2019), and in 2015 the number of irregularized<sup>18</sup> arrivals from Turkey to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean route increased significantly (see ECA, 2018, p.8).

The original Statement (Council of the EU, 2016) includes nine points. It allowed Greece to return “all new irregular migrants” arriving on its islands to Turkey (clause 1). For every Syrian<sup>19</sup> being returned like this, “another Syrian” was to be resettled to the EU (cl.2).<sup>20</sup> Eventually, a “Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme” was to complement this resettlement (cl.4). Turkey covenanted to “prevent new sea or land routes for illegal

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<sup>16</sup> This chapter is not an evaluation or critical assessment of the Statement, it merely provides a context for readers not familiar with it. For a critical legal assessment see Peers (2016). For an evaluation whether Turkey could count as a safe third country, as the Statement predicates, see Dutch Refugee Council & ECRE (2016). For an extensive and critical evaluation of the Statement’s implementation from 2019 see Elitok. Further literature is also provided in Chapter 2.2.4 of this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> In October 2015, the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan (European Commission, 2015) had already paved the way for this agreement.

<sup>18</sup> I use this term instead of the more common one “irregular” to draw attention to the political constructedness of the division between “legal” and “illegal” migration.

<sup>19</sup> Peers (2016) discusses the inconsistency of differentiating between Syrians and other refugees throughout the Statement text in more detail.

<sup>20</sup> The selection of those eligible for resettlement gives priority to vulnerable persons (according to the UN Vulnerability Criteria) and those who have not tried to enter the EU irregularly yet. The 18,000 plus 54,000 spots available for resettlement were actually remainders of a previous agreement (Peers, 2016).

migration opening from Turkey to the EU,” in cooperation with Greek and European institutions (cl.3). Provided the fulfillment of visa liberalization benchmarks, EU Schengen visa requirements for Turkish citizens were to be lifted by June 2016 (cl.5). Turkey’s EU accession process was to be “re-energised” with the opening of new Chapters (cl.8), and the “upgrading” of the Customs Union was “welcome[d]” by Turkey and the EU (cl.7). The EU committed itself to support Turkey in improving the “humanitarian conditions inside Syria,” especially in areas close to the Turkish border (cl.9). The disbursement of previously allocated funds of €3 billion under the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT) was to be accelerated, and topped up with a second two-year-tranche of €3 billion at the end of 2018 (cl.6). This money was earmarked for “projects for persons under temporary protection,” especially in the fields of “health, education, infrastructure, food and other living costs” (ibid.).

FRiT coordinates the actions financed by the EU and its member states which aim at “assisting Turkey in ‘addressing the immediate humanitarian and development needs of refugees and their host communities, national and local authorities in managing and addressing the consequences of the inflow of refugees’” (ECA, 2018, p.9). Not all €6 billion are designated for humanitarian purposes. For example, out of the €3 billion of the first tranche, only €1.4 billion were meant for humanitarian assistance, managed by the EU’s Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) (European Commission, 2019, April 15, p.8).<sup>21</sup> According to the European Commission (2019, July 19), as of summer 2019, €5.6 billion of the total €6 billion have been allocated, out of which 2.35 billion were already disbursed to projects. Turkish NGOs cannot directly apply for project funds under ECHO. Instead, International Organizations (IOs) and INGOs receive the funds<sup>22</sup> and can allocate it further down to Turkish partner organizations (Shaw & Şentek, 2018).

## **2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

There is a massive body of scholarly literature on humanitarianism, partly commissioned

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<sup>21</sup> The remaining money is for “development assistance,” focusing on “longer-term needs in the fields of health, education and socio-economic development of refugees,” as well as gender issues (European Commission, 2019, April 15, p.9). “Migration management” is another focus area of FRiT (ibid., p. 13).

<sup>22</sup> For a complete list see European Commission (2019, December 31).

by major humanitarian organizations themselves, partly issued as independent academic research. That literature is complemented by activist commentaries and individual accounts and reports of various stakeholders. This chapter aims to summarize some of the key contributions available on the subjects relevant for this study, namely: (transnational) humanitarianism, the perspective of humanitarian workers, humanitarian NGOs working for or with refugees in Turkey, as well as the EU-Turkey Statement. The first section will be the most expansive as it forms the foundation for the rest of the work.

### **2.2.1 (Transnational) Humanitarianism**

As mentioned before, the moral obligation to help people in distress and listen to marginalized populations, which is at the core of humanitarian reason, is commonly framed as “beyond debate” (Fassin, 2011, p.244). Nevertheless, in the last decades a variety of critical research on humanitarianism has emerged, especially from the fields of anthropology/ethnography. This section will provide a summary of the evolution of anthropological research on transnational humanitarianism (mainly by reference to a literature review by Ticktin, 2014), which is helpful to define the grounds on which I intend to position the research at hand. I will conclude with presenting three texts which are exemplary of the literature that inspired this thesis’ approach to humanitarianism.

In her review of anthropological studies on “Transnational Humanitarianism,”<sup>23</sup> anthropologist Miriam Ticktin – herself known for her critical work on the intersection of humanitarianism with migration (2011a) and gender (2011b) – retraces three significant turns in the study of humanitarianism since the 1980s. That was the time when humanitarianism, according to Ticktin, “began to take shape as a particular moral and political project through the formation of transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)” (Ticktin, 2014, p.274).

The first phase of research was marked by a merging of legal and medical anthropology on the issue, which Ticktin finds consequent since “humanitarian responses to suffering and emergencies are structured as combined medical and legal interventions,” and she adds, “– not as political events” (Ticktin, 2014, p.274). According to Ticktin, the study

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<sup>23</sup> Both subject and title of the review article.

of humanitarianism “paved the way for a new type of intellectual moral engagement [of anthropologists], [...] which relied on a particular kinship between the role of anthropologist and humanitarian” (p.277). Studies on international refugees and displacement brought humanitarianism to the attention of legal anthropology. Ticktin names Harrel-Bond’s book *Imposing Aid* from 1986 as well as Malkki’s work on Hutu refugees living in Tanzania in the 1990s as key contributions here. They both charged the international relief establishment with silencing refugees through victimizing discourses, and respectively examined bureaucratic procedures and the concept of (universal) humanity (Ticktin, 2014, p.275). A “growing presence of discourses and institutions that represented and protected a universal, ‘global humanity’” (p.276) also left their mark on medical anthropology. Here, it was a “concern with suffering” (p.275) that drew anthropologists’ interest towards the transnational arena of humanitarianism. Research under this banner was characterized by a shift “from analytic distance to empathetic connection with one’s research subjects” (Ticktin, 2014, p.277), often combined with a wish to intervene.

In the second phase of anthropological research, beginning around the turn to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, several scholars assumed a radically critical stance towards humanitarianism. They investigated humanitarianism’s unintended consequences and often demanded its absolute dismantlement (ibid.). Ticktin names Ferguson’s critique on the development industry as an *Anti-Politics Machine* (1994a) as “foundational” (Ticktin, 2014, p.277).<sup>24</sup> De Waal’s monograph *Famine Crimes* (1997) runs along the lines of Ferguson’s argument by claiming that “the humanitarian international” prevents political solutions to famine by placing the related problems in the domain of technicalities, not politics (Ticktin, 2014, p.277). The criticism of the depoliticizing assets of humanitarianism were also articulated from other scientific disciplines, e.g. from International Relations scholars Barnett & Weiss (2008), as well as self-reflexive practitioners (see Terry, 2002). Compared to them, Ticktin points out the particularity of anthropological contributions as being positioned on the threshold between “attending ethnographically to people’s own accounts of their lives while maintaining a distance from their interpretations to show hidden motivations or interests” (2014, pp.277-278). This position also informs the

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<sup>24</sup> The concept of anti-politics will be explained further in the theoretical framework of this thesis (Chapter 2.3.4).

approach of this thesis.

It is in this second phase, especially, that anthropologists point out the political implications of international humanitarian work. Humanitarians and their institutions are shown to perpetuate, in one way or another, a certain “hierarchy of humanity [...], valuing some lives over others” (Ticktin, 2014, p.280). Some researchers, like Fadlalla (2008), reveal the immersion of humanitarians into “broader political and especially neoliberal agendas” (Ticktin, 2014, p.280). They show that humanitarian intervention in conflict situations actually reshapes the political order rather than just maintaining the existing one, as traditional humanitarian principles (see Chapter 2.3.1) would suggest (ibid.). Another observation from this second phase of research is that humanitarianism functions as a new form of government. This claim will be explicated in the context of Fassin’s book on humanitarian reason a few paragraphs below.

With the third phase of anthropological research on humanitarianism, scholars reacted to the perceived “limits of critique and denunciation,” as well as the changing realities of humanitarianism, which has outgrown its “initial sphere of emergency relief” (Ticktin, 2014, p.281). This new research focuses on the “morphing” character of the humanitarian project, its “ambiguities, limits and constraints,” without asserting a clear sense of what humanitarianism actually is (ibid.). It observes how humanitarian work merges increasingly with other forms of ethical-political interventions like human rights movements or development projects. For example, Barnett and Weiss (2011) highlight a (d)rift in the humanitarian community between those who identify with the traditional, narrow definition of humanitarianism to provide life-saving relief (see Chapter 2.3.1, page 27), and those with a broader definition that tackle more structural issues to overcome the ephemerality of short-term aid and cover a wide array of approaches from democracy promotion to long-term care, clearly expanding into political and economic fields (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.10). Scholars also started scrutinizing humanitarianism from perspectives of critical race and gender studies, reminding us for example of “the colonial histories and sentiments that figure in humanitarian discourses and practices” to this day (Ticktin, 2014, p.282, referring to Hunt, 2008; see also Stoler, 2010a,b).

Possibly with a similar sensibility, researchers also started to analyze non-secular forms of “charity” or “humanitarian” action from historically “non-Western” contexts (see

Ticktin, 2014, p.281). For example, Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan (2009) analyze the *Politics of aid in the Muslim world*<sup>25</sup>. When they look at religious foundations of aid in Muslim contexts, they argue that some of the criticism of “Western” humanitarianism might not affect Islamic ideas of alms giving as much. For example, while Western charity is charged with creating a hierarchy between “generous” givers and “muted” receivers, the Islamic theory of *zakat*<sup>26</sup> frames “giving to people in need” as a duty in the interest of the community, not as benevolent gift (pp.9-16, partly referring to Sayyid Qutb). Hungry people, indeed, “have the right to share in the meal of those who are well fed,” and may use force if denied their rightful share (p.17-18, referring to Boisard, 1985, p.101). This is to show, that it is inaccurate to assume that *all* forms of almsgiving are based on the same “universal” principles of (Western) humanitarianism. Yet, Western humanitarianism has come to inhabit a rather dominant position in the global humanitarian regime. This will be explicated in the summary of Donini’s article “Decoding the Software of Humanitarianism” (2016) a few paragraphs below.

In reaction to this dominance, calls for the “localization of aid” have become increasingly vocalized inside the global humanitarian sector – articulated for example in the report on the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul (Agenda for humanity, 2016, pp.22,28) and also by networks of humanitarian actors from the Global South<sup>27</sup> (Adeso, 2015). But neither global funding nor scientific research stay abreast to this increasing importance or visibility of local actors. Baguios (2017) points out that *already*, 80 percent of the registered NGOs worldwide and 87 percent of aid workers are local or national (referring to the 2015 “State of the Humanitarian System” report from ALNAP). Yet, out of the total budget of USD28.9 billion for international humanitarian assistance in 2018, local and national NGOs reportedly received only 0.4 percent (Development Initiatives, 2019,

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<sup>25</sup> This is the subtitle of their book *Charitable Crescent*.

<sup>26</sup> *Zakat* is one of the Five Pillars of Islam recognized by Sunni branches of Islam and means “the religious duty to give up a fixed proportion of one’s wealth [usually one fortieth] for specified good causes” (Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan, 2009, p.9). Since the majority of Turkish population is officially Sunni Muslim, an awareness of this concept seems sensible, given that it *might* have impact on quotidian understandings of humanitarian action among Turkish actors. However, Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan also remind us that in Turkey, secularizing politics, especially of country founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and his orientation towards European ideas and values have left their mark on Turkish society. This is arguably reflected in an “impatience” of many Turkish reformers in the face of religious rhetoric (p.19).

<sup>27</sup> Although the term Global South might not be descriptively accurate and even contested for other reasons (see Toshkov, 2018), it can be used: not as geographical denominator, but to describe countries with a similar economic status, often with a history of colonization from European powers. Its counterpart is Global North. For a detailed discussion see Hollington et al. (2015).



p.64).<sup>28</sup> Baguios (2017) pointedly exclaims: “Aid is already ‘localised’ – power within the aid sector is not.”

Against the background of this evolution of anthropological research on humanitarianism, I will now present three publications which significantly contributed to this thesis, from the second and third phase described above: Fassin’s *Humanitarian Reason* (2011), Donini’s “Decoding the Software of Humanitarianism” (2016), and Robin’s “Humanitarian Aid beyond ‘Bare Survival’” (2009).

Fassin’s book *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (2011) contains several criticisms of (Western) humanitarianism and is key to understand the role of humanitarian reason in the current political system. In it, the French-born anthropologist and sociologist presents previously published case studies to shed light on how humanitarian reason and its moral sentiments are currently used in public discourse and how they have “reconfigured politics” (p.5).

Fassin develops a number of tangible theoretical categories, namely humanitarianism as a *politics of life* and *humanitarian government*. Politics of life “give specific value and meaning to [specific] human life” (Fassin, 2007, p.500). They are manifested in the humanitarian context in three main contradictions: The most fundamental contradiction is between “lives to be saved” (those of the “beneficiaries”) and “lives to be risked” (of those intervening) (Fassin, 2007, p.507). The underlying assumption is that the former are bound to “passively await bombs,” assistance and salvation, while the latter are freely, actively choosing to “come and render assistance” and “sacrifice themselves” (ibid.). In consequence, humanitarian intervention also embodies a politics of life in selecting which lives are “possible or legitimate to save” (ibid.). The other contradictions are about the question whose life is represented by whom (the “beneficiaries” life by the public relation team of humanitarian organizations); and the division between the value of expatriate and local staff, expressed for example in different levels of salaries, technological resources as well as work contracts and insurances (Fassin, 2007, p.515; see also Anderson, 1999, p.58).

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<sup>28</sup> Total funding to local or national actors in 2018 was 3.1 percent, most of which (2.6 percent) was given to national governments. Further 0.3 percent go to international NGOs from the Global South (p.64).

Humanitarian government, on the other hand, is defined as the “deployment of moral sentiments in contemporary politics” (Fassin, 2011, p.1). Inspired by Foucault, Fassin defines government in the broad sense of “techniques and procedures designed to direct the behavior of men” (Foucault, 1989, p.154, cited in Fassin, 2011, p.263), thus “includ[ing] but exceed[ing] the intervention of the state, local administrations, international bodies, and political institutions more generally” (Fassin, 2011, pp.1-2). Hence, NGOs may well be part of this form of government. Fassin claims that, on the global scale, humanitarian government operates on a “dual model.” By this he means that it applies a different logic to “beneficiaries” in poor and in rich countries: In poorer countries, it treats people as “large and often *undifferentiated populations*,” by means of mass operations – thousands of refugees in and outside refugee camps in the Global South are the “paradigmatic” figures of this (p.253). In richer countries, on the contrary, it deals with *individuals* “whose narratives it examines and whose bodies it scrutinizes,” which is exemplified in the meticulous interrogation of asylum seekers in European countries (ibid.). Fassin explains that in order for this “double register of humanitarianism to work, both the territorial and the moral boundaries between the two worlds must be sealed as tightly as possible,” for example in denying refugees from the South the possibility to claim the same “prerogatives granted to asylum seekers in the North” (ibid.).

Fassin’s observations call out the unequal power relations inscribed into humanitarianism. However, according to Dunn (2014), when Fassin turns to case studies outside of France in the second part of the book, his analysis lacks complexity and ethnographic detail and evokes stick-figures rather than engaging with “actual people” (p.193). Dunn questions whether humanitarianism is “really the only guiding force behind welfare policy” and suggests that a theoretical account of neoliberalism<sup>29</sup> might be useful to understand welfare with its indispensable focus on self-sufficiency and the responsibility of the “unfortunate” individuals to care for themselves (ibid.). Dunn’s own work on normative governmentality will offer a useful addition here to comprehend the complexity of the humanitarian Facility of the EU-Turkey Statement in implementation

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<sup>29</sup> While a sharp definition of neoliberalism is difficult, I find the one given by Harvey (2005) helpful: “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve and institutional framework appropriate to such practices” (p.2).

(see Chapter 2.3.2).

The second text to be presented here, titled “Decoding the Software of Humanitarianism. Universal or Pluriversal?” calls into question the dominance of a particular Western humanitarianism. It was written by Donini (2016), who has been working as a researcher affiliated to various UN offices on issues of humanitarianism for decades, but often from a rather critical stance. In this article, he tries to disclose which processes and assumptions account for the current dominance of a specific Western/Northern notion of humanitarianism. He also asks whether and how this dominant regime is going to be challenged by other notions of humanitarian aid. His meta-analysis embraces previous critiques which denoted major aid agencies with their Western roots and universal claims as performing “a move by the wealthy and powerful to impose their world views on the weak and vulnerable” (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.16).

Donini pinpoints two systems of knowledge assessment which underpin the Western dominance: The *Western code* as described by literary scholar Walter Mignolo (2011) and what Donini terms the *network power of standards* (Donini, 2016, pp.73-75). The Western code is closely linked to Western modernity and entails the (hidden) assumption that Western rationality alone is the valid way of knowing. It expresses itself also through universalist claims, where European particularity establishes itself as truth that is not culturally, spatially or temporally bound (p.79). Other forms of knowledge were/are eliminated or marginalized through “epistemic colonisation” (p.74). The dominant humanitarian discourse is therefore characterized by Western modernist rhetoric of charity, compassion and rationality (p.75). Additionally, the dominance of Western humanitarianism is perpetuated by codes of network power which are embedded in globalization. Network power functions through the establishment of (globally) dominant standards which may shape or determine institutions, values and behavior. The bigger a network and its power is, the harder it becomes for alternatives to emerge and/or persist. Nevertheless, alternatives to the dominant humanitarian discourses and practices exist and emerge, leading Donini to ask how these different discourses will relate to each other in the future and shape reality (pp.78-79).

The third text by Robins (2009) is called “Humanitarian Aid Beyond ‘Bare Survival’: Social Movement Responses to Xenophobic Violence in South Africa,” and actually hints

towards this interplay of dominant and alternative forms of “humanitarian” reason in the form of a case study. Robins, professor for sociology and anthropology, investigates responses to xenophobic violence against non-nationals in South Africa in May 2008, particularly of the national AIDS activist movement TAC and its international and local partners. The article is relevant for this thesis because it explores how local stakeholders engage with humanitarian ideas, procedures and standards from global actors and networks, but deploy them according to their own principles. In this case, activists combined humanitarian assistance with radical political and legal advocacy together with affected refugees; and engaged for example in technical health assessments *not* to depoliticize needs but in contrast to *use* that data to build pressure on state and UNHCR officials. Robins thus shows not only how humanitarian ideas can merge with more rights-based approaches, but also defeats the oversimplification of an omnipotent expansion of Western principles by depicting local actors as agents in their own rights.

This chapter has shown that there is a rich body of research and both theoretical as well as methodical approaches to humanitarianism. However, most of this research and its critique focuses on major Western NGOs and UN institutions, based on the assumption that they “dominate the field, do the bulk of the work, and are the primary authors of the majority of the sector-wide reforms that have occurred over the past several decades” (Barnett, 2013, pp.386f.). The question arises, how actors, who are not situated at the center of Western hegemony, perceive and narrate their humanitarian reality.

### **2.2.2 Humanitarian Workers**

Research focusing directly on humanitarian workers is more scarce. Common frames to investigate humanitarian workers are mental health issues<sup>30</sup>, as well as staff safety and security, more precisely the risks and protection requirements on that line, and

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<sup>30</sup> This approach is prominent of course in Public Health and Psychology departments, and includes both international (Jachens, 2018 & 2019; Cardozo et al., 2012) and national humanitarian workers (Ghods et al., 2019; Shah et al., 2007; Eriksson et al., 2013), rarely also in a comparative manner (see Cardozo et al., 2005). Connorton et al. (2012) offer a comprehensive summary of several studies related to trauma-related mental illnesses among aid workers.

particularly in relation to (perceived) entanglements with political agendas.<sup>31</sup> With regard to Ferguson's concept of anti-politics (see Introduction and Chapter 2.3.4), it is interesting that one trend in this research seems to render the safety risks for humanitarian staff as technical or organizational issues (see Ben Lazreg et al., 2019), instead of political. Other studies focus on competencies of aid workers, including cultural competence as prerequisite for (Avruch, 2004) and outcome of humanitarian work (Chang, 2016). Competencies of aid workers can also be presented as benchmarks for the professionalization of the sector (see Johnson et al., 2013). Another common theme for contemporary journalistic and scholarly writings are economic or structural disparities between "expat" and "local" workers, regarding for example the duration of work contracts, access to resources as well as career opportunities, security issues and knowledge value (see for example Houldey, 2017; Ong & Combinido, 2018; Pauletto, 2018). Furthermore, a number of autobiographical books or essays are available, to my knowledge mostly from humanitarian workers from the Global North.<sup>32</sup>

A lot of the aforementioned studies employ quantitative approaches, however a few qualitative researches are available. These include research on workers of major international NGOs, like Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and examine "their institutional lives, from their bureaucratic process to how their ethical principles play out" (Ticktin, 2014, p.279).

For example, Schwartz et al. (2010) use grounded theory to explore ethical challenges for Canadian health professionals in their humanitarian practice abroad. The challenges alluded to are: allocation of scarce resources; unjust historical, social, political and commercial structures; discrepancy between aid agency policies and momentary acute needs; and (culturally) differing norms around (health) professional roles. Thematically close, Hunt (2008) approached the lived experience of international health professionals in cross-cultural humanitarian contexts phenomenologically and identified similar ethical dilemmas. Here, participants described the implementation of standards according to the local setting as difficult (p.64). How is this perceived from actors already situated *in* the local setting? Another useful input of this research is that Hunt describes ethical

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<sup>31</sup> This research also takes interest in both international (Rowley, Crape & Burnham, 2008) and national aid workers (Stoddard, Hamer & Haver, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> For reviews see Denskus (n.d.).

dimensions of humanitarian work as a “recurring source of reflection and self-evaluation for the participants” (p.65), correlating with different identifications as (medical) professional, moral person and/or humanitarian worker.

Finally, I want to highlight one very extensive project focusing on aid workers directly: the blog *Aid Worker Voices* by US-based sociologist Tom Arcaro. His book with the same title is more like a chronicle of the experiences of over 1000 aid workers from around the globe whose replies were gathered in a quantitative-qualitative online-survey conducted in English (for a review see Denskus, 2016). It helps to understand the complexity of experiences and perspectives, but Arcaro himself points out that there is need for shedding more light on the perspectives of *local* aid workers, particularly from the Global South.

Accordingly, Arcaro is currently working on a follow-up volume with the tentative title *Local Aid Worker Voices*. With reference to a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) from 2011 titled *Safety and Security for National Humanitarian Workers* (Stoddard, Harmer, & Haver, 2011), Arcaro suggests that “[u]nderstanding national aid workers is imperative given their numbers<sup>33</sup> and obvious critical impact on the sector and, of course, on affected communities” (Arcaro, 2018, August 12). Preliminary data from his surveys specifically aimed at national humanitarian workers from the Global South points to a variety of topics. Among others, it is shown that there is no homogeneous group of neither national nor international aid workers. Rather, distinctions are useful, for example between “local staff” and “nationally-relocated staff” or “administrative” and “support” staff (see Stoddard et al., 2011; Arcaro, 2018, August 12 & 2017, June 28). Nevertheless, a *common* concern raised by local humanitarian workers is that the relation between local and international NGOs is primarily one of dependency (regarding both financing and programs) which is seen to be perpetuated because national governments lack accountability and action (Arcaro, 2017, May 7). Others emphasize the benefits of a local team as being more familiar with the cultural setting and more likely to be committed and available for long-term efforts.

Although Arcaro’s research is conducted as a survey, it allows for narrative as well as comparative analysis of local aid workers’ voices. However, personal interviews with

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<sup>33</sup> Here, he refers to statistics from the OCHA report that for most INGOs national aid workers make for more than 90 percent of their staff (Stoddard, et al., 2011, p.3).

humanitarian workers could allow for a more careful analysis of a few but complex voices. Furthermore, in his approach to the survey results, Arcaro seems to be quite affectionate about the respondents and the humanitarian system as such (see for example Arcaro, 2016, January 17). A more critical approach might be interesting.

### **2.2.3 Humanitarianism & NGOs Working with/for Refugees in Turkey**

Before looking at literature directly interested in humanitarian refugee NGOs in Turkey, I would like to offer a quick glance at research on humanitarianism in the Turkish context.

An interesting historical perspective is provided by Çelik (2015) who outlines three cases from the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to illustrate the historical place of humanitarian values and actions in a non-Western context at the time. He argues that the binary of Christian versus Muslim charity/humanitarianism, which forms the base of most research on humanitarianism, “disregard the complexity of social and imperial networks in mid-nineteenth century” (p.14), including close diplomatic and personal transnational and interreligious relations. Contrary to some euro-centrist accounts which equate the expansion of humanitarian values with the expansion of Christianity, Çelik expounds that Ottoman reactions to humanitarian crisis (i.e. the Great Irish Famine between 1845-52) were “not ‘copied’ from the ‘West’, but had already been developed rather simultaneously in contact with Western traditions of humanitarian support, together with local traditions of charity and philanthropy” (p.18). He sets this argument against the background of rapid sociopolitical and economic changes within the Ottoman Empire and internationally. During that time, the emergence of official national newspapers and mass media informed the public about even distant events, i.e. human suffering, and questions of Empire, identity and humanity became renegotiated (p.16). He demonstrates that even back then diplomatic and ethical interests commingled in state donations (p.19).

The few publications available on contemporary Turkish practices of humanitarianism are usually affiliated with the disciplines of International Relations or Political Science and frame it as part of the country’s foreign policy (Bacık & Afacan, 2013; Tank, 2015; Gilley, 2015; Özerdem, 2016). Scholars focus on Turkey’s particular role as a “middle

power”<sup>34</sup> and find the country’s strategy of *humanitarian diplomacy* representative of a “new humanitarianism” of those middle powers and emerging states (see Bayer & Keyman, 2012; Tank, 2015; Gilley, 2015). Humanitarian diplomacy “merges national interests and norms in the formulation of humanitarian policy” (Tank, 2015, p.1).<sup>35</sup> Readers interested in this mostly state-led humanitarianism in Turkish discourse and politics may revert to one of those publications; for this thesis, the important point is that Turkey is by no means merely on the “receiving end” of humanitarian assistance. In fact, its proactive stance and considerable financial contribution has received international attention and recognition: it was not by accident that the first UN World Humanitarian Summit ever was held in Istanbul in 2016.<sup>36</sup>

Regarding Turkey’s internal infrastructure for welfare, Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan (2009) point to the historical importance of the religiously rooted *vakıflar* (sg.: *vakıf*).<sup>37</sup> Zencirci (2013) argues in her Doctoral thesis, *The local production of welfare humanitarianism in neoliberal Turkey*, that *waqfs*<sup>38</sup> eventually became re-conceptualized in Turkey as the historical and particularly Turkish-Ottoman, thus “authentic,” model of civil society organizations (CSOs) (pp.65-68). She describes this process as an “NGOization” of *waqfs*, by which they were defined “as voluntary organizations which engage in social service provision” (p.68, referring to Alvarez, 1999). They became construed as a model for “organizations which partnered with the state in a non-confrontational, collaborative manner to service [*sic*] the public” (ibid.). Thus, it is of little surprise that in 2003, the Turkish Prime Minister at that time, presented CSOs as capable and responsible actors to fill in the welfare gaps which the state cannot (or does

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<sup>34</sup> Middle powers can be defined as the approximately twenty countries which rank “immediately below the eight countries generally acknowledged as established or new great powers (in today’s world: The United States, China, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Japan, and India)” (Gilley, 2015, p.50).

<sup>35</sup> The term originates from a book about possibilities to improve the effectiveness of the U.S. government to secure basic human rights for vulnerable populations (Gilley, 2015, p.47, referring to Farer, 1980); and was popularized in Turkey by no one less than former Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu (2013).

<sup>36</sup> To give some recent statistics: In the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2019 (Development Initiatives, 2019) Turkey is ranked both among the top ten receivers of international aid (rank 8 with USD741 million received; p.27), and among the major donors (since the country’s voluntary reports to the Development Assistance Committee include the budget spent on refugees *inside* of the country, Turkey is not included in the regular evaluation. *Would* it be, it would be rank 1 with USD8,399 million spent; before the US, Germany and the UK).

<sup>37</sup> The legal status of these pious foundations in the service of social welfare (education, health, infrastructure, religious practice) was consolidated as early as in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. After the founding of the Turkish Republic and especially with a new legislation in the 1960s, they were subjected to more governmental control, to prevent administrative abuse (p.34, referring to Bilici, 1985, p.12).

<sup>38</sup> Which is the “English plural” of the Arabic term for *vakıf* used by some authors.



not) cover – and philanthropy as “an equal partner in public administration” (cited in Zencirci, 2013, p.67). In the “humanitarian approach to societal welfare” (p.70) thusly advocated, CSOs were “not understood as representatives of social masses vis-à-vis the state, but instead as organizations which worked in partnership with the state to address social problems through targeted, micro and project-based interventions” (p.71). This observation might be relevant to understand the relationship between civil society actors, like people working in humanitarian NGOs in Turkey, and the Turkish state.

Regarding recent developments among NGOs or CSOs<sup>39</sup> dealing with refugees in Turkey, the arrival of refugees fleeing from the Syrian Civil War (beginning in 2011) spurred academic and activist publications on the issue. One comprehensive publication is the field observation report *Civil Society and Syrian Refugees in Turkey* by Mackreath and Sağmıç (2017). It is based on ethnographic research in four Turkish cities and presents data about “current changes in civil society in response to Syrians in Turkey” (p.8), focusing on the impact on the relations between CSOs, as well as CSOs and the state.<sup>40</sup> They point out that the growing number of research papers and INGO reports since 2011 on assistance for Syrians in Turkey has focused hitherto on the situation and coping mechanisms of Syrian people themselves, the ways the Turkish government is dealing with Syrians and the perceptions of Syrians in the Turkish public (p.8). They close a gap in research in focusing on changes and adaptation within the civil society in Turkey. Their preliminary findings are summarized as follows: CSOs fill in for the lack of state assistance outside of camps and are often perceived as part of the “state’s machinery” by Syrians (p.2). Given the limited capacity of CSOs, their provision of material assistance is regarded as successful. They suggest an analytical division between “needs-based” and “rights-based” CSOs (p.12), which accounts for persisting disputes as to whether material aid or rights advocacy should be the primary objective of refugee assistance. In this range, some actors pursue a “policy of avoiding turning the Syrian issue into something political” (p.2). The authors observe a “pattern of existing groups increasing or changing their activities [toward refugee issues]” (ibid.). Competition among CSOs, for funds or

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<sup>39</sup> The Turkish translation of CSO – *sivil toplumsal kuruluş* (STK) - is commonly used to designate both NGOs and CSOs; generally, they can thus be used interchangeably (see for example entries on “NGOs” on user based online dictionary *ekşi sözlük*). The literal translation of NGOs – *hükümet dışı kuruluşları* (Bilman, n.d.) - is not commonly used.

<sup>40</sup> Their definition of CSOs includes NGOs, but also (less formal) groups like activist collectives or religious groups which do not identify as NGOs (p.11).

due to political differences, is presented as a main obstacle to productive communication and collaboration within the sector. Furthermore, the authors describe a significant impact of the entrance of an unprecedented number of INGOs into the Turkish sector, which are “increasing [the] capacity of civil society through funding and partnerships” (p.2), but simultaneously “creat[e] competition and marketization in the field, which is driving CSOs from voluntarism to professionalism” (p.2). They ask about future developments in this relation with INGOs. Finally, the response to Syrians by the state and civil society has re-opened questions on the relationship between these two actors: Many believe in a selective cooperation of the state with ideologically aligned CSOs and perceive the increasing governmental regulation of CSO activities<sup>41</sup> as a state intrusion into the autonomy of CSOs not aligned with the government (p.3).

I suggest that the particular nexus of state – INGO – CSO/NGO that the authors describe, can be further elaborated in the context of the EU-Turkey Statement. The methodical approach of Mackreath & Sağnıç to use open-ended questions in their interviews to gather an extraordinary richness of data is convincing.<sup>42</sup> The authors refrain from contextualizing their data with a theoretical framework (p.13), but for the purpose of this thesis it would be worthwhile to focus on fewer interviewees and interlace their statements into existing theoretical discussions for deeper comprehension.

#### **2.2.4 The EU-Turkey Statement & Humanitarianism**

The EU-Turkey Statement of 2016 is subject of a variety of publications, from state evaluation statistics (see European Commission, 2019, January 7) to journalistic, activist and academic accounts in all shades. A short overview of general research on the Statement will be followed by literature directly interested in its humanitarian Facility.

Legal assessments have discussed the rightfulness of the Statement, i.e. its (non-)compliance with International Laws or Human Rights (see Ulusoy, 2016; Peers, 2016; Dutch Refugee Council & European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE),

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<sup>41</sup> Mackreath & Sağnıç name the expanding role of the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) along with bureaucratic tools of accreditation and the Electronic Aid Distribution System (EYDAS) as examples (p.3).

<sup>42</sup> They also use focus groups to observe in more depth the relation between different stakeholders. While this is an inspiring approach, it surpasses my own capacity as a researcher both in skill and in resources.

2016; ECRE, 2016). Other scholars positioned the agreement in continuation of an externalization of EU border and migration policies (see Üstibici, 2017). Another point of interest as well as harsh critique from refugees, activists and scholars has been the disastrous situation for refugees in and around the camps on the Greek islands (see Gostoli, 2017; Leghtas, 2017) and the precarious situation of refugees who (were) returned to Turkey from Greece as part of the Statement (see Amnesty International, 2016; Ulusoy & Battjes, 2017).

One more line of inquiry has been the impact of the Statement (and the migration movements following the Syrian Civil War in general) on Turkish migration legislation: İneli-Ciğer (2019) refers to an analysis by Aydın & Kirişçi (2013) to explain that even prior to the EU-Turkey Statement, Turkish migration legislation has been gradually aligned with EU asylum *acquis*<sup>43</sup> since 2000. This process was mostly (but not exclusively) part of the negotiations for the accession process of Turkey to the European Union, starting as early as 1995 (İneli-Ciğer, 2019, pp.115,122-123). As proof, she lists the adoption of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) in Turkey in 2014, which “mirrors the EU law in many respects” (p.123), and which was perceived rather positively as offering a dependable legal framework for the protection of Syrian refugees in Turkey (p.139). She then concludes, however, that with the EU-Turkey Statement there was a shift in this perception because the Statement itself entailed a number of legal issues and inconsistencies (p.139; see also Heijer & Spijkerboer, 2016).

Further literature is available on the humanitarian facility of the Statement. Several publications from the European Commission provide a starting point to trace the spending of the money from the European Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT). Especially the continuously updated list of committed, contracted and disbursed project funds (European Commission, 2019, December 31), the interactive projects map (European Commission, 2020a), as well as the continuously updated “Fact Sheet[s]” on the Facility (European Commission 2020, February) are useful sources here.

More critical evaluation and analysis of the implementation of FRiT is offered from different parties: The special report of the European Court of Auditors (ECA, 2018)<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> (the entirety of legislation, legal acts, and court decisions which constitute the total body of European Union law)

<sup>44</sup> A detailed summary of the report is provided by Küçükkaya (2018).

focuses on 10 out of 45 humanitarian projects and criticizes a lack of efficiency and diversity among the assistance provided,<sup>45</sup> budget inconsistencies, and insufficient justification for the ratio between administrative and operational costs. From a less institutionalized angle, journalists from the investigative multimedia platform *The Black Sea* meticulously examined the disbursement of the humanitarian/development budget of the Facility in Turkey. They contradict euphemistic success claims of the EU with data that proves the rather slow, insufficient and nontransparent implementation of humanitarian and developmental aid in Turkey (Shaw & Şentek, 2018). The same platform published an investigation which shows that money from the Facility (with the explicit purpose to *support refugees* in Turkey) was allocated to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for buying patrol boats of a Dutch company to *detect and detain* people in illegalized border-crossings in the Aegean Sea (Şentek & Şebnem, 2018). Aydın-Düzgit et al. (2019) argue that the EU-Turkey Statement with the accusations and mistrust it sparked on both sides, played a “toxic role in the overall EU-Turkey relationship” (p.3). According to the authors, this calls for a change of direction in the migration cooperation between the two parties “toward issues concerning *rights-based good governance* aiming at *cohesion* and employing effective *inter-institutional cooperation*” (p.3).

An interesting ethnographic approach to the humanitarian aspects of the Statement has been used by Mühlethaler (2017) to examine the role of humanitarian aid on Europe’s borders (i.e. on the Greek Island Chios) as part of the European border regime. The regime approach is useful also for this thesis and will be explained further in Chapter 2.3.3. Mühlethaler maps the relation between various stakeholders in humanitarian assistance and shows how humanitarian actors (unwillingly) reproduce the exclusive forces of the migration regime, which poses practical and ethical dilemmas for them. Subtle or overt forms of cooperation between humanitarians and state institutions play a vital role here. How does this cooperation look like on the Turkish side of the border? Humanitarians there might not all be confronted with bordering policies of states as directly as in the confined space of the Greek islands, but they, too, are obviously operating in a context highly defined by state politics. How do they perceive this political context for their work?

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<sup>45</sup> According to the report, 80 percent of the audited INGOs funded by the EU did not achieve their planned outcome, due partly to the “difficult operating environment” (p.37).

## 2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & KEY CONCEPTS

The following concepts and theories have emerged in general from critical research on humanitarianism as well as standardization and globalization, and they form the ground from which I will start my interrogation and analysis of the narratives of the humanitarian workers. They will allow me to appreciate the richness of the narratives of the humanitarian workers while staying aware and critical of the social structures in which these narratives are embedded.

### 2.3.1 Humanitarianism: Traditional and Critical Conceptualizations

The term *humanitarianism* can signify a diverse range of concepts. Ticktin (2014) states, it is dominantly characterized as “one way [...] to improve aspects of the human condition by focusing on suffering and saving lives in times of crisis or emergency” (p.274). This perception of humanitarianism is rooted in a dual notion of humanity which signifies both an *indivisible collective* of human beings and a *sentiment* which compels individuals to “gesture[s] of humanity towards fellow humans who are suffering or in danger,” thus giving a “concrete sense of belonging to the human species” (Fassin, 2007, p.518). Humanitarianism’s most prominent, and “traditional” definition derives from the ICRC, and can be summarized as “the desire to provide life-saving relief while honoring the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence” (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.9-10).<sup>46</sup> The principle of humanity calls for “attention to all people,” afar or close by.<sup>47</sup> Neutrality prohibits any involvement in “action[s] that either benefit[] or disadvantage[] the parties to an armed conflict.” Impartiality demands assistance without

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<sup>46</sup> The ICRC is presumably the oldest acknowledged humanitarian organization. The endeavors of the Red Cross “prime father,” Henry Dunant, to provide aid to suffering soldiers during the 1859 Battle of Solferino are often presented as the “beginning” of the humanitarian story. However, Barnett and Weiss (2011) rather locate the origins of the humanitarian enterprise in social transformations around the change from 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely abolitionist movements (p.23). Their book provides a detailed account of the historical contexts in which humanitarianism evolved over the centuries. Another interesting historical account is given by Haskell (1985), who analyzes the evolution of humanitarian sensibility and reforms in the middle of the 18th century, and sees them as part of a bourgeois rationalization project with particular self-interests (p.340). He argues that the emergence of this sensibility relied on the expanding capitalist market at that time, which brought about a “change in the perception of causal connection and consequently a shift in the conventions of moral responsibility” (p.342).

<sup>47</sup> For a critical elaboration on the construction of “humanity” especially in European Enlightenment and its entanglement to colonialism, see Barnett (2013, p.385).

discrimination, strictly based on need. And independence postulates that “assistance [should] not be connected to any of the belligerents or others (especially states) with a stake in the outcome of a [conflict],” resulting in the “general rule that agencies should either refuse or limit their reliance on government funding, especially from those with interests in the results” (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.10).

This thesis accepts the definition above as a common, and thus important, frame of reference. However, the concept of humanitarianism which underpins this research is informed by more critical literature from the “second phase” of anthropological research on the issue, as described in Chapter 2.2.1. Hence, humanitarianism is understood not only as “an ethos” (Ticktin, 2014, p.274), but also as “a set of laws, [...] and a form of government” (ibid.), as well as a “political economy” (Donini, 2016, p.72). To conceptualize humanitarianism, earlier anthropological research contrasted it to other approaches which “want to ‘do good’” (Ticktin, 2014, p.281): *Human rights* were framed within the logic of politics and justice aiming to repair *past* violations. *Development* was situated within the scope of “improving economic well-being through long-term investments in the *future* [emphasis added]” and informed by a belief in progress (ibid.). *Humanitarianism*, by contrast, was perceived to “exist in the temporal *present*, with no pretension to longer-term resolutions of inequality” (ibid). But Ticktin points out in the same breath that boundaries between these and other political-ethical approaches become more and more blurred, with new and different actors entering the field (ibid.). This observation is significant to understand the possibly diverse ethical and political backgrounds which local humanitarian workers might speak from.

Beside the critical observations on humanitarianism mentioned in Chapter 2.2.1, three more aspects are important for the concept of humanitarianism underlying this thesis: the implications of economic considerations for humanitarian action, the intersection of humanitarianism with politics in the form of instrumentalization and governance, and – much related to the governing function of humanitarianism – its increasing institutionalization and standardization.

Economic conditions configure humanitarian work explicitly through the decision of how and “on whom” the limited resources of humanitarian funds should be spent - which lives or conflicts “deserve” humanitarian relief? Which work is worth which salary? And

finally, which philosophical standing of which organizations is deemed worth financing at all by financiers and donors? Who gets to be a donor? These financial issues may enhance competition among local and (inter)national organizations, leading to further problems such as the concealing of project failures or problems in order to ensure future funding, the constant generation of new projects for funding regardless of their utility, and a decrease in willingness to cooperate with other organizations who turn from potential partners to potential rivals (Cooley & Ron, 2002, p.15-16).

At the same time, economic power relations are one of the powerful leverages used to integrate humanitarian work into the political sphere. As several scholars point out, humanitarian intervention has become of major interest for governments: In foreign policy, it presents nation states with “an alternative to effective political action that addresses the root causes of a conflict” (Ferris, 2011, cited in: El Amin, 2017, p.11), and an instrument to enhance economic or geopolitical aims (El Amin, 2017, p.10). The “introduction of morality into politics” is characteristic of the humanitarian government described by Fassin (see Chapter 2.2.1). Beside these quite obvious political implications of humanitarianism, there is the more implicit dimension of humanitarianism as a form of global governance. According to Fassin (2007) humanitarian governance<sup>48</sup> is “the administration of human collectivities in the name of a higher moral principle that sees the preservation of life and the alleviation of suffering as the highest value of action” (p.151, cited in: Barnett, 2013, p.381). It is organized through principles of market, network and hierarchies (Barnett, 2013, p.387-389).

The structuring of humanitarianism as a form of governance is linked to the third aspect listed above: the institutionalization and standardization of humanitarianism. This process apparently gathered momentum after the Cold War (Donini, 2016, p.78). Barnett (2013) observes that since then a variety of “codes of conduct, professional standards, measures of effectiveness, and systems of accountability” (p.88) have emerged. He suggests three reasons for this: a donor demand for accountability, anticipatory self-regulations (before donors or host-countries impose it) and fear of established major NGOs of small unstructured organizations to undermine quality and thus credibility of humanitarian

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<sup>48</sup> I understand governance here in the broader sense as “a complex and fragmented pattern of rule composed of multiplying networks” (“What is governance?”, 2008). The concept “expresses a widespread belief that the state increasingly depends on other organizations to secure its intentions and deliver its policies” (ibid.).

work (ibid.). As explained in the literature review (Chapter 2.2.1), Donini (2016) points out that the *network power of standards* enables humanitarian governance. Once standards (e.g. of accounting, reporting, language use or infrastructure) achieve a “critical mass” (Grewal, 2008, cited in: Donini, 2016, p.73) they tend to become globally dominant and result in isomorphism. This, on the one hand, enables global communication and cooperation, but on the other eclipses alternative standards (Donini, 2016, pp.73-75). At the same time, the adoption of dominant standards generally becomes a prerequisite for players (ibid., p.73; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, cited in Barnett 2013: 88) who want to get access to significant funds as well as medial, political and informational infrastructures. In the next section we will get a better understanding of the intersection between standards and governmentality.

The previous pages showed that humanitarianism is embedded in a variety of power structures which are present and overlapping even in minor (inter)actions.

### **2.3.2 Normative Governmentality, Standardization and Professionalization**

The concept of normative governmentality relates fundamentally to processes of standardization and the power relations inscribed in them, as outlined by Donini (see above). Dunn (2005) describes normative governmentality as “characteristic of the European Union,” and defines it as “attempt[ing] to integrate new geographic spaces and populations not by overt coercion, but by instituting a host of ‘harmonized’ regulations, codes, and standards” (p.175).<sup>49</sup> It channels resources like capital by “demanding specific forms of record keeping and audit that claim to make the production process ‘more transparent’ to regulators, investors, consumers” (ibid.).

Standardization, as a pivotal tool of normative governmentality, can be defined as “a process of constructing uniformities across time and space, through the generation of agreed-upon rules” (Timmermans & Epstein, 2010, p.71, referring to Bowker & Star, 1999). When promoting new standards and transferring them from one locale to another, the normative state and its intermediaries – in this case the EU as a donor and the contracted INGOs - claim that “each place in a given technozone shares the same set of

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<sup>49</sup> Dunn examines the case of the (attempted) EU-regulation of the meat market in Poland, but her insights are eye-opening for standardization processes in general, particularly those driven by the EU.



problems – the problems that the standards were developed to address” (Dunn, 2005, p.180). This claim prioritizes some problems over others and entails assumptions about the “practices and infrastructures” of the targeted place (ibid.).

At the same time the non-compliance with standards becomes equated with a lack of quality (pp.181-182). The underlying assumption is that standards are based on technical expertise and, hence, objective and free from “political entanglements” (Timmermanns & Epstein, 2010, p.80).<sup>50</sup> But standard formulation and implementation are not free from bias: On the one hand, access to standard formulation processes is restricted (Dunn, 2005, p.180), which raises questions like, “Whose benefits are served by standards?” and which evidence is even considered sufficiently legitimate to back up standards (Timmermanns & Epstein, 2010, p.70). On the other hand, the implementation of standards in normative governmentality is considered a unilateral process whereby the EU dictates, while its “partners” are expected to adapt (p.176). Standardization, in fact, is seen as a backbone of neoliberalism in “translat[ing] government priorities into a wide variety of locales and [...] provid[ing] legitimacy” (Timmermanns & Epstein, 2010, p.80, referring to Rose, 1999). It achieves this not only by making products or results alike and comparable, but more so, in also making *firms* (or, in our case, *organizations*) alike by means of internalized self-improvement and discipline (Dunn, 2010, p.176). EU standards not only valorize Western institutional structures (and attempt to duplicate them in different geographies) but also “European forms of personhood,” demanding people to “become calculative actors, willing to orient their activities to produce the desired figures on a record sheet” (p.186). Standardization therefore offers the EU an opportunity to converge frontiers into a “visible, calculable, and governable space by making the people in it into governable, calculating, self-regulating selves” (p.184, referring to McDonald).

These attributes of standardization also make it central to modern processes of professionalization (Larson, 1977, p. 42). Professionalization can be defined as “the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, [...] and to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p.152; referencing Larson, 1977). This is achieved for example through standardized training of “professionals” (Larson, 1977,

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<sup>50</sup> This is worth remembering, as it will figure again in Ferguson’s observation of anti-politics (see below).

p.40) and a uniform code of ethics which aims to “standardize professional behavior” (p.131). According to Larson, it was a reorganization of “charitable societies along the lines of ‘scientific philanthropy’” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which made the “search for efficiency” one of their main concerns. And this efficiency was assumed to be achieved best with bureaucratic techniques proven and tested by the business world, which went hand in hand with standardization processes. Furthermore, the increasing appropriation of relief functions by the state during that time intensified bureaucratic tendencies (pp.181-182). Because professionalization puts normative pressures on individuals and organizations to “resemble other units [i.e. individuals and organizations] in the same set of environmental conditions,” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p.149-152; referring to Hawley’s description of isomorphism from 1968), it is a helpful concept to understand the “network power of standards” which Donini describes (see Chapter 2.2.1).

In sum, normative governmentality along with standardization and professionalization take into perspective the technocratic aspects of humanitarian work and link them to politically relevant discussions of power, which can also be found in the case of the EU-Turkey Statement.

### **2.3.3 Glocalization & Humanitarian Regime**

Normative governmentality may claim “to be able to encompass whatever it touches inside its own system,” but not everybody can be made “commensurable,” especially on the personal level (Dunn, 2005, p.189). Hence, “although [global] arenas circumscribe options for [local] action, they do not dictate them. There is always a repertoire of choices” (Murdock, 1995, p.92). This is where glocalization comes into play:

Glocalization understands global and local not as distinct poles, but as constantly interfering with each other, in a continuous process of reinterpretation and reassessment. At the same time, the concept does not discharge that process of power hierarchies or romanticize over the possibilities of local agents (see Baumann, 1998, pp.378-379). Bueno Castellanos (2001), for example, uses this concept to understand the *appropriation and/or rejection* of international standards in Mexico’s car parts production industry. She points out that global standards of quality “attempt to be hegemonic and homogenizing on transcending cultural borders” (p.17), but that they tend to be ignorant of the particular

socio-cultural context into which they are applied. Out of the “tension between a dual process of homogeneity and heterogeneity, the global and the particular” (ibid.), own dynamics and new responses emerge, ranging from rejection to appropriation and transformation of standards (ibid.). Local practices are therefore not simply subjected to over-powerful forces of standardization; on the contrary, by giving feedback to universal and global practices they give rise to “novel meanings of historical and contextually specific [...] processes” (ibid.). Since the implementation of standards depends on local work, the “uniformity achieved through standardization necessarily carries traces of the local settings,” but it also goes hand in hand with the erasure of some other local elements (Timmermans & Epstein, 2010, p.83).

With the notions of humanitarian governance, normative governmentality and glocalization in mind, I find the term “regime” useful to conceptualize humanitarian (as well as migration) realities. The term regime has many different definitions, but the ones developed in the study of *migration regimes* seem most useful for adapting them to the humanitarian context in this thesis<sup>51</sup>: Here, regime is an attempt to analyze the (often transnational) interaction of different forces and institutions in the creation of a particular historical situation (Hess et al., 2018, p.265), based on the assumption that social structures are fluid in principle (Pott et al., 2018, 5). The concept uses a constructivist approach and is “useful for linking a micro- or actor-oriented perspective on migration [i.e. humanitarianism] to overarching regional or transnational relations, hierarchies, and other framings that conduct the local and individual behavior of migrants [i.e. humanitarians]” (Bachmann-Medick & Kugele, 2018). It acknowledges the interplay between a variety of actors, whose practices are related to one another, but not ordered in a systematic fashion (Karakayali & Tsianos, 2005, p.46).<sup>52</sup> In this sense, local humanitarian workers are actors both in the humanitarian and the migration regime.

The regime approach and glocalization help to understand local humanitarian workers as actors who create their own realities locally, and are impacting, as well as impacted by, a globalized humanitarian network and economic-political relations.

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<sup>51</sup> A lot of literature on humanitarianism uses the term “humanitarian regime” but does not define it.

<sup>52</sup> At some points in this thesis, I also refer to the “humanitarian system”: in these cases, I mean the more established and institutionalized structures of the humanitarian regime.

### 2.3.4 Politics, Anti-Politics and Being *Political*

The concept of *anti-politics* – originally developed by Ferguson (1994; 1994b) in analyzing development projects in Lesotho but soon attributed to NGOs more generally (see Fisher, 1997, p.446) – helps to understand how humanitarian NGOs obscure their relation to politics, and why this is problematic. What I mean with politics here, is “power-structured relationships maintained by techniques of control” (Fisher, 1997, p.446, referring to Foucault, 1991, Gordon, 1991, Kauffman, 1990, Millett, 1971).

Ferguson (1994b) argued that the development apparatus in Lesotho was in fact a “machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power which incidentally takes ‘poverty’ [or, in the case at hand, the plight of refugees] as its point of entry and justification” (p.180). It does so, by enhancing administrative power, and – more importantly – by “casting political questions of land, resources, jobs or wages as technical ‘problems’ responsive to the technical ‘development’ intervention” (ibid.). This is what Ferguson calls the anti-politics machine. Furthermore, in order to be able to render political questions into technical problems responsive to development or aid, Ferguson points out that developers “construct” (p.176) a field or “reality” which conforms with their preconceptions and “service” portfolio. This construction deprives the actual situation of its political ties, by reducing “political and structural causes of poverty [i.e. other forms of precariousness] to the level of individual ‘values’, ‘attitudes’ and ‘motivation,’” presenting people as an “undifferentiated mass, a collection of ‘individual farmers’ and ‘decision makers’” (p.178). The individually and institutionally manifested “political naiveté” corresponds to the wish or need of developers to identify as “apolitical” (p.178). Due to this self-construction, developers (i.e. humanitarian workers) tend to perceive “[local] government as a machine for delivering services, not as a political fact” (p. 179).

To complement these concepts of politics and anti-politics, I find it necessary to introduce a contrary notion of “the *political*,” or “being *political*,” which accounts for the transformative potential of political attitudes and actions. This notion of the *political* is defined by Ticktin (2011b) as the “disruption of an established order” (p.251). To make clear when I refer to this disruptive notion of *political*, I will write it in Italics. By contrast, the non-italic “political” will signify the common-sense adjective of “politics” as the

creation and maintenance of order (ibid.).

Using the lens of anti-politics will prevent an overly credulous adoption of the narratives of humanitarian workers themselves, allowing for a critical analysis instead. The *political*, on the other hand, acknowledges the transformative agency of the interviewees.

## **2.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In consideration of the related literature and the theoretical framework, this research intends to shed light on the perspectives of local humanitarian workers in Turkey on their work in the highly politicized context of the EU-Turkey Statement. These perspectives will be related to critical insights on major power relations in the humanitarian regime. A lack of qualitative research, regarding both the humanitarian Facility of the EU-Turkey-Statement and the experiences of local humanitarian workers from the Global South, leads me to ask the following research questions:

- How do humanitarian workers in Turkey narrate their own experience of working in the humanitarian sector?
- How do they discuss the relation between humanitarian work and politics in general?
- How do they discuss the implication of the EU-Turkey Statement for their work in particular?
- In which ways do they engage with processes of standardization?

### **3. METHOD**

This chapter is intended to clarify the research process, including data collection and analysis. In order to understand the experiences of local humanitarian workers and their relation to structural contexts, this research draws on methods of narrative inquiry. In the first part of this chapter, I will explain the principles of this approach and its relevance with regard to the research questions. Afterwards, explanations on the processes of data collection (access to the field, sampling, interview conduction, ethical concerns and critical reflection on data collection process) and analysis will conclude the chapter.

#### **3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH**

The research questions outlined above clearly focus on the perspective and experiences of the local humanitarian workers themselves, but they also include questions of the social, economic and political structures in which those perspectives are situated. Hence, a qualitative research approach, with focus on the personal narratives of the workers, seems most appropriate because it allows for (even unexpected) individual experiences to be expressed in depth and detail, to turn them into usable data, and to contextualize them with previous research.

The experience of local humanitarian workers can be approached through narrative research based on the “phenomenological assumption that experience can, through stories, become part of consciousness” (Squire, 2008). In fact, Clandinin & Huber (in press) claim that narrative inquiry is “first and foremost a way of thinking about experience,” since it is through stories that “a person enters the world,” interprets their experience and makes it “personally meaningful.” The agency of the narrators is asserted by acknowledging their efforts to “create plots from disordered experience” (Riessmann, 2012, p.370). Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou (2013) playfully allude to narrative’s Latin etymology (which “lies in knowing, not telling,” p.13) to argue that research on narratives can “claim to be mapping forms of local knowledge or ‘theory’” (ibid.).

But narrative inquiry provides opportunities to account for more than just the agency of local humanitarian workers: it also factors in the social setting of their stories, as well as

my role as a researcher in the production of those stories. As Riessmann (2012) points out, in narrative inquiry “case studies of individuals can illuminate the intersection of biography, history, and society” (p.368). She sums up that “personal narratives are deeply social” (p. 369). Fox (2008) even claims that “the heart of the narrative lies in the context (the event, the site and the wider social context)” (p.335). This combination of local agency with bigger context, obviously fits in nicely with the concept of glocalization (see Chapter 2.3.3).

Narratives for the scope of this research are considered to be “large sections of talk and interview exchanges — extended accounts of lives that develop in conversation over the course of interviews and other fieldwork interactions” (Riessmann, 2012, p.370). They “may be about general or imagined phenomena, things that happened to the narrator or distant matters they’ve only heard about” (Squire et al., 2013, p.5). I consider an observation of experience-centered narrative research relevant which stresses that “such representations lives [sic!], so that a single phenomenon may produce very different stories, even from the same person” (Squire et al., 2013, p.6).

To make room for these stories, I decided to conduct semi-structured, one-on-one interviews (see Squire, 2008) with a very small number of participants. This means that the data and insights gathered through this research are not representative of bigger populations. Instead, this method allows for a closer focus on a few, but rich and detailed accounts; thus, permitting to deepen the understanding of how the personal perspectives of the interviewees relate to bigger social structures.

Narrative inquiry puts emphasis on the relation between researcher and narrator, who are both considered “active participant[s] in the meaning making happening through storytelling” (Lacy, 2017). Semi-structured interviews reflect this idea by opening room for both interviewee and interviewer to shape the interview: The former has the chance to come up with own answers, stories and interpretations of questions. The latter can guide the interview by “subtly prodding the interviewee to ‘say more’ about a topic or pausing at key points in the expectation that ‘more’ could be said” (Riessmann, 2012, p.368). Semi-structured interviews thereby offer a chance to follow the interviewee’s stimuli and stories without losing focus of the research questions.

## 3.2 DATA COLLECTION

This section provides information on the sampling process and interview realization, as well as reflections on ethical concerns and the limitations of the data collection process.

As stated before, this research takes an interest in the perspectives of **local humanitarian workers**, which I define via two parameters: With *humanitarian workers* I mean people who are employed in humanitarian projects (in the sense that they were funded through the humanitarian Facility of the EU-Turkey Statement), irrespective of whether those people themselves identify as humanitarians. With *local* humanitarian workers I mean those humanitarian workers who have been settled in the country, where they are now working in, *prior* to entering the humanitarian sector; thus, who did not move to this country for the explicit purpose of doing humanitarian work.

I particularly focused on people working in organizations funded through FRiT, because – as mentioned in the Introduction – the direct relation of humanitarian work to the EU-Turkey Statement seemed like a promising venture point to discuss the intersection between political and humanitarian realms. Originally, I intended to interview only people from local NGOs. However, I eventually also included local branches of INGOs, because getting access to interviewees at all proved rather challenging – as the next chapter illustrates.

### 3.2.1 Access to the Field

Finding Turkish organizations funded through the humanitarian Facility of the EU-Turkey Statement proved difficult and required meticulous research because EU funds are dispersed to Turkish organizations only indirectly, through intermediary INGOs or IOs. While a list of the Facility's budgeting for the international organizations (IOs) is available (European Commission, 2019, December 31), the subcontracting of those INGOs to Turkish "partner"<sup>53</sup> organizations is not publicly recorded. Through accounts from the known INGOs, media coverage and personal contacts, I could nevertheless identify some sub-contracted local NGOs.

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<sup>53</sup> I use "partner" in quotes here, because the term is commonly used in the online presence of INGOs.



Initially, I tried to contact Turkish NGOs directly, because I was worried that a perceived affiliation with the INGOs on my part might impact the openness of local workers for and during interviews. For a similar reason, I refrained from contacting the Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs, like World Food Programme, UNHCR, IOM) who received funding from the Statement.

Eventually, I gave up on the first limitation, because my phone calls and emails received only scarce response: From eleven contacted INGOs<sup>54</sup> only three replied; two out of which eventually ceased to respond. Similarly, only one out of four contacted Turkish NGOs stayed in touch with me.

### 3.2.2 Sampling & Participants

Because of those difficulties of access, snowball sampling proved to be the most reliable way of finding interview partners. The starting points were two contacts, one of them in a Turkish NGO, the other one in a Turkish office of an INGO. Through them I got in touch with six interviewees with surprising demographic variety, working in three different organizations and cities.

A short description of the NGOs<sup>55</sup> and interviewees can be found below. To ensure the anonymity of participants (see Chapter 3.2.4: Ethical Concerns), identifiers like names of people, places and organizations were randomly changed. For transparency reasons, those changes are marked with a “\*” the first time they appear in the analysis. The organizations’ code names consist of a random color and the ending –Der, which is the common abbreviation in Turkish for *dernek* (meaning “association”).

- \**Green-Der* is a Turkish NGO which identifies on their website as humanitarian and emphasizes its reliance on traditional humanitarian principles with a special focus on accountability. It focuses on disaster affected communities and synergizes needs- and rights-based approaches. Before focusing on activities inside of Turkey, it had already been active in humanitarian aid abroad since more than a decade. With projects in several Turkish cities, refugees are currently one of the main target group of \**Green-Der*.
- \**Blue-Der* is a European INGO with field offices and projects in several cities in Turkey.

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<sup>54</sup> Out of the 18 European organizations that were funded through the Statement (as of July 2019), six were IGO, and one INGO was closed down by the Turkish government; leaving eleven INGOs to contact.

<sup>55</sup> based on an interpretive review of the online presence of the organizations

Operating as an international aid organization for several decades, it is one of the most prominent NGOs in its home country. It embraces an approach that is mostly needs-based but includes both emergency relief and long-term development. In its global engagement, it stresses close collaboration with local partner organizations, and the importance of human rights and self-determination. It also subscribes to the humanitarian standard of independence and impartiality.

- *\*Red-Der* is a local Turkish NGO operating in a city close to the Syrian border for approximately ten years. It is founded on a strong rights-based approach, but also conducts needs-based activities. Originally, it focused on education and protection of women and children but eventually included refugees in its activities. It emphasizes its vision of a society based on human rights and gender as well as social equality. It is the local partner of *\*Blue-Der* in their town.

None of the NGOs invokes a particularly religious foundation for their work.

I interviewed two people for *\*Green-Der*, three people for *\*Blue-Der*, and one person for *\*Red-Der*. The interviewees have different educational and biographical backgrounds, and work in different positions with different responsibilities in their NGOs (e.g. case worker, team leader, translator). While some of them have longer experience of working in the humanitarian sector than others, none of the interviewees has been working in the sector in Turkey for more than four years. All the interviewees are in their mid-twenties to mid-forties.

### **3.2.3 Interviews**

Because of the geographical distance, only one of the interviews was held in person, in the headquarters of one NGO; the other five were conducted via video call, with the participants being in an office of their NGO or – in one case – at home. Three interviews were held in English (foreign language to both interviewer and interviewees), three were held in Turkish (one of the native languages of two of the interviewees). They lasted between 40 minutes to 2 hours. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the interview partners.

Interviews were composed of two phases: They started off with narrative questions about the everyday work and initial motivation of the interviewee. Then, I used open-ended questions as follow-ups on specific aspects of their narratives, to find out more about their reflections on topics relevant for this study (in line with the theoretical framework). These

topics included questions on humanitarian identity, ethical principles and practical criteria for humanitarian aid, work conditions, funding, reporting and bureaucracy, relation with local and international NGOs, perceptions of the relation between humanitarianism and politics as well as NGOs and the state, and the EU-Turkey Statement. While I had a prepared set of these follow-up questions, sometimes the interviews required the flexibility to react to unexpected statements with unplanned questions.

### **3.2.4 Ethical Concerns & Critical Reflection on Data Collection Process**

Confidentiality was a major concern from the beginning of the study, especially since the interviews covered topics which were partly intimate or politically sensitive. Three measures were taken to deal with this concern: First, participants were asked for their consent to participate in the study and informed about the general scope of the research and about the means through which their identity was to be protected. They were asked whether they wanted to proof-read their interview transcripts afterwards to possibly make adjustments.<sup>56</sup> Second, as mentioned above, names of interviewees, organizations and other identifiable information were anonymized. Third, all raw data was stored exclusively offline to prevent online data abuse.

Another issue requiring reflection was my own position as a researcher and the structural relation between the interviewees and me, because these impact the way of collecting, interpreting and representing data. In that sense, I had to be mindful of my own research bias which enticed me to look particularly for patterns of discrimination, inequality and resistance during the interviews. Being aware of this bias helped me to separate my own expectations from the interviewees' statements, and hopefully this led to a more balanced interpretation of the data. Similar awareness was due regarding the diverse and asymmetrical power relations in which the encounter between the interviewees and me was set: On the one hand, as an exchange student from Germany, I was lacking (and *perceived* to be lacking) tacit knowledge of Turkish culture and practical work experience in comparison to the interviewees, who have been living and working in Turkey for years.

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<sup>56</sup> Five of them made use of this offer, but none of them wished for any retroactive adjustments. The sixth interviewee read a preliminary draft of the whole thesis and requested minor changes to improve anonymity, which I incorporated before submission.

This sometimes meant that interviewees seemed to feel the need to “sensitize” me, as an “outsider,” to comprehend the local and professional context. On the other hand, our relation was also linked to bigger political dynamics of Turkey-EU/ Turkey-Germany relations. Here, Germany’s economic advantage as well as its political privileges (visa regulations, powerful voting position in international committees, i.e. in the EU) and the long history of Turkey’s attempt to try to enter the European Union, stand for a major power divide. In *this* sense, I was speaking (or rather asking) from a comparably privileged position, and this also had an impact on the way interviewees responded to certain questions. I also have to acknowledge that, even though I have been living in Turkey for almost five years now, my image of the country is still to some extent influenced by German mainstream discourses about Turkey – which unfortunately often transport underlying racist, orientalist or anti-Muslim narratives and oversimplifications. Although I am aware of this fact, it was through the feedback of my advisors and colleagues, and through the interaction with the interviewees, that I realized how these narratives also impacted my work unintentionally. In this way, I tried to let go of inaccurate assumptions like a clear dichotomy between “Western” and “non-Western” realms and practices, or the mostly unfounded expectation of Islamic influence in the humanitarian NGOs and workers I interviewed.

In addition to those broader issues, the data collection was also influenced and limited by the interview setting. First and foremost, the contact between me and the interviewees was very short-term; in some cases, really just a one-time interview. In this short time, it could not be expected from interviewees to develop full trust and openness. In addition to the confidentiality measures mentioned above, I tried to create a trustworthy relationship by being open about my position and interest as a researcher, answering questions the interviewees asked me, engaging in “active listening.” Although interviews held via video-call had a surprisingly personal or intimate atmosphere to my mind; on some occasions weak internet connection interrupted the flow of the conversation, leading to repetitive questions and sometimes a little frustration. One interview was literally cut off prematurely due to a technical error.

Furthermore, the interview language was a defining factor: As stated above, interviews were held in English or Turkish, because proficiency of one of these languages could be reasonably expected in the international setting of the humanitarian sector in Turkey.

These languages also allowed me to conduct the interviews myself, without the intermediation of a translator, which I found desirable for the natural flow and trustful atmosphere of the interviews. However, the choice of interview language also entailed some problems, because oftentimes both the interviewees and I were speaking in a foreign language. This limited the proficiency of expression and comprehension on both sides and probably caused some misunderstandings at times. Furthermore, interviews held in Turkish often meant that I may have missed subtle meanings. In these cases, the use of repetitive words by some interviewees might not have meant to stress a point, but to make sure that I understood them. I want to express my gratitude to all interviewees for their patience and flexibility in this matter.

I also want to make very clear that, just like the humanitarian sector and its political environment evolve constantly, so, too, the identity and attitudes of the interviewees regarding the research subject may change over time. This research, then, represents just a snapshot of their experiences and perspectives within a particular time-frame. What makes this snapshot meaningful nevertheless, is how it relates to the broader social context and preexisting literature.

### **3.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

Given that the focus of the research is on the interviewees' perspectives, analytical categories were created inductively from the data gathered throughout the interviews.<sup>57</sup>

For the analytical coding, the sound-recordings of the interviews were transcribed in detail in accordance with a previously established transcription log. From those transcripts, analytical categories were created through two cycles of manual coding: In a first cycle of open coding, I produced a vast amount of preliminary codes to lay out all subjects and emotions brought up by the interviewees. Those preliminary codes were then coded once more in a second cycle based on emerging visible patterns; this second cycle was more sensitive to my actual research questions. Finally, I searched those codes of the second cycle for patterns of frequency, similarity and difference, and then organized these codes into categories. Throughout the whole process I wrote memos to be mindful about

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<sup>57</sup> However, since the theoretical framework formed the basis of my research and interview questions, it obviously influenced the analysis as an underlying grid.

my own assumptions and positionality and to trace intuitions for analysis which formed during the coding. I also kept protocol of which subjects were first brought up by the interviewees themselves and which subjects I as researcher introduced to the conversation to not conflate my research priorities with those of the interviewees.

The following chapters are structured around the themes which emerged most strongly throughout the analysis.



#### **4. ANALYSIS: “LIKE IT OR NOT” - LOCAL HUMANITARIAN WORKERS AT THE INTERSECTION OF POWER RELATIONS**

According to Donini (2016), humanitarianism in its current form is “the product of the expansion of western values and economic power,” based on the dominance of the capitalist system with its colonial foundation (Donini, 2016, p.76). He further claims that the contemporary “dominant humanitarian model has reached ‘critical mass,’” making it virtually “irresistible” to join it (ibid.). This dominant model of humanitarianism entails an “asymmetrical relationship” (Donini, 2016, p.77) between the “giving” and the “receiving” party, as well as a de-politicization in a double sense: Firstly, members of the “receiving” group tend to become defined as “hapless victims” rather than “rights holders” (ibid., referring to Fassin, 2010). Secondly, humanitarian workers themselves predominantly struggle to present their work as detached from political issues, let alone interests (see Barnett, 2011, pp.10-12). Donini points out that any “small humanitarian agency in the Global South” is of course “free not to choose the dominant model, but in practice this is pointless if [they] aspire to be an important player that attracts contracts and funds” (ibid.). At the same time, Donini himself (2016, p.76) – along with other scholars (see Barnett, 2013, p.387) – acknowledges a diversification of humanitarianism in terms of actors, principles, objectives and priorities. And previously mentioned studies of glocalization caution us against an oversimplified notion of the transmission of standards, regulations and ideas from “top to bottom” (see Kraidy, 1999, p.456).

Therefore, it would be an over-hasty conclusion to assume that my interviewees must have adopted dominant humanitarian discourses, just because their NGOs indeed managed to “attract contracts and funds” from the European Union. Instead, the way in which local humanitarian workers in these organizations narrate their work on the ground provides a more nuanced understanding of their perspective and position in the complex network of power relations shown in figure 1 below.

This chapter will analyze these narratives, with a focus on how interviewees perceive the relation between politics and their work, specifically as it occurs in the context of the EU-Turkey Statement.

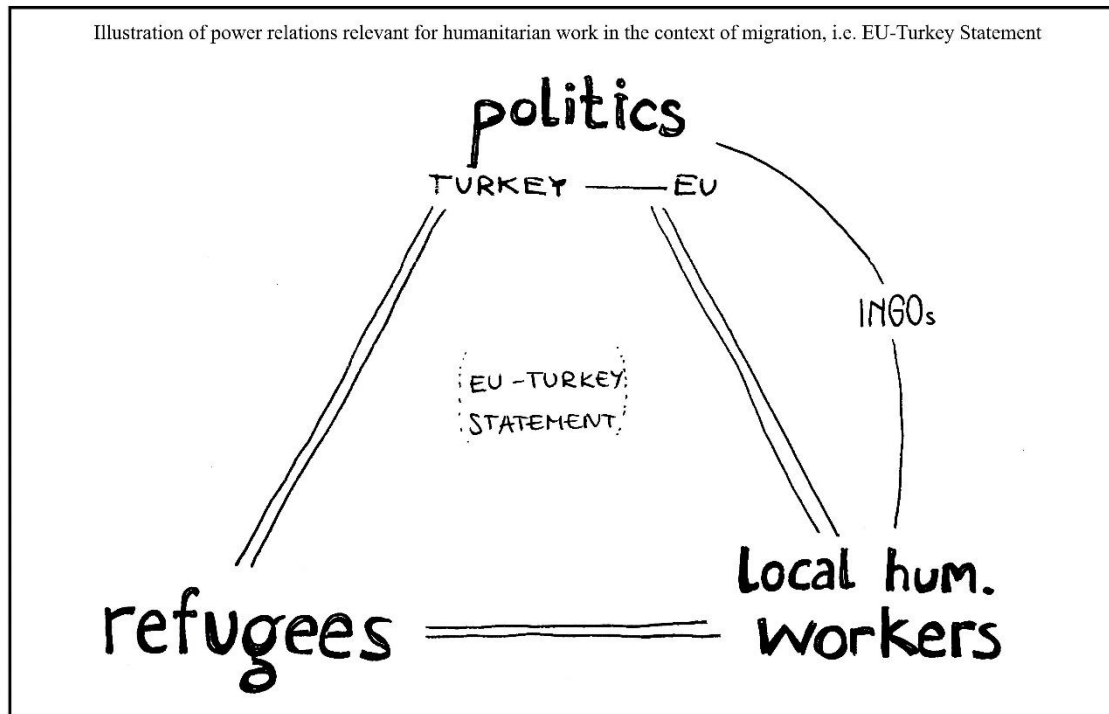


Figure 1: A simplified illustration of power relations in local humanitarian work in the context of the EU-Turkey Statement, as deduced from the interviews

The first section will look at the alleged separation between humanitarian work and politics, often symbolized by the EU-Turkey Statement and conclude with instances where interviewees indeed recount intersections between politics and humanitarian work.

The second section then focuses on the humanitarian sector in Turkey, and how the sector has been impacted and continues to be impacted by the EU-Turkey Statement.

In the final section, I will focus on the local humanitarian workers themselves as active agents in this network of power relations.

#### 4.1 THE ALLEGED SEPARATION BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN WORK AND POLITICS

That the discourse of humanitarianism contributes to the perception of a division between a political and (disparate) ethical realm has been pointed out by Barnett (2013, p.384; referring to Kennedy, 2005). Kennedy (2005) elaborates that both humanitarians and statesmen – although increasingly drawing on the rhetoric of the relative other, namely of ethics or pragmatism – they insist on a sharp boundary between the two realms of



humanitarians and politicians (pp.337-339). For humanitarians, this means they ultimately tend to refrain from instrumentalism in favor of principle and ethics, and adopt an (ostensible) “posture outside power” (Kennedy, 2005, p.338). The aim is to “leave some space between [themselves, i.e. humanitarians] and someone else – the strategist, the statesman – who is even more strategic, even farther from virtue” (ibid.).

As for the interviewees of this study, this however is only true to some extent, as we will see in this chapter. I will show that the interviewees indeed described their humanitarian work and politics as divided by the *commitment to or neglect of* ethical values, most prominently the virtue of *humanity*. The logical conclusion that interviewees did not usually see a direct relation between humanitarian work and politics will then be contrasted with instances where interviewees acknowledged a mutual impact of the two.

#### 4.1.1 Humanitarian Work as Ethical Endeavor

Interviewees commonly framed their experience as humanitarian workers as an ethical endeavor - even though the degree to which they identified with humanitarianism varied significantly. This varying degree defies the notion of “the one” type of (local) humanitarian worker, and is important because it also relates to the differing extent of critical reflection of interviewees on the humanitarian enterprise. Therefore, a short overview of that range will introduce this chapter:

On the one end of the spectrum, there is for example \*Ayhan, who fully identifies as a humanitarian when asked in our interview:

H<sup>58</sup>: Would you call yourself a “humanitarian”? [...] Like, “I am a humanitarian.” - Is this something you would say?

A: Yes. This is something I would say. Yeah. And I want people to say like, “Go to Ayhan! He is a humanitarian.” [...] Because it’s something, I’m doing it on a purpose. And I’m doing it because I like it and I want it.

Through the quote above it becomes clear that Ayhan not only adopts the humanitarian label for himself, but that he relates to it with pride, as he perceives it as a marker for a certain quality of work and/or personality. For Ayhan, being a humanitarian is deeply

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<sup>58</sup> H for Helene (researcher). I translated all excerpts from interviews held in Turkish into English to increase the readability of the analysis. To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees in this small sample, it will not be pointed out, which quotes are translated and which are originally in English. Appendix B offers a list of transcriptions codes used in this analysis.

related to an intrinsic motivation, a certain kind of passion even, and meaningfulness. This notion is repeated by several other interviewees, for example by \*Deniz, who describes working as a humanitarian as a “childhood dream.” Such highly passionate identifications with humanitarianism, however, might also be interpreted from the perspective, that the degree to which one engages in humanitarian action can come to be seen as “a measure of one’s [own] humanity” (Barnett, 2013, p.385). In that sense, Ayhan’s statement that he wants others to recommend him as a humanitarian, reflects the idea that “how we imagine others to see us [...], and how we imagine others evaluate what they see” forms to a certain degree the basis for a person’s sense of self (Arcaro, 2016, [blog post from January 25], referring to social psychologist G.H. Cooley’s concept of the “looking-glass self”). The more passionate a humanitarian someone is, or is perceived (for example by me, the researcher), the more that person’s own humanity is presumed to be validated.

On the other side of the spectrum, \*Özgür distances herself explicitly from being a humanitarian, but still uses a rhetoric of ethics:

Ö: Actually, I have never defined myself, I think, as a humanitarian, or as a humanitarian worker in this sector. But of course, because you have been working in this sector, people call you a humanitarian worker [...]. For me, I do - I just do what I want to do. And I communicate with people - I work with people, and to see the change, I think, in the world. Even in one person’s life. [...] For me, every person – every, I think, creature - deserves a dignified life. Dignity is the main point for me. And every person has the right to celebrate their rights, their existence. Humanitarians, for me, work or team up to support this environment and these areas for people.

Özgür’s relation to humanitarianism is rather complex. Even though she does not identify herself as a humanitarian, she acknowledges that she is ascribed to be one in the eyes of other people due to her profession. She emphasizes her individual conviction, which finds its ethical core in a proximity to people and universal existential and practicable rights. When she says, that humanitarians, for her, “work or team up to support this environment and these areas,” she portrays them as something like “kindred spirits” who work along similar lines, maybe even share similar goals. Her argument about the universality of dignity for example is akin to the principle of humanity which is so central to humanitarianism (see Chapter 2.3.1). The idea of addressing *all* people, without bias, has been raised by several interviewees, sometimes repeatedly, as an important guiding principle of their work. Özgür still rejects to be counted as humanitarian, mainly because she charges humanitarian work with stabilizing an unequal social order, which I will

discuss in more detail in Chapters 4.1.3 and 4.3.2. For now, it is noteworthy that her vocabulary is more one of rights and (social) change, than one of compassion (which would usually be assumed to form the basis of humanitarian sentiment; see Fassin, 2011).

Across that wide range of personal stances there is a pattern of describing one's own work in the humanitarian sector through the vocabulary of ethics, often combined with a tendency to negate any implications contradicting those ethics. For example, \*Yaşar describes his initial motivation to work in the sector like this:

Y: Well then, why did I start this job? I love to value and cherish people. Because every person is very particular for me. You might ask why. Because they are human beings, and when they are stuck in difficult circumstances, I get really upset. [...] Humans deserve respect, in any case. Refugees, too. Before I started this job, I saw that they were – well, not denigrated by the public, but somehow looked at with despise. So with this awareness, I asked myself: Why do people do that? [...] That is why I said I'd like to work in this sector. Yes, I do get some money in return for this. That's true. But if we would all do our duty, we wouldn't even need this money anymore. Because if everybody would help out a friend, ((inaudible)) for people. [...]

Yes, maybe we all need a certain amount of money to live our life. But never, never ever, did this money stand in the way of our project, in the way of anybody who supports us. I wonder: What could we do, if the money wouldn't be there? [...] If they would tell us one day, "The money is finished, we won't pay any more." And if, still, one of our participants would call me and say, "I need a lawyer, and I am sick, I'll go to the doctor." They ask for my help, but I don't get money anymore. The project is over. It will not be like this, I mean. The reason why we are here, is to help people, without reciprocation.

This quote represents a rich profile of ethical assumptions raised throughout several interviews. First, it highlights again the focus on "humanity" as a core principle: Yaşar cherishes human beings on the mere ground of their being human, and thence feels compassionate with people living under harsh conditions. Secondly, it points out that these harsh conditions are not limited to the unfulfillment of basic needs<sup>59</sup>, but include also the neglect of immaterial needs or rights, like the right to being treated respectfully. Seeing this right infringed upon by a disdainful Turkish majority society with possibly racist attitudes motivated Yaşar, like other interviewees, to start working in the humanitarian sector. This work might then be understood, if not as an expression of a decidedly anti-racist stance, at least as a tool to act against a perceived injustice; hence, as a tool for social change. Thirdly, Yaşar stresses a point which was raised by almost all interviewees without my mentioning it: that financial remuneration for humanitarian work is merely a necessity, but by no means a motivating or influencing factor. In fact, by stressing that they would give the same assistance without payment, and that the core

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<sup>59</sup> I understand basic needs, here, as defined by Maslow (1943): as physiological and safety needs.

motivation for humanitarian work is providing help “without reciprocation,” Yaşar seems to suggest a certain kind of selflessness, of unconditional engagement. That so many interviewees brought up the issue of (the “secondariness” of) financial remuneration without my hinting at it, might mean that they are either often charged with accusations of having ethical principles compromised by salary, or that they themselves feel this dilemma at times.<sup>60</sup> It surely resembles a grand narrative of the humanitarian tale according to which humanitarian work is, or should be, based on altruism, often connected to the notion of volunteerism (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.12). Barnett & Weiss, however, doubt the existence of any truly altruistic humanitarians. Instead, they speak of “selfish altruists” (Vaux, 2001, cited in Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.13) who give, but also seek “power, esteem, and social status” (p.13). And in fact, unlike financial remuneration, *emotional* remuneration for their work was freely recounted by interviewees on various occasions. For example, Deniz feels rewarded by seeing the positive change in the people she is working with:

D: You can see how their face is changing, <<smiling> the color of their face,> the light in their eyes. So it was my motivation, I was so much in love.

The quote demonstrates Deniz’s emotional attachment to her work, but it also shows that observing her positive impact in the lives of the people she works with, benefits herself in uplifting her emotionally. And \*Olçay adds a dimension of spiritual reward to it:

O: For me, when I help a person, and this person includes me in their prayer and is happy, that is something sublime, something I take pride in.

From this perspective, assisting others seems to be almost sacred, and Olçay feels honoured by the satisfaction and gratitude of people who include him in this sacredness through their prayers. While salary seems to be an illegitimate motivation, pride and sense of self and purpose were presented as unquestioned gratifications.

One final point that Yaşar’s remarks from above highlights, is a common understanding that “helping a friend” – which I understand in this context as “helping a fellow human being” – is in fact a (moral) *duty* or obligation for all humans, which unfortunately a lot

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<sup>60</sup> For Özgür, for example, this dilemma is one of the reasons why she feels like a “stranger” among humanitarians at times. For example, when her colleagues, especially expats, started celebrating the news of receiving major future funding. Özgür says with emphasis: “Okay, if the crisis will go on, then it’s good we have money to provide our services. And provide support for these people. But it’s not a celebration! Come on!” And at a different point in the interview: “Some people [are] suffering; and some people earn money - so, this really doesn’t make sense or you can not feel COMFORTABLE with that.”

of people fail to carry out. We will see in the following section, that from the perspective of the interviewees, it is precisely this moral obligation which state politics fail to meet.

#### 4.1.2 “Humanity Ends There”: The EU-Turkey Statement as Exploitative and Unethical

Ironically, like humanitarian workers, EU- and Turkish officials do not cease to emphasize the humanitarian dimension of their work in the EU-Turkey Statement (see European Commission, 2019, January 7; “Migrant crisis”, 2016).<sup>61</sup>

For my interviewees, however, the story is a completely different one. For them, the Statement is not a humanitarian intervention but an exploitative bargain between national state interests. Olcay, expresses this perception in the following:

O: I mean: If the European Union would think different about refugees – I mean, “We don’t want to take these refugees. Let whomsoever look after them! We’ll give the money” – the moment you say this, humanity ends there anyway. If, in real terms, they think about “How can we save these people from the war, how can we help,” and if they want to support Turkey a bit – that’s not just a matter of material aid. For example now, more than four million refugees are coming to Turkey, and the EU, or the world in general – not just Europe, also Arab countries – must take in the same number. [...] A humanitarian plight is happening, a problem of humanity. And I’m saying that, “I don’t want to take these people, permit them into my country... but [I’ll] only [give] material support.” I mean, if this material support would find a solution – question mark. I mean, I don’t know. Money isn’t everything.

In Olcay’s opinion, the Statement contradicts humanitarianism’s core value of “humanity.” According to him, it does so by turning the care for refugees into an object of trade, a burden to be kept afar at any price, expressing an intrinsic neglect of their well-being. He mistrusts that there is any true interest in “helping” or “saving” people fleeing from war, especially because he doubts that the money the European Union is paying, will help to find a solution for the refugees in Turkey.

As suggested in the introducing paragraphs to the chapter, state politics are hence perceived to function in a realm of strategy and instrumentalization, disparate from humanitarian idealism. But from the way Olcay uses the subjunctive (“IF they want to support”, “IF they think like ‘how can we help/save them’”) it can be understood that, in a way, he still expects politicians to live up to the humanitarian ideals. This especially becomes clear also when he demands that countries from all over the world, especially

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<sup>61</sup> Such a “deployment of moral sentiments in contemporary politics” is another example of the pervasive “humanitarian government” described by Fassin (2001, p.1; see Chapter 2.2.1 from page 16).

Arab and European countries, should take their “share in numbers” of accepting refugees. This perception was repeated by several interviewees, often with a hint to the big number of refugees currently living in Turkey. Deniz’s first reaction when asked about the Statement, for example, was:

D: Somehow, for sure, everyone will agree to it, [that] it is not fair. Because it is not fairly sharing the responsibility for those refugees.

Such statements may reflect personal moral convictions, but they might also be influenced by mainstream media narratives of the Statement in Turkey which often criticize the EU for not taking responsibility or “shar[ing] the burden” (Oruç, 2020; see also Aras, 2020).

But the interviewees’ criticism of the Statement goes further than that, in accusing *both* sides of the agreement of instrumentalizing the situation for their own benefit. \*Fikret, for example, was disturbed by the dehumanizing rhetoric of Turkish officials:

F: Turkey, too, is trying to work according to its own prosperity. In any case, you might have noticed, that the nation’s president appears on the news whenever there’s an incident and says [to Europe], “Don’t anger us! We open the doors, let them all out.” If such a threat is constructed, that means that, in the background, there must be a lot of talk about this. And that’s a very deplorable thing. I mean, are they [(the refugees)] – excuse my French – animals? Are they property or what? What does that mean, “I’ll open the door, and shove these people on to you.” Are these your slaves, your humans, or what? I mean, what are they?

That the Turkish president uses refugees as a threat – a strategy which has gained new attention with the recent developments at the Turkish-Greek border – is absolutely immoral for Fikret: Instrumentalizing refugees to increase one’s own prosperity<sup>62</sup> and put pressure on European countries, implies that they are one’s property, which is deeply dehumanizing. Especially, the last string of questions which Fikret rhetorically poses to the Turkish President, underlines his intense disapproval – probably most strikingly by linking this exploitation to the substantial deprivation of human liberty in slavery.

A further common criticism raised by my interviewees was the *hypocritical* attitude of the parties of the Statement towards social rights and the value of human lives. This criticism was raised for example with regard to politician’s public display of consternation after refugees die in the Mediterranean Sea. It was also raised with regard

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<sup>62</sup> A little earlier in the interview Fikret also stated, that Turkey’s economy is not in a good position, turning the EU money into a considerable incentive to try and make some profit for oneself. This draws attention to the economic discrepancy between the EU and Turkey, affecting each party’s position in the negotiations of the Statement.

to aid statistics from both Turkey and the EU, which claim to support a certain number of refugees with basic income, when actually the designated sum for basic income is not even enough to survive.<sup>63</sup> This allows to publicly present the high *number* of supported people as a success, but hides that even the people who get support are still living under the most precarious circumstances.

Furthermore, humanitarian aid and the Statement as such were charged with hypocrisy, as can be seen from another quote by Fikret:

F: I see this [governmental humanitarian aid] as being a bit two-faced. [...] For example, someone might say: Social standards have been created there [in a particular country], have been established there in time. But if go back to an earlier point in history, the very same country that created those social standards went to a different country at the time and brought that place into a state of exploitation. [...] Like this, it enriched and aggrandized itself. The exploited country, however, was left in poverty, left in hunger. This time around, the exploitive country wants to relieve its conscience and now goes over there to provide medical aid, deliver food etc. Like, “I’m providing aid, easy, I’m easy!” But that’s not it! It was already you who went there at the time, invaded the place and took everything! You brought this! [...] So what, now you’re making an agreement; you say, “Well, these people are refugees; normally, according to my standards, my laws, there is all sorts of support for refugees.” But you say, “Look, this wave that’s coming is very big, I don’t want it to come. C’mon, you take ‘em, stop ‘em there! Let me give you some money to support, they shall stay with you.” But this is against your own rules. ((inaudible words)) You have to accept whoever comes to your land. I mean, seeing that you don’t accept anyone like this, you probably shouldn’t have created your laws like a social state. There is much more to say, this enters a bit into politics. I don’t want to go into this too much, but I don’t find this very right, for instance.

This statement displays an awareness of how the pretended “charity” of rich, self-proclaimed “social states” is often rooted in colonial exploitation, creating the very conditions of poverty and hunger those states are now ostentatiously “aiding” against.<sup>64</sup> Fikret saw the Statement as a continuation of those colonial relations. More than that, he pointed out that this kind of bargain is against the very social values and laws that European countries pride themselves with. The Statement, for him, uncovers the hypocrisy of the social foundation of European states, which are swiftly undercut at any national inconvenience. His criticism, of how refugee populations are denied access to the social rights of successor states of former colonial powers, points to the “dual model” of humanitarian government described by Fassin (see Chapter 2.2.1). Fikret clearly

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<sup>63</sup> For example, the monthly income provided by the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), which is the biggest cash transfer project under FRiT, totals about €20 per person per month (European Commission, 2019, January 7). This is hardly enough for groceries, let alone rent.

<sup>64</sup> Other interviewees did not allude to colonial relations, but in essence criticized hypocrisy similarly. Özgür, for example, said: “Let’s think about Turkey and the situation of refugees in Turkey: they are provided food and they are provided non-food items and basic needs. And all this money comes from the states and from the sites of actual wars, actually <chuckling sadly/cynically>. So, it’s also questionable.”

negates the ethical and legal legitimacy of such a double register. His closing remark, that he “doesn’t want to get too much into politics [here]” leads us to the next section, which analyzes how interviewees only gradually overcame their reluctance to acknowledge a certain intersection between politics or the Statement and their own humanitarian work.

Given that the previous pages have shown how interviewees position their work on the ethical side, and politics and the Statement<sup>65</sup> on the unethical side of a divide, this reluctance seems comprehensible.

#### 4.1.3 (No) Intersections of Politics, the Statement and Humanitarian Work

Initially, interviewees tended to describe the relation between humanitarian work and politics as non-existent. But throughout the interviews, a lot of them eventually mentioned conflicts arising from the intersection between politics and their work. Ayhan’s reply is a good example of that:

H: Usually, it’s said that humanitarian work and politics should be separated. Or they are separated. What do you think about it?

A: They are very separated.

H: Yeah?

A: Yeah - they are very separated, for most of the projects. I mean we just take the permission from the government. That’s all. They do not ask for, I mean, for only one project - which is the [\*project name] - they always ask for a number of Turkish people to benefit from the project. A percentage. And sometimes it’s high. Like, fifty percent. Or, thirty percent. And we are here for refugees; so that might make a conflict. Yeah.

With starting by claiming that humanitarian work and politics are “very separated,” Ayhan took the same line as most humanitarians who like to “present themselves as above politics” (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.12). Barnett & Weiss go on to claim that nevertheless, most “acknowledge that their actions have political consequences” (ibid.). The people I interviewed argued slightly differently: On some occasions, upon second thought or between the lines, they “acknowledged” that political actions had “consequences” *on their* work rather than the other way around. Like Ayhan expresses in the quote above, requirements of the government have an impact on which populations receive

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<sup>65</sup> Throughout the interviews, comments on the Statement often led to remarks on politics in general. Because of this, it is difficult to precisely distinguish in hindsight whether some comments refer strictly to the Statement or to politics in general. I will therefore analyze comments on these issues simultaneously without always making a clear distinction between them.



assistance.<sup>66</sup> On other occasions, they spoke more about conscious *decisions* to participate in political processes themselves (see Chapter 4.3) which differs from “admitting consequences.” In Ayhan’s quote it shows that the intersections of politics and humanitarian work are perceived as problematic. In this case, they lead to a conflict between designated and demanded recipients, calling into question who has the right to decide on such a matter and on which ground.

Deniz elaborated further on this dilemma between humanitarian ideals and political interests after we had talked about some core humanitarian principles her organization subscribed to:

H: Are there moments in your work, where you feel like these principles are conflicted?

D: <<thoughtful> mhh...> Because the... the issue is so much political in Turkey, these refugee issues. So, everyone has a word, depending on their political background and political standing. So, sometimes – yeah –, even for each of [these principles]. [...] But I think, in general, when we also speak with other humanitarians from different parts of the world - when we are discussing with my friends, I think “independent” is the most questioning one, because it is such a political issue. So, when you are giving your word that, “I will be cool to anyone,” but sometimes there is not enough place, open space to do this. Someone might wanna cut it, or put some: “Okay, if you do this, you can’t do that.” So, it is a big dilemma, for this [reason].

The way she paused, before stating the political complications, made her seem hesitant to talk about it, possibly indicating the difficulty of this issue. She still continued, and made clear that independence<sup>67</sup> is the most troubled ethical principle, because people [i.e. policymakers] with their own political agenda in Turkey (try to) interfere in decisions on humanitarian work by cutting or channeling funds, or demanding trade-offs for certain humanitarian actions. Besides the problems of prioritization which limited resources entail in any case, the *control* over these resources is thus perceived as a significant tool of (national) politicians and policymakers to influence humanitarian work.

Similar to politics in general, interviewees usually referred to the Statement as something apart, abstract, which they mostly relate to through the news. This might surprise, given that they all work in projects (co-)funded through the Statement – thus having a direct relation – and although they knew that my research was about humanitarians working

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<sup>66</sup> Obviously, it can be argued that such an impact ultimately translates into political consequences *of* the humanitarian work on the ground. But the focus of this analysis is on the way interviewees told their stories, and they did not talk about that translation. This particular issue might be another research topic worthwhile.

<sup>67</sup> Reminder: Independence is a traditional humanitarian principle which commands that “assistance [should] not be connected to any of the belligerents or others (especially states) with a stake in the outcome of a [conflict]” (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.10).

*under the EU-Turkey Statement.*

Intersections between the Statement and their work were mentioned only when directly asked about. On such an occasion, Fikret emphasized that the Statement affects the humanitarian work only in the background, but more importantly has direct impact on the refugees they are working with. Additionally, as Fikret is working for an international NGO, his organization inevitably depends quite profoundly on political decisions.

F: It doesn't affect us in our daily work, but in the background it does, like it or not. If they want, Turkey could kick us, I mean this organization, out, evacuate us.

[...] But there are many ways it affects the refugees, for instance. There are many refugees who want to go to Europe, but they are all staying here, for example. They made their registrations, but nobody accepts them. They are all forced to stay here. [...] In this regard, there are a lot of obstacles, but for our own work it doesn't have too much of an effect, directly, because it comes from above, and we are on the ground. It crumbles until it reaches us, it crumbles quite a lot.

He claims that the Statement does not have significant impact on the daily work, because its regulations come from “above” (i.e. the EU/Turkey) and “crumble” before they reach the ground where the daily work is located. On the one hand, this observation reflects the assumption laid out in the theoretical framework in chapter 2.3.2; that the definition of standards and regulations is considered to be a unilateral, top-down process (Dunn, 2005, p.176). On the other hand, it also shows that in practice, these regulations are perceived to lose their vigor on the way down the cross-organizational hierarchy. Hence, Fikret assumes a certain liberty or independence in his own work. However, he also says that his organization might be “kicked out” if Turkish authorities “want” to. In fact, this happened to the US-based NGO *Mercy Corps* which initially received funds through the EU Facility but was then expelled from Turkey in 2017 (Shaw & Şentek, 2018). Other NGOs and INGOs faced difficulties in obtaining work permits for their staff and were pressured with high fines (Shaw & Şentek, 2018). Fikret's remark shows that this threat presents a constraint on humanitarian work. And this constraint is all the more political, as the cases of *Mercy Corps* and others show, because the punishment is not *just* about sanctioning (I)NGOs if they do not comply with Turkish laws. Moreover, it also has a symbolic dimension, and is therefore affected by the degree to which international relations between Turkey and the EU are good or tense.

Finally, Fikret made the important point that the Statement has a massive impact on refugees in Turkey, and hence – through them – it becomes meaningful for humanitarian

work. The fortification of EU-borders and virtually non-existent resettlement opportunities force refugees to stay in Turkey against their will. At a different time in the interview, Fikret mentioned that the awareness of being unwanted by both Europe and Turkey<sup>68</sup> causes a feeling of abasement and psychological distress in refugees. In consequence, his organization started to offer psychological support with this focus - an example of how humanitarian work gets affected by the impacts of the Statement on refugees themselves.

Another example by Deniz shows how a conjunction of the Statement's regulations with Turkish migration legislation impacts refugees and, in consequence, humanitarian work:

D: We [our NGO] are there for all refugees who are asking assistance. [...] And for example, these ESSN cards<sup>69</sup>, they are for all refugees. Irani, and so on. But the thing is... for example, for Afghani people now, it is SO difficult to apply for international protection. Also for Iraqi people. [...] It is so difficult. [...] Then, when you don't have papers, or when you have just a residence permit [for example for work or education purposes], you can not apply for any humanitarian assistance.

The quote highlights that a bias in Turkish migration law, on who is granted protection status, combined with EU project guidelines, on who merits to become a “beneficiary,” creates an exclusion of certain populations from assistance. Even though this might not be intentional, it results in a discriminatory practice based on nationality by translating the legal bias into humanitarian practice. This, once more, creates a tension between humanitarian ideal and politically impacted reality.

This chapter has highlighted that the interviewed humanitarian workers initially represent their work and politics, as well as their work and the Statement, as separate. For them, humanitarian work operates in the realm of ethics, with humanity as its core value. By contrast, politics in light of the Statement are perceived to operate through dehumanizing practices regarding refugees, with exploitative strategies of instrumentalization, bargaining, hypocrisy and indifference. Upon further reflection, however, the interviewees explicated a number of instances where state politics – namely in the form

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<sup>68</sup> Here, he referred to Turkey's plans of deporting people to declared “safe zones” in Syria. All in all, the refugees' awareness responds to the dehumanizing state rhetoric laid out in the section before.

<sup>69</sup> The issuing of ESSN cards has been funded through the Statement and is the “largest-ever humanitarian aid programme financed by the EU” (European Commission, 2019, October 31). It was implemented by the UN World Food Programme in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent, and as of April 1, 2020, it is continued by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent (ibid.).

of legislation and sanctioning – and the regulations of the Statement had a (mostly problematic) impact on their work, for example through the distribution of resources, the interference in project designs, and the constraining effects on refugees themselves.

## **4.2 THE EU-TURKEY STATEMENT AND THE (TRANS)FORMATION OF THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR IN TURKEY**

The previous chapter already pointed out some practical and moral implications the Statement had for the work of the interviewees. This chapter will describe the larger impact of the Statement on the humanitarian sector in Turkey which some of the workers mentioned. They observed roughly two different phases: Firstly, the inflation of the sector after the beginning of the Syrian war, spurred by the money from the EU Facility. Secondly, the quantitative shrinking of the sector and a shifting focus in assistance. Professionalization and marketization of the sector seem to be the long-lasting side-effects of these processes. Recognizing the perceptions of those dynamics helps to answer in more detail how local humanitarian workers view the Statement and processes of professionalization, i.e. standardization. The chapter closes by assessing the role of the interviewees in the implementation of international standards.

### **4.2.1 The Syrian Civil War, the Statement and the Inflation of an Unstable Sector**

To understand the perceived impact of the Statement on the humanitarian sector in Turkey, it is important to clarify how interviewees described the sector prior to 2016. As anticipated, the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, and the subsequent large-scale immigration of refugees to Turkey, was commonly seen as a turning point, both for a rapid change in Turkey's humanitarian sector, but also for the interviewees' personal biographies.<sup>70</sup>

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70 Some interviewees recalled these events as an incentive to start working with refugees in Turkey. Furthermore, two of the workers are Syrians and there were instances where their personal experiences of being a refugee and humanitarian worker mingled or conflated. I decided to not make this an issue in the interviews because (a) it was not what the interviewees had agreed to beforehand, (b) I was not prepared for this kind of conversation, and (c) their complex and personal stories would have become just marginalia to this thesis, which would have been disrespectful. At first, I was insecure how to account for this mingled identities in the analysis. Eventually, I realized that it was illusionary to imagine a “sterile, pristine

Comments on the sector in the early phase after 2011 often alluded to the previous inexperience of Turkey in dealing formally with immigration. Özgür recalls:

Ö: With the Syrian crisis and Van<sup>71</sup> earthquake, [our NGO] started working inside Turkey. And actually in Turkey, there were no refugee rights, previously. <<speaking quickly> Yes, of course, there were people under international protection,> but Turkey is not a refugee country. We are a transit country. [...] We didn't have refugee laws and regulations in Turkey. And, this was the same for organizations as well: for civil society organizations. There was no humanitarian sector in this country or refugee rights organizations... It was something like that, so these organizations were, like, mushrooming! And there were no experts or people who could improve the capacities of these organizations.

Her quote exemplifies the perception that legal and civil society structures for immigrants were barely existent in Turkey before the Syrian civil war, and that both structures developed rapidly and somehow messily since then. Although this is a common conception,<sup>72</sup> scholars like İçduygu (2007) and Kirişçi (2004) call our attention to the fact, that national immigration and asylum policies and practices in Turkey have their own historical legacies. İçduygu (2007) argues, that what actually accelerated in the past years is a “Europeanization” of those policies and practices, taking ‘migration control’ as its core component (p. 201). Similarly, there was already an emergent and “vibrant civil society in Turkey” twenty years ago, with NGOs getting involved in asylum matters (Kirişçi, 2004, p.6). That Özgür talked about the sector as though it emerged from nothing, might merely be a simplification. But it could also indicate, that what she defines as “refugee laws” or a “humanitarian sector” is not *any* kind of law or sector, but a very particular kind: one based on a certain type of “expert” knowledge. In this case, Özgür does not describe the emergence of a humanitarian sector from zero, but rather the *professionalization* of that sector. In any case, her quote surely highlights a big quantitative increase in associations turning their focus towards migration issues (see Mackreath & Sagnıç, 2017, p.2) and an increased visibility of their work.<sup>73</sup> The fact that

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humanitarian worker identity” in the first place; not just with respect for the (for sure particular) intersection of refugee and humanitarian experience.

<sup>71</sup> Van is a Turkish city close to Iran. The earthquake Özgür refers to happened in 2011.

<sup>72</sup> For example, İneli-Ciğer (2019) claims that the 2014 Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), “*established* a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey that in many respects mirrors the EU asylum *acquis*” (p.115, emphasis added). This implies that there has been no such framework before.

<sup>73</sup> One more note on visibility: With the exclamation that “of course, there were people under international protection,” Özgür brushes over another related issue: the visibility of refugees and their realities. That this issue is very much related to humanitarian work itself becomes clear when looking at an elaboration made by Deniz, who said: “The Afghani people, Iraqi people [...] they were there [in Turkey], with their own vulnerabilities, ten years ago. But there was not any special assistance for them. But with the Syrians, these refugees are on stage somehow. THEY become also more visible. Not enough, still! but I think it’s better

none of the interviewees has been working in the humanitarian sector *in Turkey* for more than three/four years might be another indicator for the recent amplification of this job area. Most of them had project-based (often short-term) contracts, which is symptomatic for the NGO-sector in general; and is actually a pointed example of the “project-oriented justificatory regime” which Boltanski & Chiapello (2005) describe in their article on “The New Spirit of Capitalism.” The project-oriented regime comes along with demands for flexibility (e.g. to move to another city for a different project), adaptability, networking and project enthusiasm, all of which can be found in the quotes from the interviews. To explore this further, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Interviewees did not just link the difficulties of Turkey to provide proper assistance to refugees with the country’s lack of experience, they also connected it to limited state budget and a weak social welfare system in general. These two points were often brought up in a comparison to European countries which were assumed to have more capacities to build on in both regards. Surely, as mentioned in Chapter 3.2.4, this juxtaposition between Turkey and Europe could have been partly employed by interviewees to sensitize me, as a researcher coming from Germany, about the local setting. But it also pinpoints the economic and social inequality between Turkey and major European countries which forms an important frame for the experiences and narratives of the interviewees.<sup>74</sup>

Against this economic background and the initial “messiness” of the humanitarian sector, the €6 billion of the EU Facility were perceived to have had significant impact on the humanitarian sector in Turkey. Deniz insinuated early in the interview that the sector in Turkey had been growing disproportionately over the last few years. When I asked her directly whether she perceived an influence of the money of the EU Facility on the sector, she replied like this:

D: For sure! Now, really many people are working in here; but also, when we are speaking during our meetings, it [the EU funding] will decrease - it is decreasing already. Unfortunately, <chuckles quietly> for some reasons, I am not sad that it is decreasing - that salaries are decreasing - whatever... Because, unfortunately, at the beginning it was SUCH A big amount of money, such a big level of salaries. [...] I know many people just chose to work in the humanitarian sector because of the salaries, so then you cannot really digest what you believe in, why you are doing that job. [...] Now people are starting to

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than compared to the past.” This exemplifies that assistance, i.e. humanitarian aid, is not as unconditional and universal as it likes to claim: to some extent at least it depends on a certain public awareness, promoted for example through media images, leading to a *call for* assistance (see Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.18).

<sup>74</sup> Example quotes from the interviews: “Turkey is already a third world country” (Özgür); “It [Germany] is better than Turkey for Turkish people ten times!” (Ayhan)

worry, because that money is getting less; the NGOs, INGOs are actually starting to be little; day by day it will change more into the direction of development and protection. Everything will change. I mean, it is not stable. [...] But, for sure, the EU money and the UN money created this humanitarian sector here. As I said, for example: We don't go to Yemen to work voluntarily there. We stay here, because the money is here, the salary is here. So, unless there is no money, I don't think, it will be that much a prioritized issue, this 'humanitarian' issue, in Turkey.

In essence, Deniz's answer to my question shows that the EU money is perceived to have created a very temporary, kind of "inflated" humanitarian sector in Turkey. This effect is seen ambivalently: On the one hand, it opened job opportunities in the field, hence providing the economic foundation for people to make a humanitarian engagement *inside* Turkey their number one priority. On the other hand, Deniz objects the disproportionately high salaries set up through the Facility (note how strongly she emphasizes "SUCH A big amount of money") which attract people who do not subscribe to the humanitarian ethics laid out in the previous chapter, namely selflessness. When Deniz says that EU and UN money put humanitarianism on the map in Turkey, this opens the question in how far it will stay on the map once that money holds off.

Since the interviews were held at the end of 2019 – towards the end of the Statement's projected time frame, and before the Turkish border "opening" in early 2020 put the renegotiation of the Statement's continuation/expansion back on the agenda – it was expectable that questions of uncertain future funding would be a common topic. The next section will look at the consequences of decreasing funds for local humanitarian workers and try to decode from their stories which effects of the Statement might last even after the funding ends.

#### **4.2.2 Decreasing Funds, Marketization and Professionalization**

There was a common consensus that EU funds for humanitarian projects would decrease in the near future and that this awareness shapes the sector significantly. When asked about the issue, Ayhan replied like this:

A: There is this conversation [about decreasing funds], always. To work harder on our project, to get funds again. Or to think about other projects that will stay longer. Because the projects started getting less and less, that's right. [...] Personally, I would say these protection projects will finish in two years! Because people [i.e. refugees] have been living here for eight years and they no longer need translation and accompanying. They might need job opportunities! Vocational trainings! Livelihoods! Let's think about these projects!

H: Okay. So this [shifting focus] is an internal choice of your NGO, maybe your personal perspective? But maybe, the money will follow, hopefully?!

A: For sure! The money will follow. ((chuckles)) I mean just to keep these works, these projects ongoing.

Ayhan's remark draws attention to two arguments relevant here: Firstly, the competitive dynamics immanent to limited or decreasing funds. Secondly, the observation that not only are projects decreasing, but they also shift their focus from emergency aid to long-term development. This paradigmatic shift is generally agreed upon by most interviewees, even though not a lot of them share Ayhan's optimism that funds will follow necessity and initiative.<sup>75</sup> In fact, previous research highlights that assistance and funding still has to adapt to the reality that most refugees in Turkey find themselves in a "protracted situation"<sup>76</sup> (see Cupolo, 2017; Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017, p.8). This is another proof that international and national politics' impact on refugees logically influences the priorities of humanitarian work.

As for the effects that competitive dynamics among NGOs might have on their work, the opinions of my interviewees diverge. Yaşar claimed that it is the competition for funds (in his words: "the continuous fear" of losing funds) which drives NGOs to write better projects, hence *increasing* the quality of humanitarian work.<sup>77</sup> Özgür, on the other hand, criticized that outside of coordination meetings, NGOs and other stakeholders are not usually willing to share information (e.g. about existing services). The possession and withholding of knowledge is a competitive advantage to secure the own pole position against other competitors, decreasing the willingness to "pool resources" (El Amin, 2017, p.18). Because this attitude damages the collaboration of different implementing partners, even towards the same overarching goal, maybe even for the same umbrella project, it has been listed as one of three main problems for the implementation of partnerships between IOs and NGOs (Cooley & Ron, 2002, p.16). When humanitarian work becomes marketized, as in this case, it risks to divert from its ethical priority of promoting peoples'

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<sup>75</sup> Fikret for example supposes that livelihood projects will increase in the future, but criticizes that they are "not easily approved by Europe."

<sup>76</sup> Protracted means that migrants "cannot go back to their homeland, [...] are unable to settle permanently in their country of first asylum, because the host state does not want them to remain indefinitely on its territory; and they do not have the option of moving on, as no third country has agreed to admit them and to provide them with permanent residence rights" (Crisp, 2002, p.1). Biehl (2015) provides a contemporary analysis of the protracted uncertainty of refugees in Turkey.

<sup>77</sup> Yaşar: "There is always a fear in CSOs. What can we do if [the money] finishes? And this makes them more successful. [...] They say, "If these projects don't work out, let's make some even better projects."



well-being.<sup>78</sup> Herman (2015) even argues that competition for funds makes NGOs “financially and strategically encapsulated by governmental donors” (quoted in El Amin, 2017, p.19).<sup>79</sup> In this sense, the marketization of humanitarian action can not be seen as an isolated phenomenon; it also relates back to state politics once more.<sup>80</sup>

Another effect of competition among NGOs in Turkey is the shift from “voluntarism to professionalism,” which was spurred by the entrance of INGOs (Mackreath & Sağrıç, 2017, p.2) and which has already been allured to by Özgür. According to previous literature, professionalization entails the adoption of a “modern democratic model of management and organization” (Slim, 2006, p.20). In result, efficiency and “objective indicators of success” become of primary interest (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.20), with report writing as one of the core controlling tools (see United Nations, 2016, p.18; Achamkulangare & Tarasov, 2017). And indeed, report writing as a means of accountability but also control was an omnipresent feature of interviewees’ description of their everyday work. Özgür describes the issue concisely:

Ö: Now, [providing a monthly report to public agencies] is a request. Previously, it was voluntary [...]. But now, this is a request because when some time passed, actually, the government and the public agencies got rigid. More rigid than before, actually. Because there are really many organizations mushrooming; and they can’t control; so now, they request this report. [...] But of course it’s a burden for us to produce these reports. Because every month we also produce reports for donors and partners we work with. Because we’re partnering with [different IOs], and their donors are different. So, it’s kind of third parties, second parties, and we produce reports for all of them.

It becomes clear through this quote that report writing became a common request both by the Turkish government and IOs (who in turn have to provide reports to *their* donors). Due to heterogeneous reporting requirements, the increased funding over the past years came hand in hand with increased reporting tasks.<sup>81</sup> But Özgür’s description exemplifies also that the responsibility for accountability through report-writing is generally directed towards donors (or other authorities) – not recipients (Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.20, citing Stein). This reinforces a critical power divide as to *who* decides about the legitimacy of humanitarian actions, clearly placing the power in the hands of the donors. To contrast

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<sup>78</sup> It is with this background that we have to understand Özgür’s averseness against celebrating funding in humanitarian NGOs (Chapter 4.1.1).

<sup>79</sup> This makes sense, considering that globally, humanitarian assistance is funded predominantly by governmental institutions (Development Initiatives, 2019, p.32).

<sup>80</sup> For more details, see for example Barnett & Weiss (2011, pp.18-23).

<sup>81</sup> The lack of harmonized reporting requirements as a bureaucratic burden for humanitarian workers has been analyzed in detail elsewhere (see ICVA, 2016; Achamkulangare & Tarasov, 2017).

this imbalance, one of the sampled NGOs proactively tries to be transparent to the public by publishing several of their reports, and opening different channels for feedback and complaint for the people they assist. This effort was seen as a “work in progress” by one of the interviewees.

All in all, given that interviewees said in the face of decreasing funding they would find another job, work with smaller teams or move abroad, it seems questionable which part of the humanitarian sector in Turkey will persist. What might prevail are the traces of professionalization: standardized tools and procedures. The next section looks at the role of local humanitarian workers in their implementation.

#### **4.2.3 Local Humanitarian Workers’ Role in the Implementation of International Standards**

Making a clear distinction as to where the bureaucratic influence of the Turkish government ends and the one of the Statement starts, is beyond the scope of this paper. But *that* the professionalization of the humanitarian sector in Turkey, spurred by the budget of the EU Facility, has an impact on rationalization processes in the Turkish humanitarian and migration regime becomes obvious through another quote of Özgür:

Ö: I think the case management and lots of the protection issues will be done totally by the state, the public service providers - and in this stage, INGOs, NGOs, organizations like us - we provide capacity building trainings for them; as far as I understood from the last meetings. For example, now, the UNHCR is trying to harmonize the case management tool of the Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Policies. They are trying to harmonize their social services tools with us. And at the last meeting, the protection coordinator of UNHCR said that “NOW you have the responsibility, as civil society organizations; you will advocate for these tools with the government agencies - and you will provide some capacity building, and we would like to be on the same page about for example, the risk assessment factors, indicators, and case management tools.”

The essence of this quote is that local NGOs along with their international partners are expected (by IGOs like the UNHCR, and possibly also by the EU and the Turkish government) to facilitate the transfer of their expertise and tasks to governmental institutions. This is a remarkable (side-)effect of the Statement: Through the intermediation of local NGOs (enlarged and capacitated through FRiT), international standards of assessing and “managing” assistance (“harmonized tools”) are being injected, first, into Turkey’s humanitarian sector, and further into Turkish governmental policies and practices. Previous research has argued that standardization takes on an especially vital function for management and legitimization of decision making processes

when “traditional forms of regulation (e.g. governmental) have been politically delegitimized” (Timmermans & Epstein, p.77, referring to Busch 2000). This might have been the case for the initial disorder in the humanitarian sector in Turkey following the Syrian civil war, especially considering that NGOs operated mostly in domains where the state failed to administer assistance and regulation (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017, p.2). When NGOs themselves, now, will have less funds available to continue their work; and are anticipated to make way for public “service providers,” it is at least questionable whether, along with the standardized tools, the ethical commitment to work in the interest of the refugees will be transmittable to governmental institutions as well.<sup>82</sup>

If the predominant responsibility of professionalized local NGOs in the current phase is the “advocacy” for harmonized tools and indicators, it is worthwhile to look at how people working in those NGOs, i.e. my interviewees, engage with those international standards. Looking at their statements, it becomes clear that international standards are not passed down “from bottom to top” in a smooth, linear way. For one, local organizations retain a certain liberty to choose which standards they adopt and which not. When I asked Özgür whether the increased collaboration with international donors results in more rigid and standardized approaches to humanitarian problems, she said:

Ö: Actually, we try to keep our autonomy. But, of course, we work with donors and international organizations in the field as well. But we benefit from them. For example, for child safeguarding policy, or for gender policy, and additional regulations that we can use in the field to make quality in our work. We benefit from them. But, also, we have some... some red lines. So, for example, when something occurs, we discuss; and we say, “Okay, we can use this, and this is very beneficial for our programs, and for our operations. But we cannot use this, because this thing, this regulation will affect our work and our beneficiaries in a bad way. So, let’s not go with this; but we can go with that.” [...] [And] actually, we produce some tools. Because, when we improve our capacity, we come to that stage. Of course, for example, there are some guidelines provided by [major INGOs] or from public authorities. And we investigate, we review all of them and we produce our tool and guidelines.

Of course, it is important to stay aware of the “network power standards” that Donini (2016) described, which makes the adoption of certain standards a necessity for any organization wishing to get access to a particular circle of donors and reputation.<sup>83</sup> But

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<sup>82</sup> At the same time, the transfer of NGO tasks (back) to government is not per se “bad.” For example, activist groups in Germany demand with vigor the inclusion of all minor refugees into regular schools because education offers of NGOs or private companies are perceived to create a 2-class education system (see <https://kampagne-schule-fuer-alle.de/>). The same might be argued for the Turkish context.

<sup>83</sup> That this dominant standard set has practical implications became obvious in an off-record conversation with Deniz: Although she said that the relationship between her NGO and its partner INGOs is very good, she agreed that it was a slightly awkward and “expensive” scheme of the EU Facility that INGOs become

Özgür's quote shows that standards are not automatically perceived as an imposition. Yes, they can interfere with an organization's mode of working. But they can also be beneficial in providing insights into experiences of other humanitarian actors. Most importantly, local NGOs *can* and *do* reflect on the utility and appropriateness of certain standards and regulations for their work, i.e. in the interest of their "beneficiaries": they can draw "red lines." They are not defenseless victims of an over-powerful standardization machinery. On the contrary: provided with the right resources and capacities, they can synergize their own ethical considerations, knowledge of the local context and international standards in the production of new and adapted sets of standards.

Another way to divert standards on the ground is to "undermine" or generously "re-interpret" regulations by taking advantage of their rigidity. An example of this is to be found in a story by Fikret about a family who urgently needed more support, beyond the six months that were the projects' official maximum for assistance:

F: We can help a client [*damışan*] for a limited period of three or six months. [...] The rules are like this. That's why we couldn't do it. After that, we sent them to, whatsitsname, to our team in \*a different city\*. So that maybe, they would help for two, three more months, and then, when the child is a bit older, the woman can work.

Instead of sticking strictly to the rule of not assisting any case for more than six months, the workers found a way to continue the assistance without formally breaking the regulation, because they saw the prospect of the mother being able to work *soon* but not *yet*. Thus, the quote highlights once more that standards can be re-interpreted by local humanitarian workers based on their *own* ethical and practical assessments.

In short, this chapter has argued that the EU Facility has played a significant role in rearing the humanitarian sector in Turkey. However, the interviewees perceive the quantitative growth of the sector to be temporal. Longer-lasting effects of the Facility might be the increasing marketization and professionalization, i.e. standardization, of the

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intermediary funders between the EU and local NGOs. She argued that it makes sense, though, because bigger INGOs "know" the European standards better and have similar standards themselves, unlike local NGOs. In this way, the role of standards as gatekeepers to funding stabilize the dominance of major European or US-American actors in the humanitarian regime, because they can skim significant funds for their "service" of "subcontracting" projects to local partners that are deemed qualified. For example, according to Shaw & Şentek (2018), NGOs funded through FRiT are entitled to bill administration costs of up to seven percent of the total project budget, which explains why the UN World Food Programme billed €70 million for itself.

humanitarian sector in Turkey. With these processes, competition for funds and bureaucratic/political legitimacy come to exert a strong influence on humanitarian work. It has been shown, how in some instances, marketization and professionalization enhance the manifestation of existing power relations. Yet, local humanitarian workers demonstrate that they are active agents in these processes of professionalization and standardization by interpreting international regulations according to their own priorities and principles.

### **4.3 LOCAL HUMANITARIAN WORKERS AS *POLITICAL* AND ANTI-POLITICAL AGENTS**

While the previous chapters looked at perspectives of local humanitarian workers on the relation between politics, the state and their work, this chapter will analyze the way interviewees positioned *themselves* in the evidentially political setting of their work. Roughly two positions will be presented, which may overlap in practice: One is a proactive stance which embraces the own *political* potential. The other is more evasive, trying to disburden the own role from political implications. It will be also demonstrated, that this positioning can affect the humanitarian work itself.

#### **4.3.1 Being “*Political*”: Contributing to Change and Challenging Hierarchies**

Interviewees commonly displayed themselves as active visionaries who are excited to contribute to a change that would make the world more equal or dignified for all people. This clearly correlated with their attachment to the ethical value of their work. When I speak of the interviewees as *political* agents here, I use it in the transformative sense laid out in Chapter 2.3.4, as the “disruption of an established order” (Ticktin, 2011b, p.251).

Among the people I interviewed, every one pronounced a wish to change certain things - in their projects, or in society in general. This has been immanent in some of the previous quotes, but to explicate, Fikret’s testimony after speaking about the experience of growing up as a Kurdish person in Eastern Turkey in the 1990s provides a concise example:

F: You see the state of society, so you say, ((inaudible)) some things have to change. [...] If not, the world can not continue in this way, you say. With some living under splendid conditions, and others living in poverty. It shouldn’t be like this. That’s how I see it.

H: So, for you, it's not just important to offer help – you want to see some kind of deeper change, is that true?

F: Yes. I mean, some things have to change, we have to increase [people's] capacities. I mean, if you go to a family today, and let's say, okay, their economic situation is not good. You can give them some money, but what will they do two months later, when the money is gone? They will be left with nothing. That's why you say: Let me increase the capacity, let me improve something.

Fikret claims that his ultimate motivation is the conviction that the unjust distribution of wealth and power in this world has to be changed. His understanding of the economic and political inequality which humanitarianism presupposes (see Fassin, 2011, p.4) therefore results in a critical assessment of the short- or long-term impact of aid. Fikret clearly searches for ways or tools to increase the self-reliance of people in need, rather than providing short-term relief. Consequently, he said at a different point in the interview that starting to work in a humanitarian NGO was an experiment for him to see whether the particular tools of a professional humanitarian can increase his impact. Next to this, however, he continued his commitment to social change in his free time. For interviewees with a more *political* stance, this was a common theme (see next chapter).

Another forum for promoting change towards more equal structures was the humanitarian system itself. When I talked with Deniz about the engagement of her organization in a network of NGOs from the Global South<sup>84</sup> she emphasized:

D: For sure, localization and strengthening of the current local network is SO important for prevention, for preparedness. It will change a lot of things. But it is kind of a... – there is one system, and you are making it upside down ((gesturing with her hands: turning the world upside down)). So we will see: how we will adapt ourselves; how it will be for monitoring, and so on. For me, somehow, being in the same line is much easier now, because: Okay, the UN has criteria, donors have criteria. [Whether] you are in Africa or you are in Turkey, or somewhere in Asia. But now, it is from bottom to top, somehow. Until it's really grounded on the principles, maybe, we will harm somehow. It is one, just one, question mark in my mind. [... But] I am not that much agreeing that, “okay, no need to discover America [i.e. humanitarianism] 'again.’” - Because I think each discovery is totally different. So, from my perspective: Yes, we have to discover it by ourselves!

Here, she and her organization directly tackle the Western-dominated humanitarian system that has seen so much scholarly criticism by now. She stresses the importance of a more localized system which would put previously marginalized actors at the core of the new system, and increase disaster preparedness by strengthening local capacities to deal with them. Such a call is supported by other actors from the Global South (see Adeso, 2015). She advocates for a completely new attempt for such a system, with its own

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<sup>84</sup> Self-designated term

principles and criteria. By doing so, she demonstrates awareness of the inequality of the current system and the wish to overcome this discrepancy with a new system. At the same time, Deniz's worry about how to effectively coordinate a global network of actors if current "universal" standards are abrogated, shows the complexity of creating a locally sensible and sensitive network in a globalized context.

Why localization is still a salient attempt to advance equality inside the humanitarian regime, and possibly beyond, can be understood from a quote by Özgür: She drew a comparison between her experiences of working in an INGO vis-à-vis her current NGO, which she defined as "a small but local and really sincere organization":

Ö: I was happy working with them [INGO with project offices in Turkey], as well. But, THAT's an international organization and the system is very established there. As a worker, for example as an officer, you don't have so much things to do to get things in order. So everything is very systematic. [...] But in \*my current NGO\*, for example, in one year, we organize several managers' meetings. And in those meetings, we discuss, and \*a lot of\* people are attending. [...] And we define the strategy, and we define the way the organization will go. So it's not a decision from top to down. It's a decision from down to up. Sooo, all the managers, all the people working for this organization, have their contribution for the future. In the field as well: almost all of the managers have their weekly and monthly meeting with their team. So the feedback mechanism is very important for us. And we try to work in an un-hierarchical way. And that's why, actually, I'm still with \*this NGO\*.

So besides challenging the hierarchies in the global humanitarian system, challenging inner-organizational hierarchies is seen as an important point towards a more participative society and humanitarian regime. Özgür finds the potential for this latter challenge increased in (this particular) local organization because it is less deadlocked in established structures and procedures. The possibility for change and adaptation is increased by the organization's lower hierarchies and internal feedback mechanisms. And this participative structure motivates Özgür to continue committing herself to her work. Of course, local organizations can *also* have rigid and established structures. But their smaller size and closer personal relations among all members might make a change even of those established structures more feasible than in big INGOs. In this way, localization *might* contribute to the reconfiguration of humanitarian approaches into more *political*, participative and, hence, empowering forms.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Such as has been described by Robins (2009; see Chapter 2.2.1 in this thesis)

### 4.3.2 Being “Anti-Political”? Keeping Politics at Bay

As we have seen in Chapter 2.3.4, anti-politics in Ferguson’s conceptualization of the “anti-politics machine” are characterized by “enhancing administrative power” and “casting political questions [...] as technical ‘problems’ responsive to technical [...] intervention” (Ferguson, 1994b, p.180). In Chapter 4.2.3 we have already seen that local humanitarian workers are to a certain extent involved in the enhancement of administrative power through the implementation and amplification of standardized processes. This final chapter will look at how interviewees partake in the anti-politics machine through forms of de-politicization.

The alleged separation of politics and humanitarian work, demonstrated and disputed in Chapter 4.1, already hints to a certain reluctance of several interviewees to reflect consciously on the connection between the two. However, interviewees (eventually) displayed a certain awareness of the political context of their work. To deal with the complexity and conflicts arising from this correlation, interviewees displayed different strategies, which generally aimed at dissociating themselves from the political context in order to be functional in the everyday work.<sup>86</sup>

A quote from Deniz is a powerful example of how and why this distancing of the own position from political realities occurs. When I asked her for her opinion on the EU-Turkey Statement, she concluded her reply like this:

D: Personally, I am graduated from... not from social sciences, international studies, whatever. So, personally, to keep my motivation, I prefer to... not dive deep about all this political relationship. It keeps me more independent, personally, I think; it keeps me more hopeful. Because, if I started to believe that I cannot do anything, because it is a ‘big game’ ((chuckles)) I think, I cannot move. [...] So, for sure, it is important to know, but I am always saying, “Okay, I know there is darkness there. I’m aware of the darkness, and those bad games, and all of those calculations. ((inhales)) It is not really a ‘human rights approach,’ it is not a rights based approach, whatever. But, I prefer to really... Okay. I’m aware of it, but... I just want to look at the light, and I want to put my energy there. So yes, I cannot really say so ‘deep’ sentences about that topic.

Her quote highlights a feeling of being overwhelmed or overstrained by the consideration of how politics impact humanitarian work. Again, politics are displayed as something immanently “bad”, “dark”, unethical (“games and calculations”, “not rights based”). To cope with the stress that the intellectual and emotional strain of this rift causes, Deniz

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<sup>86</sup> To cope with the strenuousness of everyday dilemmas or hardships in their work, some interviewees mentioned psychological counselling or other forms of self-care. These are not part of this analysis.



“prefers” to push aside the dark “political relationship” and focus on “the light” instead. It is a way of self-care to keep hopeful and motivated.

Such a stance was sometimes combined with pragmatic<sup>87</sup> argumentations, as this quote by Özgür shows:

Ö: Of course I believe that all the leaders of the world and Europe have responsibility, for what’s going on here, and in another part of the world. [...] But if we wait for all the political discussions, all the situations to be solved, we cannot do - as humanitarian sector actors here - we cannot do anything; we are, we should be out of those political discussions, and political decisions. Of course, it affects our work, for example our funding and the services we provide, of course, but we need to focus on what we should do for those people.

She is very much aware that politics affect humanitarian work, and she also articulates strong personal opinions on political/*political* matters. But she supposes that the resolution of all political tensions are realistically out of reach – for herself and for the near future. Therefore, she brackets her ideals and theories out of pragmatic consideration and decides to assume an illusionary separation of politics and her own work, because that is how it “should be.”

These two testimonies are different from the “political naiveté” that Ferguson describes in his article on anti-politics (1994b, p.178). Deniz, Özgür and some of their colleagues were not oblivious to the political implications of their work. They reflected on them and more or less consciously decided to disassociate from them for the sake of “today’s” practical work. This led to a kind of iconic exclamation of Özgür when asked about a campaign against prejudices that her NGO had run:

Ö: Of course, it sounds... <<:-)> it’s political> ((chuckles)). Yes. But \*our NGO\* didn’t do this as a political act.

For the everyday humanitarian practice, the pretense or intention of being unpolitical, is more important than whether something actually is political/*political*. Because the role of the professional humanitarian worker or NGO is defined as unpolitical, any political affiliation has to be negated, pushed away from this role. Some of the interviewees literally separate their roles as “humanitarians” and as “*political* actors” (as much as this is in their power): They attempt to refrain from political issues during their humanitarian work, but engage in *political* struggles and discussions outside of it. This was perceived

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<sup>87</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary (online) defines pragmatism as “the quality of dealing with a problem in a sensible way that suits the conditions that really exist, rather than following fixed theories, ideas, or rules” (“pragmatism”, n.d.).

to be necessary to value humanitarian work ethics (i.e. of impartiality and independence), to protect refugees from unrightful exertion of influence, and to ensure cooperation with governmental institutions in the day-to-day work.

This cooperation with governmental institutions hints to one point, where anti-politics did surface throughout the interviews: Because humanitarians need to “construe their role as ‘apolitical’” they tend to perceive “[local] government as a machine for delivering services, not as a political fact or a means by which certain classes and interests attempted to control the behaviour and choices of others” (Ferguson, 1994b, p.179). Again, I want to point out, that the degree to which interviewees reflected on the importance of politics in their work, varied. But the narrative of humanitarian work as “service provision” was commonly used, especially to describe the “cooperation” with “public service providers.”

In doing so, humanitarian workers risk precisely to “cast[] political questions [...] as technical ‘problems’ responsive to [technical] intervention,” just like Ferguson cautioned with regard to the development system in the 1990s (Ferguson, 1994b, p.180). Why this can have problematic effects, even for the everyday work, can be understood from a quote by Ayhan. We talked about the little opportunities for refugee resettlement from Turkey to Europe even though according to the interviewees, the majority of refugees wants to go to Europe. I asked him how he feels about providing aid when actually the declared wish of most refugees was something else. What does he think about not providing support in *that* aspect through his work?

A: I am very okay with that; because these are not my responsibilities. [...] I go to the family, I say, “These are my services, I can do these ones, like, perfectly and with high quality!” [...] I have a project and I have indicators that I should achieve, and when I achieve them, then I’m happy. When I promise a family my whole services and I’m doing them well – I’m happy. But if they have other needs – this is, for now, we say that this is not something we are doing. You know?

H: Yeah. I understand.

A: Yeah, an indicator says like “helping people with access to services” - you wanna go to a third country? The state can do that. They do it or not? I don’t know. But they can do that. You wanna job? There is a job center, I can refer you, I can come to you, register you, translate for you, but will you find a job? I don’t know. And usually it’s hard to find a job with job center. It is, like: it doesn’t happen. It’s like something that doesn’t happen.

The first part of the quote shows that Ayhan draws clear boundaries as to what his work has to achieve. He makes these boundaries transparent to the refugees and then evaluates the success and satisfaction of his work according to pre-established indicators. From a “professional” perspective, this is logical, because predefined indicators allow for

measurable and even comparable, standardized assessment of results. But in Chapter 2.3.2 we saw, that standards – i.e. indicators –, even if based on “expert” knowledge, are not value-neutral. Expert knowledge itself *is* political and has practical impact (Barnett, 2013, p.390). For example, the indicator “helping people to access services” amplifies the de-politicization of political questions such as unemployment or freedom of movement: Ayhan addresses these issues like abstract outcomes, theoretically achievable through a set of routine procedures. Governmental institutions like embassies or job centers come to be perceived as service providers. This obscures the political interests of those institutions as representations of the state they are working for. It also neglects the political context which causes the “need” (for resettlement or employment agencies) in the first place. Furthermore, in this technical “service” discourse, single actors and processes seem to be perceived as isolated units of a bigger “service” machine. Only within their own unit, people are responsible for their individual operation (i.e. “helping people to access services”), and have a closed circuit assessment to evaluate the “success” of their operation. But the bigger picture can easily be lost like this. As Ayhan says: He can forward or accompany refugees to job centers. But whether the original aim of finding a job will be achieved, is beyond his responsibility. And – at least within the context of his professional role – it is also beyond his interest. In fact, he admits that it is not likely that the service referral in this case leads to the desired goal. This is understandable, given that unemployment rates in South-Eastern Turkey in 2018 ranged between 13 to 25 percent (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi, n.d. [2019]). But it is also comprehensible that the issue of unemployment will not be solved merely through service referral or more “efficient” cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors. As a politically and economically structured problem it requires political and economic solutions - and so does freedom of movement.

One problem is that these mechanisms of anti-politics and pragmatic separation between politics and humanitarian work on the ground, also contribute to anti-politics on a larger scale. Özgür explicitly reflected upon this, with which we get a final reply to the question posed in the first analysis chapter of why she does not really identify herself as a humanitarian:

Ö: Of course, the humanitarian sector is questionable for me, as well... Because there is a humanitarian sector, people are not on the street and yelling: “There is no war!”, “There should be no war!” Because the humanitarian sector - I think - mitigates the problem.

And coming back to this idea later on, she added:

Ö: Maybe, that's why there is no change in the world. Everything is in order. Health sector, humanitarian sector, blablablah. But in this reality, yes: for me, in \*this city\*, I change a lot!

The previously mentioned definitions of “the *political*” vs. “politics”<sup>88</sup> can be useful to understand Özgür’s criticism: In essence, she accuses the humanitarian sector of being part of “politics”: stabilizing the existent order instead of enabling change. For one, the sector itself is in order, and even more so, the further it becomes professionalized with regulations and bureaucratic grids. Additionally, Özgür alludes to a common concern with humanitarianism, according to which it prevents radical change by mellowing the most unbearable symptoms of the established social order. In a similar vein, Belloni (2007), for example, argued that “[h]umanitarianism’s main function is not so much that of improving the human condition by changing the structural circumstances which permit human rights violations but that of temporarily sedating political crises, preventing their escalation [...] and limiting their impact on Western countries” (pp.463-464). He continues with claiming that “[h]umanitarianism is part of a control strategy designed to prevent the transmission of disorder and chaos from war-torn, poor and peripheral countries to the developed world” (ibid., pp.464, referring to Slim, 2002). With the case at hand, I would argue that it is not just to limit the transmission of instability to “Western” countries, but that quite fundamentally it works to also limit instability *within* one country by trying to appease the most devastating realities of that country. As Fassin (2011) writes, “[h]umanitarianism has this remarkable capacity: it fugaciously and illusorily bridges the contradictions of our world, and makes the intolerableness of its injustices somewhat bearable” (p.xii). This might be true even more for the humanitarian workers and the social majority than for the refugees themselves. In any case, as Özgür states, it prevents people from demanding political solutions to their (or their society’s) problems. Nevertheless, I want to conclude this chapter with a reminder of the *political* potential of people working in humanitarian organizations which has been shown in Chapter 4.3.1. Keeping this potential in mind, Özgür is surely right when she concludes by saying that in “this reality and this city [she] can change a lot.”

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<sup>88</sup> Reminder: *politics* as “set of practices by which order is created and maintained” vs. *the political* as the “disruption of an established order” (Ticktin, 2011b, p.251).

This final chapter of the analysis has drawn attention to the way interviewees positioned themselves in the political field. It was shown that some of them demonstrated a strong wish for contributing to a change towards more equality and participatory structures – both in society in general, as well as in the humanitarian sector, and even inside the single NGOs. On the other hand, it also became clear, that to some extent, interviewees felt the need to disassociate themselves from political or *political* considerations in order to be able to function in their jobs. In some instances, this resulted in an oversimplification of the work context as an arena of “service provision,” not of political interests. This mirrors an important aspect of Ferguson’s concept of anti-politics: “political and structural causes” of precariousness are neglected, the government itself is imagined as a “machine for delivering services, not as a political fact” (Ferguson, 1994b, p. 178-179). However, my interviewees did not neglect these facts out of “political naiveté” (p.178), as Ferguson argues. Rather, they are aware of the political complexity of their work, and decide consciously or unconsciously to distance their professional selves from it for the sake of everyday assistance. Local humanitarian workers are therefore potentially both *political* agents, and agents of anti-politics.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzed the perspectives of local humanitarian workers in Turkey whose projects were funded through the EU-Turkey Statement. It focused on their perceptions on the relation between their own humanitarian work to politics in general and the Statement in particular. To this end, a narrative analysis of six semi-structured interviews with local humanitarian workers from different professional positions and cities in Turkey was conducted. This allowed for a focus on the interviewees' personal experiences, and the political-social contextualization of their perspectives. Through manual coding of the interview transcripts, analytical categories were generated, which allowed for the identification and relating of emergent key topics and patterns to answer the research questions. These questions were: How do humanitarian workers in Turkey narrate their own experience of working in the humanitarian sector? How do they discuss the relation between humanitarian work and politics in general? How do they discuss the implication of the EU-Turkey Statement for their work in particular? In which ways do they engage with processes of standardization?

Regarding the second and third question, a perceived juxtaposition of “ethical” humanitarian work and “unethical” politics – which has also been discussed by previous research on international humanitarians (see Kennedy 2005) – seems to contribute to the inclination of most interviewees to initially negate any relation between their humanitarian work and politics or the Statement. In presenting their work with refugees as an ethical endeavor, based on work principles like an unbiased and compassionate devotion to humanity and dignity, the local humanitarian workers resembled their international colleagues (see Barnett & Weiss, 2011, p.12-13). To some extent, interviewees expressed the expectation that, ideally, humanitarian work should be somehow altruistic in the sense that personal benefits and interests should take second place behind the aim of supporting people in need. By contrast, state politics were narrated as driven by national interests or short-term personal benefits. Discussions on these issues were spurred by reflections on the EU-Turkey Statement as a particular case of migration politics. The parties and politicians involved in the Statement were accused of instrumentalizing refugees for their own ends, and of treating their plight with either

indifference or hypocrisy. While dominant media narratives tend to position either the EU as not living up to its responsibility, or Turkey as guilty of bargaining on the back of refugees, interviewees moved beyond this simple juxtaposition: They criticized both Turkish *and* European politics of irresponsible bargaining and questioned the hypocritical role of states in fueling conflicts and then offering assistance.

It was only upon further reflection that interviewees recounted several instances of intersection between the allegedly separate domains of humanitarianism and politics: Politics were perceived to influence the distribution of resources and even project designs; national and international legislation was accounted to have an impact on both humanitarian NGOs themselves – for example in terms of work permits – and, more importantly, on refugees as the third and central party in the humanitarian nexus of this context. While the impact of politics onto humanitarian work was only hesitantly acknowledged, some interviewees seemed to appreciate the *political* – that is, transformative – dimension of their own humanitarian work. For example, some interviewees regarded this kind of work as a tool for large-scale social change. And *all* interviewees expressed the wish to contribute to some kind of change with their work – in society in general, but also in the global humanitarian regime or even inside their respective NGO. To transform the own NGO or the humanitarian regime as a whole, interviewees stressed the importance of creating or strengthening more participative structures. It thus became obvious that local humanitarian workers are by no means oblivious to the political implications of their own work. But some of them expressed the need to disentangle their humanitarian work from its political context in order for the former to function. This process sometimes resulted in an oversimplification of the work setting: Political interests were muted into an allegedly value-neutral arena of “service provision,” which Ferguson described as a characteristic of “anti-politics” in 1994. Yet, this oversimplification did not always occur out of “political naiveté” (Fassin, 1994b, p.178), but mostly in the awareness of the political complexity of their work. This differentiation between ignorance or “naiveté” versus conscious dissociation from politics in the reflections of humanitarian workers is important, because the latter emphasizes the workers’ agency, and requires different approaches to address, if the troubling side-effects of anti-politics are to be overcome. In showing that local humanitarian workers are neither immune to nor outright mirror images of the criticisms

previous literature had charged international humanitarianism with, the paper hopes to contribute to a more refined and ambivalent understanding of local humanitarian workers as professional, *political* and anti-political actors. This is necessary if increasingly voiced calls for the “localization of aid” are not to lead to an unconscious perpetuation of flaws in the existing humanitarian system.

As stated above, perceptions on politics in general and the EU-Turkey Statement in particular were often interlinked, to the point that a clear analytical differentiation between the two was difficult. However, one distinct aspect of the EU-Turkey Statement, which was commented on by the interviewees, was the impact of the EU Facility on the humanitarian sector in Turkey. After the beginning of the Syrian civil war and the subsequent flight of many refugees to Turkey had already triggered the sector’s proliferation, the EU budget was described as a significant factor in boosting and professionalizing the previously mainly unorganized sector. However, with the designated end of the EU’s humanitarian support to Turkey through the Facility in 2020, the interviewees forecasted that the quantitative growth in humanitarian staff and projects would decline quickly and soon. Instead, the interviewees’ observations hint to a persistence of professionalized procedures and international standards in the assessment and management of refugee needs and assistance in Turkey.

This leads us to the fourth research question. For the sake of professionalization, some interviewees and NGOs took a proactive stance towards the implementation and adaptation of standards and regulations introduced by international actors. Yet, interviewees did not merely copy international standards. They expressed careful consideration as to which standards suit their NGOs’ principles and the local context, and selected or adapted regulations accordingly. This is interesting, because it complicates the notion of international standards being imposed on local practitioners top-down. Another aspect of standardization processes in which local humanitarian workers were engaged, was the transmission of the aforementioned international standards in the assessment and management of refugee needs from local NGOs to Turkish governmental institutions. With the protraction of the refugee situation in Turkey, and possibly also with the anticipated downsizing of the national humanitarian sector, the Turkish government was about to take over humanitarian tasks from the NGOs. International organizations apparently expressed the expectation that local NGOs should accompany this process in



providing trainings to government institutions to transfer their professional skills and advocate for international standards. During the interviews, this role was not problematized; some interviewees actually took pride in their capacity to provide such trainings. Nevertheless, such processes of standardization re-establish or strengthen pre-existing power relations, by monopolizing control in governmental hands, and organizing it around standards from major international organizations. In thusly enhancing administrative power, local humanitarian workers once more become entangled in the anti-politics machine. However, even the small sample of six interviewees, displayed a significant variation of attitudes and perspectives on their work, as well as politics. This defies the oversimplification of conceptualizing “local humanitarian workers” as a homogenous group. Research into which other biographical factors influence those attitudes and perspectives might be useful to enhance the understanding of humanitarian workers’ (self-)reflection on politics and their work. Furthermore, longer-term ethnographic research into local processes of professionalization and the cooperation of INGOs, NGOs and governmental institutions in the negotiation and implementation of humanitarian standards could be useful to deepen the insights of the thesis at hand.

Through all the above-mentioned aspects, the research showed that local humanitarian workers in Turkey are glocal actors: they draw on globally dispersed humanitarian discourses of ethics, political independence and professionalism, but they also create and re-create their own discourses and principles on a local scale which in turn have the potential to affect global developments. In highlighting this position and agency of local humanitarian workers in a complex humanitarian regime, where actors with different languages and belief systems meet,<sup>89</sup> this research also contributes to studies of Intercultural Communication.

Finally, this thesis provided a critical counter-narrative to euphemistic accounts of the humanitarian success of the EU-Turkey Statement – from the very people who are the implementers of that “humanitarian success.” Even mainstream media has started to question the humanitarian dimension of the Statement after the recent events at the

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<sup>89</sup> For example, the humanitarian’s language of compassion with the politician’s language of national interest; or the belief in social change of the activist and the belief in emergency relief of the donor. (These are just “place holders” for the sake of the argument, not analytically accurate categories.)

Turkish-Greek border, but the criticism raised by the interviewees goes beyond the particular case of the 2016 Statement and cautions against any musings of either Turkish or European politicians to re-enact similar agreements with other objects or other states.



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## APPENDIX A: EU-TURKEY STATEMENT, 18 MARCH 2016



PRESS RELEASE  
144/16  
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### EU-Turkey statement, 18 March 2016

Today the Members of the European Council met with their Turkish counterpart. This was the third meeting since November 2015 dedicated to deepening Turkey-EU relations as well as addressing the migration crisis.

The Members of the European Council expressed their deepest condolences to the people of Turkey following the bomb attack in Ankara on Sunday. They strongly condemned this heinous act and reiterated their continued support to fight terrorism in all its forms.

Turkey and the European Union reconfirmed their commitment to the implementation of their joint action plan activated on 29 November 2015. Much progress has been achieved already, including Turkey's opening of its labour market to Syrians under temporary protection, the introduction of new visa requirements for Syrians and other nationalities, stepped up security efforts by the Turkish coast guard and police and enhanced information sharing. Moreover, the European Union has begun disbursing the 3 billion euro of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey for concrete projects and work has advanced on visa liberalisation and in the accession talks, including the opening of Chapter 17 last December. On 7 March 2016, Turkey furthermore agreed to accept the rapid return of all migrants not in need of international protection crossing from Turkey into Greece and to take back all irregular migrants intercepted in Turkish waters. Turkey and the EU also agreed to continue stepping up measures against migrant smugglers and welcomed the establishment of the NATO activity on the Aegean Sea. At the same time Turkey and the EU recognise that further, swift and determined efforts are needed.

In order to break the business model of the smugglers and to offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk, the EU and Turkey today decided to end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU. In order to achieve this goal, they agreed on the following additional action points:

1) All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey. This will take place in full accordance with EU and international law, thus excluding any kind of collective expulsion. All migrants will be protected in accordance with the relevant international standards and in respect of the principle of non-refoulement. It will be a temporary and extraordinary measure which is necessary to end the human suffering and restore public order. Migrants arriving in the Greek islands will be duly registered and any application for asylum will be processed individually by the Greek authorities in accordance with the Asylum Procedures Directive, in cooperation with UNHCR. Migrants not applying for asylum or whose application has been found unfounded or inadmissible in accordance with the said directive will be returned to Turkey. Turkey and Greece, assisted by EU institutions and agencies, will take the necessary steps and agree any necessary bilateral arrangements, including the presence of Turkish officials on Greek islands and Greek officials in Turkey as from 20 March 2016, to ensure liaison and thereby facilitate the smooth functioning of these arrangements. The costs of the return operations of irregular migrants will be covered by the EU.

2) For every Syrian being returned to Turkey from Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU taking into account the UN Vulnerability Criteria. A mechanism will be established, with the assistance of the Commission, EU agencies and other Member States, as well as the UNHCR, to ensure that this principle will be implemented as from the same day the returns start. Priority will be given to migrants who have not previously entered or tried to enter the EU irregularly. On the EU side, resettlement under this mechanism will take place, in the first instance, by honouring the commitments taken by Member States in the conclusions of Representatives of the Governments of Member States meeting within the Council on 20 July 2015, of which 18.000 places for resettlement remain. Any further need for resettlement will be carried out through a similar voluntary arrangement up to a limit of an additional 54.000 persons. The Members of the European Council welcome the Commission's intention to propose an amendment to the relocation decision of 22 September 2015 to allow for any resettlement commitment undertaken in the framework of this arrangement to be offset from non-allocated places under the decision. Should these arrangements not meet the objective of ending the irregular migration and the number of returns come close to the numbers provided for above, this mechanism will be reviewed. Should the number of returns exceed the numbers provided for above, this mechanism will be discontinued.

3) Turkey will take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for illegal migration opening from Turkey to the EU,

and will cooperate with neighbouring states as well as the EU to this effect.

4) Once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU are ending or at least have been substantially and sustainably reduced, a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme will be activated. EU Member States will contribute on a voluntary basis to this scheme.

5) The fulfilment of the visa liberalisation roadmap will be accelerated vis-à-vis all participating Member States with a view to lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens at the latest by the end of June 2016, provided that all benchmarks have been met. To this end Turkey will take the necessary steps to fulfil the remaining requirements to allow the Commission to make, following the required assessment of compliance with the benchmarks, an appropriate proposal by the end of April on the basis of which the European Parliament and the Council can make a final decision.

6) The EU, in close cooperation with Turkey, will further speed up the disbursement of the initially allocated 3 billion euros under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and ensure funding of further projects for persons under temporary protection identified with swift input from Turkey before the end of March. A first list of concrete projects for refugees, notably in the field of health, education, infrastructure, food and other living costs, that can be swiftly financed from the Facility, will be jointly identified within a week. Once these resources are about to be used to the full, and provided the above commitments are met, the EU will mobilise additional funding for the Facility of an additional 3 billion euro up to the end of 2018.

7) The EU and Turkey welcomed the ongoing work on the upgrading of the Customs Union.

8) The EU and Turkey reconfirmed their commitment to re-energise the accession process as set out in their joint statement of 29 November 2015. They welcomed the opening of Chapter 17 on 14 December 2015 and decided, as a next step, to open Chapter 33 during the Netherlands presidency. They welcomed that the Commission will put forward a proposal to this effect in April. Preparatory work for the opening of other Chapters will continue at an accelerated pace without prejudice to Member States' positions in accordance with the existing rules.

9) The EU and its Member States will work with Turkey in any joint endeavour to improve humanitarian conditions inside Syria, in particular in certain areas near the Turkish border which would allow for the local population and refugees to live in areas which will be more safe.

All these elements will be taken forward in parallel and monitored jointly on a monthly basis.

The EU and Turkey decided to meet again as necessary in accordance with the joint statement of 29 November 2015.

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[Source: Council of the EU (2016)]

## APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTION CODES

To increase the readability of the thesis, the quotes from the initial, detailed transcripts were simplified. Most of the transcription codes appearing in the quotes inside the thesis are derived from the GAT 2 system as presented by Selting et al. (2011). They include:

Code	Meaning
[ ]	ellipsis or subsequent note by the author
((inaudible))	inaudible passage
((laughs)), ((coughs))	Description of non-linguistic event
<<laughing> so> <<crying> so>	Speaking accompanied by non-linguistic/non-verbal action. The outer angled brackets indicate when the action starts and ends.
<i>foreign word</i>	Words that are not usually part of the interview language (foreign language or brand names) are written in <i>italic</i>
<u>emphasis</u>	Light emphasis on one word, phrase or syllable <u>underlined</u>
<b><u>STRONG EMPHASIS</u></b>	Strong emphasis in <u>underlined CAPITAL letters</u>
“”	Indirect speech/ "quote unquote" statements
*, * *	marks a change of name/place into a code name/description

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