

SEMINAR

Syrian Migrants/Refugees in Istanbul: Differentiated Waits, Movements and Presence

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Abstract

Since the start of the Syrian revolution in 2011, many Syrian migrants/refugees have come to Turkey fleeing the violence in Syria. From the start of the influx, many Syrian migrants/refugees chose to come to Istanbul rather than enter the state run camps in Turkey's southern provinces or go to other cities. Some come to Istanbul to build new lives while others come with the aim of moving on to Europe. In this research project, I focus on Syrian migrants/refugees' waiting practices while in Istanbul. In exploring their waiting practice, I analyse the intersection between temporality, movement, and uncertainty. I argue that Syrian migrants/refugees engage with various actors who enforce different waits on them affecting the speed of their movement to Europe and the conditions underlying their continued presence in Turkey. The actors vary from smugglers to family members to different states-Turkish, Syrian or European, amongst others. Syrian migrants/refugees in turn affect their engagement with these actors in multiple ways whether by moving and thus ending a wait, forming ties while in Istanbul to manage the uncertainty they face, or usurping states' sovereignty to govern the entrance and exit of persons. Following Landolt and Goldring (2013), I analyse the ways the various actors affect Syrian migrants/refugees' waits as an assemblage. In this paper, I will present data gathered from ethnographic fieldwork conducted with Syrian migrants/refugees in Istanbul that extended from July 2012 to December 2013. Additionally, I draw upon data collected since the fieldwork regarding changes to Turkish state actor practices and follow up interviews with some of the original research participants.

About

Souad Osseiran is a PhD candidate at the Anthropology Department in Goldsmiths College University of London. Prior to starting the PhD, Souad worked as a caseworker with ICMC's Beirut Office in refugee resettlement to the USA. She holds a master's of science degree in social anthropology from Oxford University.

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