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Gendering self-reliance

Constructing the ideal refugee wo/man within livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Turkey

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PhD International Development
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2020
Abstract

My thesis sets out to explore how self-reliance is gendered within global refugee support. It contributes to scholarship on refugee self-reliance by pointing to gendered components of the concept itself, and analysing it within the specific operational context of Syrians under temporary protection in Izmir, western Turkey. It reveals that individual workers within inter- and non-governmental organisations conceptually re-construct self-reliance during the implementation process of livelihoods support, which has implications for how self-reliance is understood as well as how refugees themselves are constructed.

Self-reliance has become increasingly relevant within the Syrian refugee response in Turkey in recent years, as the international community strives to prevent asylum migration to Europe. This is particularly visible in Izmir, where a number of inter- and non-governmental organisations (I/NGOs) have established livelihoods support programmes for the Syrian population since it has become much more difficult for displaced persons to leave Izmir for Europe. This work builds on 22 qualitative interviews with staff and volunteers from ten inter- and non-governmental organisations working in central Izmir, including grassroots initiatives; larger NGOs with international funding; and intergovernmental organisations with an overseeing role across Turkey. The subjective viewpoints of interviewees have been weighed against documents from the organisations where they work, including public reports, social media pages and internal programme documentation, and analysed thematically. The data analysis is structured around three concepts used to unpack self-reliance, each of which has its own literature and development agenda: sustainability; women’s economic empowerment; and decent work.

Sustainability captures the timeframes within self-reliance, which are often contested. Women’s economic empowerment captures the specific role of women’s paid employment as a development solution to displacement. Finally, decent work captures the psychosocial aspects of labour that are often assumed to be a part of self-reliance, and questions the lack of attention paid to labour conditions and meaningful work within livelihoods support.

My research asks how each of these three concepts is operationalised within the specific context of livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir, and how staff and volunteers implementing this support navigate dilemmas they come across in relation to these concepts. It demonstrates that sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work are in effect re-defined through implementation, as I/NGO workers turn them into narrower and more implementable versions of the original concepts. Sustainability is understood to equate paid employment in the local economy, which is much more accessible to men than it is to women. Women’s economic empowerment is re-defined as individual preferences, which leads to livelihoods support being implemented as small scale income generation initiatives that are not concerned with sustainability. As such, women are expected to work towards a different version of self-reliance compared to men, where their own individual self-sufficiency is not prioritised. Decent work is implemented in two versions; one for men, which is concerned with creating formal employment understood to be both meaningful and rewarding with
guaranteed good labour conditions. As women do not have the same access to paid employment, they are instead expected to find meaning in the social aspects of livelihoods support in the informal economy, and contribute to the well-being of others in this way.

This points towards a version of self-reliance that is highly gendered, which also contributes to a construction of the ideal refugee man and woman that is deeply rooted in gendered constructs. Firstly, viewing paid employment within the local economy as the most sustainable option for displaced Syrians constructs this as the ideal way for refugees to behave. Despite the many problems with the jobs provided, Syrian men are expected to prefer them over other income generating activities. Secondly, viewing income generation for women as empowering based on women’s personal preferences, often for part-time work, constructs a different ideal for refugee women, where they are equally expected to earn money for their families, but without the prospect of individual self-sufficiency. Finally, viewing decent work as formality and income generation for Syrian men creates an ideal refugee man who is not supposed to be concerned with work being personally rewarding to himself, as long as he can earn money to support himself and his family. The ideal woman, on the other hand, should not be concerned with economic self-sufficiency, but be happy to work on behalf of the greater good of her community and family.

These constructs are problematic in several ways. They create an ideal that is impossible to achieve for both Syrian men and women, since jobs that will render them self-sufficient are not actually available to them in Turkey, which is also the case for many other displaced populations around the world. If support is conditioned on behaving like jobs are still a good solution, this encourages refugees to take jobs that are exploitative and precarious. Further, this ideal is built on gender stereotypes that encourage refugees to behave in ways that reinforce their perceived social positions and gendered divisions of labour, for example by encouraging men to be breadwinners and women to be responsible for unpaid care work. This creates exclusion for those who do not conform to the expected roles and behaviours, and serves to reinforce gendered structures that cause inequality. Finally, this ideal promotes paid labour in neighbouring (often poor) countries as a solution to displacement, in a way that prioritises market benefits over the welfare of people. This creates further risks of exploitation and poverty for those displaced, caused by precarious labour. It also contributes to the continued de-valuation of unpaid labour as equally valuable and meaningful work, which further contributes to gender inequality.
Lay summary

My work aims to find out whether the idea that giving jobs and incomes to refugees instead of food or cash is working in practice, and how the people delivering this support understand dilemmas and issues within their own work. It focuses on Turkey where many refugees have gone as a result of the conflict in Syria. Syrians who live in Turkey are allowed to work, but often prevented from doing so because they struggle to find employers who are willing to hire them legally under fair conditions, and therefore often work in jobs that are exploitative. Organisations and companies that want to give refugees good jobs then have to adapt to these difficulties.

I have conducted this study through interviews with 22 people who work to provide jobs and incomes to Syrian refugees in Turkey. I focus on the city of Izmir in western Turkey, where many Syrians who originally wanted to travel to Europe are now staying more permanently. By asking staff and volunteers within international and Turkish organisations that support refugees about the programmes they deliver, and what they think the Syrian population in Izmir need when it comes to jobs, I have attempted to draw conclusions around how they frame their own roles within global refugee support; how they understand the support they provide; and the consequences this has for the refugees they are trying to help.

I am particularly interested in how organisations delivering job support think about gender, by looking at the differences between refugee men and women in the jobs they are given, but also in how they are expected to behave by the organisations offering to help them. I conclude that the staff and volunteers who deliver job support perceive their own goals as gender neutral, even though they are in fact creating separate goals for men and women respectively, and separate ideals for them to live up to. These ideals are based on stereotypes around how men and women are assumed to behave, which is problematic because it encourages refugees to adapt their behaviours in ways that are known to cause gender inequality.
Acknowledgements

No PhD project would be possible without its supervisors, but I believe this is especially true in my case. Without the unwavering support of Dr Claire Duncanson and Dr Jean-Benoît Falisse, it is no exaggeration to say that I would have quit a long time ago. Even though I may be the one who wrote the actual words, this thesis has very much been a team effort, and I cannot believe my luck to have ended up with such a good team. This is in no small part thanks to Dr Zoe Marks, who was the one to originally take me on and supervise my first year. She believed in me when I had no idea what I was doing, told me to take a break when I really needed one, and eventually left me and my project in very capable hands. Thank you all for getting me to where I am today.

I also believe that support networks are essential to any PhD project, and for me that is family in all its forms. My family in Sweden is my oasis when I need love, rest and inspiration, and even though I spend most of my time far away I am grateful for them every day. Pappa (Hardy Marcks von Würtemberg) and Pia-Maria Hammarling; Mamma (Nina Mohss) and Fredrik, Anna, Kjell and Ingegärd Larsson; Liv, Malin, Hugo and Jonathan Gingnell; Thomas and Karin Marcks von Würtemberg; Matti, Peter and Torbjörn Sjöberg; Sverker and Lova Jerremalm — you all mean the world to me. My family in Scotland lets me feel that I have support nearby even though I moved away from my first home. Selin and Ross Campbell; Anne, Chris, David and Sarah Eynon; Hazel and Rob Eynon-Cole; and last but not least the late Doreen McAteer — thank you for welcoming me into your lives. My family in Turkey is the reason it has become my third home country, and for that I will always be grateful. Thanks to Patricia and İbrahim Türkmenoğlu, my in-laws and outlaws, who have not only given me a husband, but also a home in İzmir filled with laughs, great food, and live music. Tülin teyze, Aylin and Enis, and the mavi yolculuk group have also given me an extended Turkish family to come back (and home) to. And, of course, a huge thank you to Kerim McAteer Türkmenoğlu, for being my constant and my everywhere-family. I love you more than I can say.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who has been involved in this project. I find it so unbelievably heart warming that complete strangers have gone out of their way to help me with my research; taken time out of their days to show me around, interpret, tell me about their jobs, connect me with their networks, and let me interview them. Apart from my informants, I owe an especially big thank you to my research assistant Yousef who introduced me to refugee organisations in İzmir during the hottest days of Ramadan, and Ala’a who took me to Arabic-speaking organisations in Istanbul that I never would have found on my own. Without your kindness, this work would not have been possible. I am also grateful to the academics who have taken me under their wings during these years, especially Ela Gökalp Aras and Zeynep Şahin Mencütek from RESPOND; Gökay Özerim and Ayselin Yıldız from Yaşar University. Thank you for your encouragement and support.
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Introduction

Livelihoods support aims to create ways for people in poverty to earn the resources they need through paid labour. The goal is for the support recipients (often referred to as beneficiaries) to become self-reliant, so that development actors do not have to keep providing the money they need to live. This idea frames the problem of poverty as a lack of monetary resources, which in turn creates a lack of freedom and self-fulfilment for the poor individual (Sen 1999). Rather than just giving poor people money, providing them with an income through labour is portrayed in development policy as a more sustainable solution that will last over time. Like the saying goes, giving someone a fish only feeds them for a day, whereas teaching them to fish can feed them for a lifetime. It also attaches a very particular meaning to paid labour as something that gives poor individuals a sense of independence and self-worth (Ferguson 2015). Self-reliance through livelihoods support is, therefore, in many ways presented as the ultimate solution to poverty.

Since the early 2000s, self-reliance has gained traction as an approach within global refugee support, particularly within protracted and long term displacement (Betts et al. 2017; Omata 2017; Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018). For a long time the dominant support model for refugees, promoted by the United Nations Refugee Agency UNHCR, was camp-based care and maintenance, which means providing housing, food and basic care for refugees in camps, often for periods that extended into years and decades as protracted displacement became increasingly common (Crisp 2003; Slaughter and Crisp 2009). With camp-based care and maintenance as the status quo within global refugee support in the 1990s, self-reliance has been presented as new and innovative policy solution that is more cost effective for donors, more humane for refugees, and more beneficial to host communities and economies (Hovel 2007; Polzer 2014).

My interest in self-reliance as a concept stems from its complexity, and the tensions that make it so difficult to implement. Firstly, there are always contestations surrounding refugee self-reliance, as host governments are very rarely in favour of permanently welcoming refugees into their economies and labour markets (Long 2014; ORSAM 2015). While the global refugee regime led by UNHCR, and rich donor governments in the western world, now treat self-reliance as a long term solution for refugees, host governments in

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1 See for example DFID’s Sustainable Livelihoods Approach.
poorer parts of the world are more inclined to see it as an interim solution while refugees await resettlement or repatriation (Milner 2014; UNHCR 2014a). Secondly, for the individual refugee, a job does not necessarily equate a way out of poverty (deHaan and Zoomers 2005; Hickey and duToit 2007). Exploitative and precarious labour are widespread and well known issues, and paid labour can therefore create new types of poverty and exclusion, especially for migrants (Canefe 2016; ILO 2019). These complexities within the self-reliance concept raise questions around what the goal of self-reliance actually looks like as it is conceptualised and implemented within global refugee support, and what the problems with this might be. Some of these issues have been addressed in previous studies (Ilcan 2018; Omata 2017; Turner 2019), and my thesis aims to contribute to this body of work.

I argue that gender is a crucial factor that has largely been missing from debates on refugee self-reliance. There are a number of studies that explore displaced women’s particular and gendered situations in relation to livelihoods and employment (Beucher and Aniyamuzzaala 2016; Jabbar and Zaza 2015; Kaya and Luchtenberg 2018), but research appears very limited on how self-reliance in itself is a gendered concept. My thesis contributes to addressing this gap, by asking how self-reliance is gendered in the way it is understood and implemented within livelihoods support for refugees.

It is well established that all economies and labour markets are gendered (Barker 1999; Beneria et al. 2016; Elson 1991; Koggel 2003; Pettman and Hall 2015). For example, women are more likely to occupy insecure parts of the labour market due to their disproportional share of unpaid care work (Peterson 2015). Further, work that is socially coded female is more likely to bevalorised as unqualified and thereby paid less (Elson and Pearson 1981). These issues are very relevant for refugee women and men, as gender roles surrounding labour can be both changed and reinforced by displacement (Hammar and Rodgers 2008; Hammar 2014). If self-reliance is understood to be a solution that builds on existing economic structures and livelihoods strategies (Betts et al. 2014; Betts et al. 2017; Bloom and Betts 2013), it is therefore likely that gendered structures will play a part in that.

My entry-points for understanding self-reliance, based on existing literature, led me to divide it into three concepts that I believe are relevant to its gendered aspects: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. Firstly, sustainability captures the contested timelines within refugee self-reliance (Taylor 2014), where different actors treat it as a temporary and a long term solution respectively. Secondly, women’s economic empowerment captures the specific role of women’s paid employment as a
development solution in displacement (Momsen 2010). Finally, decent work captures the risk of remaining in poverty and exploitation after being provided with a job, as well as the psychosocial value assigned to work, when jobs are treated as a way out of poverty (Nizami and Prasad 2017).

I analyse and address these three concepts in the context of displaced Syrians in Turkey. The Syrian conflict has caused widespread displacement, particularly in the neighbouring countries, and has received a lot of international attention and funding in recent years (3RP 2019; UNHCR 2019). It is very common for refugees to be restricted from local labour markets (Zetter and Ruaudel 2016). Syrian displacement in the neighbouring region provides a good and current example of that, as host governments in the region have not been particularly keen to create long term economic integration for displaced Syrians (Betts and Collier 2015). Turkey is a particularly interesting case, as Syrians under temporary protection do have the legal right to work since January 2016, but very few Syrians actually do work legally (DGMM 2019; Mülteciler Derneği 2019). In practice, the majority remain in the informal economy where they can easily find jobs, but pay and labour conditions are poor (Akcan 2018; Çetin 2016). As such, the inherent problems within refugee self-reliance as an approach are likely to be visible within the Syrian refugee response in Turkey.

Provisions for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey are led and coordinated by the Turkish government, primarily through the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM) who manage official registration. The social services that Syrians are granted under national law (including access to health care and education) are then delivered by local municipalities. However, legislation governing local authorities have not specified what should be provided for the Syrian population, and it is therefore up to each municipality to decide what they provide for non-citizens (Çamur and Gözler Çamur 2018). Meanwhile, the Turkish government continues to allocate funding to local municipalities based on their local population numbers, without accounting for the increased costs induced by the displaced population (ICG 2018). This has created significant service gaps for inter- and non-governmental refugee support organisations to fill (Sunata and Tosun 2018).

My work focuses on intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who provide livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Turkey. They

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2 Syrians in Turkey are not considered refugees under international law, but treated as a population under temporary protection. For this reason I have refrained from using the term “refugee” when referring directly to displaced Syrians in Turkey within this work, but it is important to note that this term is nevertheless commonly applied to Syrians in Turkey.
are operators in the global policy space where self-reliance is promoted as a solution for refugees, and in the local space where Syrians are treated as temporary guests who should not necessarily be permanently integrated. I am interested in inter- and non-governmental organisations precisely because they are torn between global and local priorities within the refugee response, as these will be spaces where the tensions inherent within the self-reliance concept are most visible.

In order to include actors at all levels, from intergovernmental organisations with an overseeing role of the refugee support in Turkey, right down to the local grassroots initiatives, I chose to focus this study on a specific city, namely the city of Izmir in western Turkey. Izmir is a key location due to its proximity to the Greek islands, which serves as a point of entry into the EU for many migrants (Crawley and Özerim 2016; Yıldız and Uzgören 2016). Since the EU-Turkey agreement came into force in March 2016, many Syrians who had previously intended to migrate onwards from Izmir instead decided to stay (Yıldız 2017). As a result, self-reliance and livelihoods became priorities within the Turkish refugee response in Izmir at an opportune time for this study. Further, the municipalities in Izmir at the time had no comprehensive approach to services for the Syrian population (Çamur 2017), which created an operational space for I/NGOs to fill (Mackreath and Gülfer Sağniç 2017).

My methodology is concerned with how staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations understand and make sense of their own work concerning refugee self-reliance. In any development organisation, there are always going to be gaps between theory and practice, between policy and implementation, and David Mosse (2004) has argued that this is often presented by academic researchers as an imperfection. The solution is then to implement policy better, or to write more implementable policy in order to close the gap. However, since the gap is seemingly always there in some form, the most interesting thing is not necessarily that it exists within refugee self-reliance policy, but what happens within it. How do people operate in that imperfect space between theory and practice? What issues do they encounter there, and how are they reasoning around these issues?

My work addresses this through two research questions, focusing on the three concepts I use to unpack self-reliance and its gendered aspects:
1. What do sustainability, women’s economic empowerment and decent work look like within the context of inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir?

2. How are sustainability, women’s economic empowerment and decent work understood and navigated by the staff and volunteers who implement this support?

The first question focuses on what the implementation of self-reliance looks like within the specific context of displaced Syrians in Izmir. It provides an account of the situation that IGOs and NGOs operate within, and what livelihoods support they provide to the Syrian population. This provides an empirical contribution to the relatively few studies on the Syrian population in Izmir, focusing on what support is available to them, and how their economic lives are perceived by those providing this support. The second question addresses how I/NGO workers understand and reason about themselves and their work, and the dilemmas they come across within the theory-practice gaps surrounding these concepts. This provides a conceptual contribution towards a deeper and more nuanced understanding of self-reliance as a concept, with a particular focus on how it is gendered.

Once I have pointed to gendered tensions within self-reliance, I also discuss wider implications of this. I demonstrate that organisations providing livelihoods support construct an ideal refugee that is both impossible for real refugee men and women to live up to, and built on stereotypes that entrench gender inequalities surrounding labour and displacement.

I have collected qualitative interview data from 22 staff and volunteers at 10 organisations that implemented livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir at the time of data collection in 2017. This includes two inter-governmental organisations with overseeing roles within the Turkish refugee response; four non-governmental organisations with paid staff and multiple offices across Turkey; and four local volunteer-run grassroots organisations that exist only in Izmir. Interviews focus on the individuals’ perceptions of what the Syrian population in Izmir need; whether this differs between men and women; and what livelihoods support is available to the Syrian population, both from their own organisation and from other actors. I also use programme documents from the relevant organisations as a complement to interview data, in order to shed light on where organisational positions may differ from those of the individuals working within them. I have sorted and analysed the data according to the three concepts I
use to unpack self-reliance: sustainability; women’s economic empowerment; and decent work. While sustainability and women’s economic empowerment came out as clear themes in both interview and document data, decent work instead stood out as a gap, and is discussed and analysed as such within my thesis.

The first chapter of my thesis begins by describing the relevant background to refugee self-reliance policy as it is currently implemented in Turkey. It establishes self-reliance as a solution promoted primarily by European donors and governments as a part of the agreement with Turkey to keep Syrians (and other migrants) from entering Europe, and describes the situation this has created for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. It focuses particularly on the city of Izmir and the role of inter- and non-governmental organisations within the refugee response there, which sets the stage for analysing the implementation of self-reliance in this very restricted operational space. Chapter two then presents relevant existing literature on self-reliance, and introduces the three concepts that I use to understand how refugee self-reliance is gendered. Sustainability, women’s economic empowerment and decent work are discussed in turn, looking at their respective histories as development agendas, as well as their relevance to refugee self-reliance policy. This chapter also establishes connections between these concepts and the particular situation in Izmir described in Chapter one, raising questions around how sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work are operationalised and understood within this context, which my thesis seeks to answer. In Chapter three I introduce the research questions that addresses these issues in order to understand how self-reliance is gendered. It focuses on the subjective knowledge of I/NGO workers who are immersed in the Izmir context, and how their understandings of sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work are expressed within their work. This chapter also justifies the use of qualitative interviews to understand how I/NGO workers navigate their own work, and explains how data has been collected and analysed.

The following three chapters introduce the findings of my thesis. Chapter four examines how sustainability is implemented and understood within livelihoods support in Izmir. It demonstrates that I/NGO workers consider jobs a sustainable solution for displaced Syrians in Turkey, and discusses the gendered implications of this. It explores ways in which Syrian women are overlooked by the focus on paid labour as a solution, and the focus on individual self-sufficiency that it creates, and raises questions around how this kind of male-dominated understanding of sustainability relates to women’s economic empowerment
within livelihoods support. Chapter five then goes on to examine how women’s economic empowerment is used to create goals for women’s livelihoods support that are not as concerned with sustainability as refugee self-reliance policy appears to be. It demonstrates that gendered structures are reinforced through livelihoods support built around women’s roles as mothers and caregivers, based on Syrian women’s individual preferences. This suggests that refugee women are expected to work towards a different type of self-reliance that is less concerned with creating self-sufficiency for these women themselves, and more concerned with supporting the self-sufficiency of the men in their families. Chapter six then examines how decent work is generally perceived to equate formal work permits for Syrians, even though this type of support (as well as the work permits themselves) are predominantly accessed by men. In livelihoods support accessed by Syrian men, income generation in itself is expected to make work meaningful and rewarding, while other aspects that might make work fulfilling are overlooked. Syrian women, on the other hand, are expected to find meaning in the social aspects of livelihoods support that are not necessarily connected to income generation. In combination, these findings demonstrate that livelihoods support aims towards goals that are very different for refugee men and women respectively.

Chapter seven concludes that my findings point towards a version of refugee self-reliance that is highly gendered. The goal of this self-reliance is to provide refugees with formal jobs within the local economy, which will enable individuals to become economically self-sufficient, even though this is much more difficult for women to achieve. As a result, it also aims to create ways for refugee women to support the self-reliance of men, by participating in irregular income generation that can be contributed to the household, while women continue to perform the majority of unpaid care work. As such, this self-reliance is inherently a male-coded concept, even though it is presented in policy as a gender-neutral goal that both men and women can and should reach. It also contributes to a construction of the ideal refugee man and woman that is deeply rooted in gendered structures. Firstly, viewing paid employment within the local economy as the most sustainable option for displaced Syrians constructs this as the ideal way for refugees to behave. Despite the many problems with the jobs provided, Syrian men are expected to prefer them over other income generating activities. Secondly, viewing income generation for women as empowering based on women’s personal preferences for part-time work constructs a different ideal for refugee women, where they are equally expected to earn money, but
without the prospect of individual self-sufficiency. Finally, viewing decent work as formality and income generation for Syrian men creates an ideal refugee man who is not supposed to be concerned with work being rewarding and fulfilling for himself, as long as he can earn money to support him and his family. The ideal refugee woman, on the other hand, should not be concerned with individual self-sufficiency at all, but be happy to work on behalf of the greater good of her community and family.
Chapter One

Turkish refugee policy and Syrian displacement to Izmir

My thesis sets out to study self-reliance in the context of displaced Syrians in Izmir, western Turkey. I start out by discussing what global refugee self-reliance policy looks like in the Turkish context, and how self-reliance as a global priority clashes with Turkish government policy, which treats the Syrian population as temporary guests in Turkey.

Since 2015 Turkey has hosted the largest officially registered displaced population in the world (UNHCR 2019). The Syrian conflict has in recent years placed new importance on Turkey’s geographical position as a country of transition between the Middle East, where many refugees come from, and Europe, where many of them want to go (Baban et al. 2016, Memişoğlu and İlğit 2017). This position has made Turkey the border guard of the European Union, and the Turkish government does not hesitate to use this as a bargaining tool by threatening to “open the gates” towards Europe and allow mass movements similar to those seen in the autumn of 2015 (Molana-Allen 2019). This geographic and political positioning has made Turkey’s national refugee policy a matter of global interest, where international organisations and non-governmental actors compete to set priorities for the displaced Syrian population.

Refugee self-reliance policy is an area where this is particularly visible. Job creation is high on the global agenda as a tool for keeping refugees in the region (3RP 2019), but a policy direction that is much less popular within Turkey, where Syrians are commonly perceived to be taking jobs from locals (ICG 2018). This clash is particularly relevant in Izmir, as a city on the west coast where the global refugee support has recently shifted from providing temporary aid to migrants passing through on their way towards Europe, to considering support models for displaced people who intend to stay in Izmir (Yıldız 2017).

Self-reliance policy thereby creates a clash between global and national priorities, and in this chapter I will go on to discuss the role of inter- and non-governmental organisations within it. I/NGOs are important implementing actors of the global refugee response in Turkey, working alongside governmental actors such as local municipalities (Mackreath and Gülfer Sağ Nichols 2017; Sunata and Tosun 2018), making them caught in
between these conflicting priorities, as they operate locally but are often funded by global organisations or international donor governments. As such, they have to adapt to both local and global policy. Inter- and non-governmental organisations also often have to fill service gaps for the Syrian population left by local municipalities in Izmir (Çamur 2017). As my work focuses specifically on the city of Izmir, this chapter goes on to outline what is known about the lives of displaced Syrians living in Izmir, and what support inter- and non-governmental organisations are actively providing for them.

This background sets the scene for understanding how self-reliance is implemented through livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir, which is the first research question this work will address. Chapter two then goes on to introduce the analytical framework I use to analyse how self-reliance is gendered. This is made up of three concepts: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work, and the literature review will establish existing gaps between policy and implementation within each concept. The methodology chapter then addresses how my study focuses on what these gaps look like in Izmir, as well as how I/NGO workers navigate dilemmas within them, before the three analytical chapters present findings within each of the three areas, and how they relate to self-reliance and its gendered aspects.

**Refugee policy in Turkey and the world**

My thesis focuses on the displaced Syrian population in the city of Izmir in western Turkey. Just a short boat trip from Greece and the European Union, Izmir’s location gives it a key position for migration, which is reflected in policy both globally and within Turkey (Yıldız and Uzgören 2016). This section outlines the relevant migration policy affecting the lives of displaced Syrians in Izmir, and how Turkish and global priorities relate to each other concerning self-reliance and livelihoods. I then go on to describe what the current situation looks like in Izmir, and what support is available to Syrians residing there.

In order to understand the current situation in Izmir, it is necessary to first focus on the events of 2015 that led to a significant change in migration policy across the European Union. In 2015 increasingly large numbers of refugees and migrants were reaching Europe, either crossing the Mediterranean by boat, or on land from Turkey via the so-called Balkan route (Betts, Ali and Memişoğlu 2017). The number of people arriving by boat reached over one million in 2015, compared to only 220,000 in 2014, and many of them departed from Turkey’s west coast passing through Izmir on the way (UNHCR Mediterranean Situation
In 2014 the number of displaced Syrians had increased drastically in both Turkey and Lebanon, prompting by a particularly violent conflict year in Syria (3RP 2015). At the same time aid to refugees in the neighbouring countries was declining, refugee camps were filled to capacity (UNHCR Syria 2019) and the situation looking too bleak in Syria to hope for a swift return. Livelihoods and self-reliance opportunities were scarce, as Syrians did not have the right to work legally in any of the neighbouring countries at this time (Betts and Collier 2015).

Many displaced people then looked towards Europe for a future, but since the vast majority of displaced people have no prospects of resettlement, the only way to access Europe for most people was (and still is) to pay smugglers for illegal passage in places like Izmir (Yıldız 2017). All the European countries are signatories to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Additional Protocol, establishing the right to seek refuge from “well-founded fear of persecution” within one’s country of origin (UNHCR 1951; UNHCR 1967). Thereby, individuals who present themselves to authorities in a European country to seek asylum have the right to see their asylum claim tried, even though procedures may vary between states (Stevens 2004). However, this was made more difficult in 2013 when the European Union established in the Dublin Regulation that an asylum claim can only be made in one European country, and that if no previous ties exist, this should be done in the first country of entry (European Parliament and Council 2013). In combination with national governments in northern Europe legislating harshly against for example airplane carriers allowing people to travel without passport and visas, this means that border states like Greece and Italy are the ones who have to deal with virtually all European asylum claims, which they were not very well equipped to do (Trauner 2016).

By September 2015 this system was no longer working. Displaced people who had entered the EU from Turkey started to move through Europe on foot, in order to avoid being fingerprinted by authorities before they reached northern Europe. Particularly the Greek authorities were so overwhelmed by the number of people in their care that they started to allow them to cross borders out of Greece (Guild et al. 2015). When Germany’s chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany would no longer adhere to the Dublin Regulation, but allow Syrian nationals to seek asylum in Germany regardless of having been to other EU countries first, that caused the breakdown of the Dublin Regulation and prompted debates on responsibility sharing of asylum seekers within the EU (Toygür and Benvenuti 2016). States who had taken large numbers of refugees and migrants advocated for the
establishment of a dispersal system and it was agreed that 160,000 refugees would be distributed from Greece and Italy to other EU member states, but some states refused to comply with this (BBC News 2016) and only 17,209 refugees were resettled to European countries in 2015\(^3\) (UNHCR Europe Resettlement 2019). A common asylum policy and a functioning resettlement system proved difficult to implement, and the EU then turned to Turkey for a solution.

The European Union started to negotiate with Turkey in order to keep the borders to Europe closed, since most migrants were arriving via the Aegean sea route (Ulusoy and Battjes 2017). The controversial EU-Turkey agreement from March 2016 states that all “irregular migrants\(^4\)” entering the Greek islands via the Aegean Sea will be returned to Turkey. However, as these returns should be carried out “in full accordance with EU and international law” migrants retain the ability to seek asylum in Greece if they wish to do so (European Council 2016). Should they choose not to, or have their claim rejected, they can be returned to Turkey under the agreement.

For each Syrian national returned in this way, the agreement stipulates that another Syrian national will be resettled from Turkey to Europe. This was described as “a temporary and extraordinary measure which is necessary to end the human suffering and restore public order” (ibid), but is still the regime in place today. Changes to the Greek asylum law have also made it possible to fast-track applications and return people to Turkey as a safe third country without a full asylum investigation (Ulusoy and Battjes 2017), but people who meet certain vulnerability criteria are allowed to stay and seek asylum in Europe. Since these new rules came into force, a pattern has emerged where these vulnerability assessments are extremely lengthy processes, trapping migrants in a limbo situation unless they voluntarily return to Turkey. During the investigations, migrants are contained in camps on the Greek islands that have become infamous for their dire conditions, such as Moria on the island of Lesbos (Amnesty International 2018; Karakoulaki 2018). These conditions, and the slim prospects of gaining asylum in a European country, have had a major deterring effect, which directly impacts the displaced Syrian population in Izmir and the choices they make.

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\(^3\) Various other EU resettlement schemes have been initiated since then, and between 2015 and 2018 a total of 117,104 refugees were resettled to Europe (UNHCR Europe Resettlement 2019).

\(^4\) This refers to all migrants, regardless of status or origin, who attempt to enter Europe without the required travel documents.
According to official statistics from UNHCR, the number of migrants entering Greece from Turkey has reduced drastically from 2016 onwards (UNHCR Mediterranean situation 2019). However, the number of migrants who die trying to cross increased in the same time period\(^5\), making it more dangerous than ever to try to enter Europe in this way. The majority of those who have been readmitted to Turkey under the agreement are non-Syrian nationals, who are placed in removal centres in Turkey where access to asylum is very limited, even though they do have the right to apply for international protection and asylum in Turkey (Ulusoy and Battjes 2017). Deportations of non-Syrian migrants to their country of origin without due process have been reported, and the risk of deportation is deemed to be higher since the failed military coup attempt in July 2016, as a result of the subsequent state of emergency in Turkey (Alpes et al. 2017).

Syrian nationals who have been returned from Greece to Turkey are placed in a “temporary accommodation camp” while awaiting a new decision on their protection status, but in practice this is another type of detention facility where people are kept locked up in cells (Ulusoy and Battjes 2017: 6). They are kept there until their temporary protection status has been confirmed, which usually takes two to three weeks, and then most of them go back to living in Turkey. There are small numbers who choose to return to Syria or remain in the temporary camps. It is also worth noting that the Turkish government can legally deport Syrian nationals to Syria if they are found to be members of a terrorist group, since an amendment to the Law on Foreigners and International Protection made in October 2016 (ibid). According to international standards, terrorist organisation membership has been applied arbitrarily by Turkish authorities to many other groups, including journalists, political opponents and human rights activists, particularly since 2016\(^6\). During 2019 reports about deportations to Syria have become increasingly common, even though they are usually not conducted in relation to attempts to reach Europe (Simpson 2019). The EU-Turkey agreement in itself has received a lot of criticism because of this potential lack of due process, but is considered successful insofar as it has decreased the number of migrants coming to Europe.

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\(^5\) According to data from UNHCR, the number of people reported dead or missing on the Mediterranean was 3,771 in 2015 and 5,096 in 2016, while the total number of crossings was 1,032,408 in 2015 and only 373,652 in 2016. (Note that the number of arrivals also include land arrivals from Turkey.)

\(^6\) See for example reports from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.
The debates around global responses to refugee and migrant movements that have followed since 2015 need to be understood within this context. Since then, western states have become increasingly concerned with the large numbers of people on the move in a world where existing agreements between states are not particularly functional. In September 2016 the UN General Assembly hosted a high-level summit on refugees and migrants, and announced this as a “milestone for global solidarity and refugee protection at this time of unprecedented displacement” (UNHCR New York Declaration 2016: 2). The declaration that followed stated that all UN member states are “determined to save lives” by addressing a challenge that is “above all moral and humanitarian” (UNGA Res. 71/1 2016: Paragraph 10). It places emphasis on responsibility sharing and international cooperation, building on language from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to reiterate the rights of refugees and migrants. Among commitments made specifically to refugees were pledges to address root causes of conflict (Par. 64), and increase the number of legal pathways to resettlement (Par. 77). There are also pledges aimed at creating a broader self-reliance focus within refugee support, by encouraging states to allow refugees legal access labour markets (Par. 84) and keep them confined to camps only as a last resort (Par. 73).

After the declaration was made, two years of consultation processes followed, leading up to the adoption of the Global Compact for Refugees (as well as the Global Compact on Migration) in December 2018, which includes the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) where action points in response to large scale refugee situations have been agreed.

The Global Compact contains a lot of promises to refugees in all thinkable areas, but I will continue to focus on those addressing livelihoods and self-reliance. It is a stated objective within the compact to “enhance refugee self-reliance” (UNGA A/73/12 Part II 2018: 2). The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework presents refugee self-reliance as a goal intended to “ease pressure on host countries” that will involve not only state actors themselves, but also private sector as well as humanitarian and development organisations (ibid: 5-7). There is a commitment from other states and stakeholders to contribute economically to job creation initiatives for both refugees and members of host communities, building on labour market analysis that identifies existing gaps, particularly for women. It is also emphasised that this will be done in accordance with existing

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7 While this was a high profile process aimed at showing support for refugees and migrants, it should be noted that none of the commitments that came out of it are legally binding on states.
commitments on ensuring decent labour conditions for refugee workers, and that women’s economic empowerment is considered particularly important (ibid: 13-14). However, when it comes to durable solutions, the framework reiterates that voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution, and that local integration policies remain within the sovereignty of each state (ibid: 19). Livelihoods support and refugee self-reliance should therefore be understood as temporary measures for refugees while they await another durable solution to displacement, and not necessarily as a way towards local integration.

Viewing self-reliance as an interim solution has become an attractive policy option for western states who wish to keep refugees in their home regions, and prevent mass-movements similar to the one Europe saw in 2015. In support pledges for the Syrian conflict, this reasoning is clearly visible in agreements with conflict neighbouring states, such as the Jordan Compact where support was pledged for the creation of special economic zones where Syrian refugees could be employed (Essex-Lettieri et al. 2017; Betts, Ali and Memişoğlu 2017). This is also reflected in Turkey’s policy towards displaced Syrians, as self-reliance and economic integration of refugees are issues the Turkish government is expected to address in order to receive support from the international community, but at the same time a very sensitive political issue in Turkey (ICG 2018). The right to formal employment was not included in the original provision for Syrians under temporary protection, but was added in January 2016 as a part of Turkey’s agreement with the EU. This gave Syrians the right to apply for work permits with their temporary protection ID cards where it was formerly only allowed with passports, which had in practice excluded the majority of Syrians from the formal labour market (Kızıl 2016; Şenses 2016). This has been praised as best practice within the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, as an action that contributes to the global objective of supporting refugee self-reliance (CRRF 2019). However, it remains difficult for displaced Syrians in Turkey to access formal employment, particularly since the onus is on employers to apply and pay for work permits on behalf of Syrian employees (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017). By the end of March 2019, three years after the regulation came into force, only 31,185 work permits had been issued to Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, which is a very small proportion of the 3.6 million population (Mülteciler Derneği 2019). As such, the Turkish government has created an economic integration policy that is hailed by the international community as an example of good refugee policy practice allowing for a self-reliance-oriented approach, while de facto still keeping refugees excluded from the formal labour market in Turkey. This raises a
number of questions around how refugee self-reliance is actually implemented in Turkey, which my thesis aims to address.

The language used by the Turkish government towards Syrian refugees is that they are guests, and thereby temporary residents by definition. This is often framed in a religious context, by referring to Muslim pilgrims travelling from Mecca to Medina, where the people of Medina welcomed them and took them in as their guests. This rhetoric implies a religious duty for Turkish people to look after Syrians as Muslim brothers and sisters in need (Kloos 2016). In surveys on attitudes towards Syrian refugees within the local population this appears to have been successful, as most Turkish people initially agreed that Turkey should provide humanitarian support to Syrians, but that they should not expect to stay indefinitely in Turkey since they are guests rather than citizens (Erdoğan 2014; Yıldız and Uzgören 2016). However, there is a growing backlash within the more secular parts of the Turkish population, who have come to associate support for the Syrian population with President Erdoğan and the ruling party AKP. A recent study describes this as particularly visible in Izmir because it is a stronghold of the secular political opposition, where locals experience the very presence of Syrians as an unwanted islamification of their country (Saraçoğlu and Bélanger 2019).

An example of this backlash is the very strong reaction against Syrians that followed the Istanbul mayoral re-election in June 2019. As the opposition party candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu announced his win for the second time, this was widely celebrated as the beginning of the end for the reign of Erdoğan and AKP. Anti-refugee statements very quickly became a part of discussions on social media, and a hash tag about Syrians leaving Turkey trended worldwide on Twitter in the days following the election. The hash tag #suriyellerdefoluyor has been translated by most English language news outlets as an imperative call - “Syrians get out” - even though the direct translation is a present continuum, closer to “the Syrians are now leaving.” This seemingly small linguistic detail is significant, because social media calls for Syrians to get out of Turkey have circulated for many years, but this particular phrasing on the day of the Istanbul election implies that Syrians leaving is something that is expected to happen because of the election result,

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8 This is known as *muhacir ensar kardeşliği* in Turkish, which means brotherhood between pilgrims (*muhacir*) and hosts (*ensar*).
9 See for example Dadouch (2019) ‘They want to kill you - anger at Syrians erupts in Istanbul’
10 See for example Twitter hashtags #ülkemdesuriyeliistemiyorum (I don’t want Syrians in my country) or #suriyellerdefolsun (Syrians should get out).
rather than just something that some people want. In other words, a political win for the opposition party CHP is expected by many to also mean a change to the current refugee policy. In August 2019 Istanbul announced\(^\text{11}\) a crackdown on unregistered Syrians residing and working in the city, and as a result many have been forced to move back to the Turkish cities where they are originally registered, with some considering going back to Syria (BBC Türkçe 2019). The Istanbul Governorate stated in October that over 40,000 unregistered migrants, including Syrians, have been transported to migration centres in other Turkish cities (Daily Sabah 2019).

In an environment that is becoming increasingly hostile towards Syrians, self-reliance and livelihoods support are particularly sensitive topics because of the high unemployment rates in Turkey, and perceptions that Syrian refugees take jobs and public funding from locals are common (ICG 2018). Refugee policy in Turkey is therefore a balancing act between what is expected from the international community, and growing tensions within Turkey, and this is particularly visible in Izmir as an opposition stronghold. There are also broader problems with the terminology surrounding the Syrian population that relates to their legal status (see Chapter four). There are four terms in Turkish that are relevant to discuss: *yabancı* (foreigner); *göçmen* (migrant); *mülteci* (refugee); and *sığınmacı* (asylum seeker). Each of these terms have some problems when it comes to the Syrian population, which leads to Syrians often being described incorrectly.

Firstly, the term foreigner is a legal definition within the Law on Foreigners and International Protection applied to anyone who does not have Turkish citizenship (Article 3) and rules for this group thereby covers everyone regardless of whether or not they are also a refugee. Secondly, the term migrant refers to foreigners who have left their country of origin voluntarily and without experiencing force, for economic gain or personal development. Thirdly, the term refugee is reserved for those seeking protection in Turkey, but since Turkey retains the geographical limitations on international refugee status, there are a number of different legal categories within this (see Chapter four). Finally, the term asylum seeker is applied to people who are awaiting an individual refugee status determination (Koç et al. 2015; Ceres Yıldız 2017). When it comes to the Syrian population, the term foreigner is legally the most accurate, but not used very often to describe them. Syrians are frequently referred to as migrants, even though it is generally accepted in Turkey that they were forced to leave Syria because of the war (ICG 2018).

\(^{11}\) See [announcement from the governor](https://www.taksim.gov.tr/uk/taksim/2019/08/01/istanbul-announced-a-crackdown-on-unregistered-syrians) of Istanbul.
asylum seekers are both very common terms in academic articles as well as news media, despite not being legally accurate. Some academic articles attach a caveat to the term refugee to explain that this is not the same as the international legal term (see for example Şimşek 2018), but in the news media these terms tend to be mixed without any explanations. This confusion around terminology likely causes misunderstandings around the Syrian population and their situation in Turkey.

These tensions between international and local priorities make Izmir and Turkey a particularly important context for researching refugee self-reliance. The next section will go on to discuss the non-governmental actors involved in this, and how they shape the refugee self-reliance agenda in Izmir.

The role and remit of NGOs

The Syrian population in Turkey receive support from state actors through their temporary protection status (see Chapter four), but non-governmental organisations also play a significant part in supporting them (Sunata and Tosun 2018). Even though Syrians under temporary protection have certain rights as residents, legislation on local authorities have not specified what should be provided for this group, but instead exempts local municipalities from providing their services to non-citizens (Çamur and Gözler Çamur 2018). The Turkish government continues to allocate funding to local municipalities based on their local population numbers, without accounting for the increased costs induced by the displaced population. This causes significant funding gaps in border cities with a large proportion of displaced Syrians (ICG 2018). In Izmir, there is no comprehensive approach to services for the Syrian population (Çamur 2017). While the public sector welfare provisions to Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey has improved in recent years (Yılmaz 2018), significant gaps in service provision remain for civil society to fill, particularly due to the lack of coordination within the public sector that is visible in Izmir (Mackreath and Gülfer Sağniç 2017). This has led to “attempts of civil actors to alter policies, expand them to include the Syrian population” (ibid: 25). As such, civil society actors importantly also contribute to shaping the policy context they are working within.

My thesis includes intergovernmental organisations at the UN-level, as well as non-governmental organisations supporting Syrians in Izmir (see Chapter three). Since NGOs began to emerge as key actors within development implementation, there have been debates around what constitutes an NGO as well as what their roles should be. In the
broadest sense of the word, a non-governmental organisation is somewhat confusingly defined by what it is not rather than what it is: it is *not* a state-actor and it is *not* a for-profit market actor. However, this very broad definition also includes civil society organisations like sport clubs and choirs. Another defining feature is that NGOs engage in some form of social change, often on behalf of poor or disadvantaged populations. This can either be done by providing direct services to the target group, or by conducting advocacy on their behalf (Chakravarti 2005). An NGO can have both staff members and supporters who are not necessarily members of this group, like many British charities working and raising money on behalf of people in other parts of the world. Many NGOs also have volunteer-based operations in some way, and raise funds for their work from private donations as well as grants (ibid; Fernando and Heston 1997). Over the last decades there are visible trends in what type of support has been favoured during a specific time period, from large scale infrastructure support; individual level basic needs support; and economic liberalisation and market inclusion. While NGOs are often perceived as more autonomous than other actors, they are clearly following the same trends as states and donors and have to adapt both their language and approaches to donor priorities in order to keep operating (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen 2005. As such, the remit of development NGOs is to some extent always guided by donor priorities. As demonstrated by the previous section, this has given NGOs providing livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir a very clear role in promoting the global agenda of refugee self-reliance.

Based on their general adherence to donor priorities, scholars have criticised the assumption that NGOs automatically have a legitimacy within the communities they intend to serve, as a part of civil society (Escobar 1995). NGOs are often presented in this way, as a community-based alternative to top-down development, but the fact that most of them have no democratic representation process at all means there are no guarantees that NGO-led interventions are more grounded in communities than government-led ones. NGOs are generally held accountable to donors rather than to beneficiaries, and more often than not these are large organisations based in different countries that may not be very well connected to the situation for communities on the ground (Blue 2011; Kilby 2011). In Turkey, the number of active civil society organisations has increased drastically since the Syrian population started to expand into urban areas in 2014-15. However, small Turkish organisations that are locally rooted are often criticised by donors and international organisations for their lack of capacity (Mackreath and Gülfer Sağniç 2017). This
demonstrates a disconnect between the desire of NGOs to form a legitimate part of local civil society, and global concerns around how funds should be spent.

The challenging environments that humanitarian and development NGOs work within also make regular process management more difficult. Most NGOs have high staff turnover and short project cycles, with greater needs for operational flexibility compared to other types of organisations (Larson and Foropon 2018). Additionally, NGOs have to adapt to the political and economic context they are working within, and critics in development studies have upheld the tendency to favour short-term technical solutions to specific problems over long-term poverty relief that requires political involvement from both host communities and governments (Ferguson 1990; Mosse 2005). As they work towards donors and government agendas rather than beneficiaries in many cases, it is not always true that NGOs deliver bottom-up approaches to development. On the contrary, NGOs contribute to shaping dominant discourses, and can thereby decide what interventions are needed to address a certain situation, and how these should be delivered, without necessarily taking other perspectives into consideration (Escobar 1995; I’Anson and Pfeifer 2012).

The remit of NGOs can thereby be varied and at times contradictory, if they attempt to both follow global agendas and meet local needs. Self-reliance and livelihoods support in Turkey is a good example of this, as it is an international priority that does not work particularly well with the Turkish government’s policy of treating refugees as guests who are only welcome in the country for a limited time period. The global refugee regime works to provide refugees with one of three solutions: safe and voluntary repatriation to their country of origin; resettlement to a third country; or local integration into the first country of asylum (Long 2014). In the case of displaced Syrian, repatriation is not considered an option within global policy, and resettlement opportunities are extremely few given the scale of the situation in all the neighbouring countries. The only solution that remains is therefore local integration, which is resisted by host governments.

In Turkey, there was an extremely harsh response to the government’s suggestion in 2016 that Syrians who live in the country should eventually be able to apply for citizenship (Dinç and Capoluongo 2016). This was met with such an uproar that the proposal was amended to only include those who are highly educated and have secure jobs, which including dependent family members only amounted to 92,000 people12 out of the total 3.6 million population (Mülteciler Derneği 2019). As this example demonstrates, permanent

12 As of 1 August 2019.
local integration is not an option that is really available to the displaced population in Turkey, which leaves most Syrians without access to a durable solution, in what might be described as a limbo as long as the conflict continues. Despite this, self-reliance is promoted by international organisations and western governments precisely because it is a step towards local integration, and a way for displaced people to make a living and be integrated with local communities and economies (CRRF 2019). However, since local integration is not fully accepted by host countries, NGOs are then placed in a position where they are tasked with delivering a global agenda that is not necessarily possible to deliver in the local context.

The Syrian population in Izmir

As of November 2019 there are 146,889 registered Syrians under temporary protection in Izmir. The population has steadily increased since 2015, which also reflects a broader trend in the rest of the country (DGMM 2019). The Syrian conflict, which stems from protests against the Syrian government that broke out in March 2011, has now killed more than 570,000 people and displaced some 12 million people according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (İçduygu and Ayaşlı 2019). The first Syrian refugees crossed into Turkey as early as April 2011, and the Turkish government set up a number of refugee camps along the border to accommodate this (Akbaş and Ünlütürk Ulutaş 2018; Öztürk and Çoltu 2015). This was expected to be a temporary refugee situation, and was initially managed by the Turkish government’s agency for disaster and emergency management AFAD13, which deals predominantly with emergency responses to earthquakes (Erdoğan 2014). However, in 2014 the conflict dynamics changed drastically with the Islamic State’s advance into Syria, which also prompted an international coalition led by the United States to start airstrikes on Syrian territory. When Russia entered the conflict in support of the Syrian government in 2015, the government forces started to gain territory that had previously been lost to the different rebel groups (GCT 2019).

The Turkish government supports the coalition against the Islamic State, but has also provided ground forces to the Free Syria Army in fights against the Kurdish militia YPG, in order to prevent them from claiming territory in northern Syria that could have political influence over the Kurdish population in Turkey. YPG is classified as a terrorist organisation

13 Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı in Turkish.
by the Turkish government, but the United States considers them an ally as they have been fighting the Islamic State on the ground, and this has caused some tension between the coalition allies (BBC 2018). In October 2019 Turkey launched a military offensive known as Operation Peace Spring\textsuperscript{14} into the Kurdish region in northern Syria. The official goal is to create a safe zone that Syrians can be repatriated to, and push back YPG from the Turkish border (BBC News 2019), but this plan for the Syrian population has received a lot of criticism as it appears far from certain that Syrians sent there would remain safe (Fakih 2019; Gall 2019).

Out of the 12 million people displaced today, 6.2 million people remain within Syria, making them the largest registered population of internally displaced persons in the world (UNHCR IDP Syria 2019). 5.6 million Syrians are registered by UNHCR as persons of concern in neighbouring countries, and the largest group has fled to Turkey (UNHCR Syria 2019). In 2013 there were fewer than 200,000 Syrian nationals in Turkey residing predominantly in the camps run by AFAD, but by the end of 2014 this had increased to 1.4 million people without any significant increase in camp capacity. This shifted the Syrian population to being urban based, and more and more people moved away from the border region to cities like Istanbul and Izmir (İçduygu 2015; Öztürk and Çoltu 2015). Around the same time governance of the Syrian population in Turkey was shifted to the newly established Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), while camps continue to be managed by AFAD. Today the number of camps in Turkey has decreased from 26 to 13 (Makovsky 2019). As of September 2019 only 63,434 Syrians are living in the camps, which is a drastic reduction from 143,558 people at the beginning of 2019 and 228,251 people at the beginning of 2018 (Mülteciler Derneği 2019). As all refugee camps are located in eastern Turkey along the border, the Syrian population in Izmir is completely self-settled, and most people arrived in Izmir from 2015 onwards.

The Syrian population in Turkey has now reached a total of 3.6 million, and most Turkish cities are home to some Syrians (DGMM 2019). According to research conducted by AFAD in 2014, 44% of the urban-based Syrian population originates from Aleppo, and 22% from Raqqa (Çetin 2016). The Turkish province hosting the largest Syrian population of over half a million is in Istanbul, followed by the border provinces Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Adana and Mersin, hosting between 200,000 and 450,000 each. After Istanbul, the two provinces hosting the largest Syrian population in western Turkey are Bursa and Izmir.

\textsuperscript{14} Barış Pınarı Harekati in Turkish.
They are both industrial hotspots with a significant number of production factories, which may have played a part in attracting Syrians there for example Ankara, which is a larger city with a much smaller Syrian population (Sivis and Yıldız 2019). Compared to the smaller border cities in the east where the population has more than doubled in some places, Syrians make up a much smaller proportion of the total population in western cities like Izmir (DGMM 2019). Even though there are practical issues caused by the large population increase in the border region, integration is deemed to be much better in the east where there is a history of cross-border cooperation and interaction between Turkish, Arabic and Kurdish populations (Erdoğan 2014b; Kanat and Üstün 2015). Local resentment towards the Syrian population, and the potential for violence between local and displaced communities are higher in non-border areas (ICG 2018). The language barrier is also a bigger problem to integration, as well as service provision in the western parts of the country. In non-border cities fewer locals speak Arabic and Kurdish, and with large populations of Arabic speakers moving into the same areas the need for new arrivals to learn Turkish is less immediate in their daily lives, but very much needed in the rest of Turkish society (Kanat and Üstün 2015).

Many Syrians come to Izmir because of the employment opportunities available in both urban and rural areas across the province (Çamur and Gözler Çamur 2018). Most of the Syrians moving to Izmir have often lived elsewhere in Turkey before coming to Izmir (Sivis and Yıldız 2019). The Syrian population in Izmir province are spread across a number of municipalities. The largest population can be found in Konak, which is the central district in the city of Izmir. Displaced populations are particularly concentrated to the Basmane area within Konak municipality, where affordable (often substandard) housing and informal labour are easily available. Aside from available labour opportunities, an important pull factor is the close proximity to Europe and the Greek islands, which has made Izmir a long-standing hub for transitional migration (Kirişçi 2007). Basmane is an area where smugglers are active, and thereby also home to a number of transitional migrants on their way to Europe (Çamur and Gözler Çamur 2018).

The prospects of reaching Europe were significantly reduced with the EU-Turkey agreement in 2016, and there is thereby a significant group of Syrians who had previously...

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15 It is worth noting that the province of Izmir also includes rural areas where agriculture is the dominant labour sector, but this study focuses on central Izmir and urban livelihoods, as the majority of NGOs included in this study are operating in Konak and particularly Basmane. This is explained in more detail in Chapter three.
planned an onward route to Europe but instead ended up staying in Izmir more long-term (Yıldız and Üzgören 2016). Some migrants in transit also reside in Izmir for longer periods of time as they need to work for a while to afford to pay smugglers for the border crossing to Greece, or await decisions on resettlement or family reunification in Europe or North America (Yıldız 2017). Not all Syrians residing in Izmir are registered with Turkish authorities, and the Syrian population may therefore be larger than the official numbers reveal (Çamur 2017). Since August 2015 freedom of movement is limited, as Syrians have to obtain a travel permit from Turkish authorities in order to go between provinces (HRW 2018). Since then public transport companies are not allowed to sell tickets to Syrians who cannot produce a travel permit (Hürriyet 2016), which can make it more difficult to relocate.

The Syrian population in Izmir has largely divided itself along ethnic lines, which is visible both in the neighbourhoods where they live and the places they work. For example, most Syrians working in the shoe production district Işıkkent in Bornova municipality are of Turkmen ethnicity, whereas most agricultural workers in Torbalı municipality are Arab (ICG 2018). This may be due to pre-existing structures within the city. Izmir has been a popular destination for Kurdish migrants since the 1980s, which has in turn attracted Syrian Kurds to move to the same neighbourhoods (Yıldız and Üzgören 2016). Arab and Turkmen Syrians have equally settled in neighbourhoods where others of the same ethnicity are already present (ICG 2018). However, ethnic divisions within the Syrian population are very rarely discussed in Turkish news media and not always mentioned in academic research, as all Syrians regardless of ethnicity are commonly referred to as “Arabs” in Turkey (Saraçoğlu and Bélanger 2019: 373). This is particularly relevant in Izmir as a secular stronghold, as the “perception of cultural threat is premised on the coding of ‘Syrian’ as ‘Arabic’ and, in turn, the indexing of ‘Arabic’ with Islamic conservatism” (ibid: 375). A report published by an Izmir-based solidarity organisation who work to support Syrians (among other groups) has described this as an ongoing problem of animosity and hate speech towards foreigners in Turkey, and particularly those from Arab countries (Halkların Köprüsü 2017).

Most Syrians in Turkey work within the informal economy, and Izmir is no exception to this (Çamur and Gözler Çamur 2018). Syrian workers can be found in a number of sectors of the Izmir labour market. Aside from agriculture in rural areas of Izmir province, the most important sectors for urban-based Syrians are textiles; shoe production; manufacturing and

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16 The majority of people crossing to the Greek islands through smugglers today are of other nationalities than Syrian (UNHCR Mediterranean 2019).
construction; and electronic repair, as well as unqualified work such as waste collection (Sivis and Yıldız 2019). While there are Syrians in Turkey who are qualified as for example doctors and engineers, the vast majority work as blue collar labourers (Akcan 2018; Ucer et al. 2018). A study of Syrian workers in Istanbul states that more qualified people often struggle to find work in their own professions, which has caused a significant reduction in living standards for many Syrians who were middle-class professionals in their pre-displacement lives in Syria (Bellamy et al. 2017).

In Izmir the labour demand is specific to certain industries, and does not always match the existing skill set within the Syrian population. A recent report states that employers in Izmir value Syrian workers for their existing skills within manual shoe production, and in some service sectors for their ability to reach new markets through Syrian costumers. However, Syrian workers are generally considered unskilled in textile production, which is where the biggest demand for labour is in Izmir (Sivis and Yıldız 2019). This appears to be a broader problem across Turkey, as studies of the textile industry in Istanbul demonstrates lower salaries for Syrian workers compared to local ones, even though the industry was known for informal and exploitative conditions well before Syrians came to Turkey (ibid; Mutlu et al. 2018). This is particularly relevant to Syrian women, who are on average paid less than their male counterparts within the textile industry (Erol et al. 2017).

According to Turkish authorities, 354,000 people have returned to Syria from Turkey, but the total number of Syrians is still increasing every month (Mültéciler Derneği 2019). However, it is important to note that this can be people who have previously been unregistered as well as new arrivals. Return of the Syrians are an increasingly common topic of public debate in Turkey, and recent studies demonstrate that a high percentage of locals believe that Syrians should return to Syria after the war (ICG 2018). As a consequence of the crackdown on unregistered Syrians in Istanbul, the number of people who consider an illegal crossing to Europe is increasing again. BBC reports that Syrians with jobs and steady incomes in Istanbul are forced to return to cities where they cannot find work, and some consider going back to Syria instead (BBC Türkçe 2019). It remains unclear how much danger is facing those who return to Syria, but many of those who followed the Syrian government’s call for returns in July 2018 have since been arrested, or escaped to seek refuge abroad again (İçduyü Gü and Ayaşlı 2019).
Izmir’s geographical location on Turkey’s west coast, as well as its political background and demographic composition create a very particular context within which refugee self-reliance policy is implemented by non-governmental actors. The non-governmental responses to the Syrian population and their needs provide a good example of tensions between global and national priorities, and the next section will outline what is currently known about the livelihoods response in Turkey and Izmir.

**Inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support in Turkey**

Livelihoods support has been a priority within the UN-supported refugee response in Turkey since 2015, and there is an international working group of NGOs supporting self-reliance\(^{17}\) for the Syrian population in Turkey, based in Ankara\(^{18}\) and coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Membership is institutional, and primarily made up of UN-agencies and international NGOs, but it also includes some Turkish authorities, such as the employment agency İŞKUR and the government agency for disaster and emergency management AFAD (UNHCR Livelihoods Cluster web portal).

The livelihoods cluster objective is to create “improved livelihoods and living conditions, including better and improved decent work conditions both for Syrians and host communities” (3RP 2019: 92). This is measured by a number of outputs with indicators attached to each one, for example the number of refugees who have accessed vocational training or income generating opportunities (ibid). In 2017 more than 75% of the total livelihoods cluster budget was spent on Output 2.1 (see below) and most activities was focused within this objective, which is also the only one that all organisations within the cluster were working towards at this time. Other outputs include job creation for specific vulnerable groups within the Syrian population, and information and capacity building aimed at labour market actors as well as the refugee and host populations (UNHCR Livelihoods Cluster). This is reflective of the livelihoods support available in Izmir, which will be described in more detail below.

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\(^{17}\) It is worth noting that not all international coordination mechanisms consider self-reliance a discrete support area within refugee responses. For example, the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) does not include livelihoods or self-reliance as one of its coordination clusters for the Syria crisis response in Turkey or other neighbouring countries.

\(^{18}\) During the period of data collection (2017-2018) the working group’s regular planning meetings were held in Gaziantep in eastern Turkey.

• **Output 2.1:** Syrian refugees or impacted host communities have better access to gender sensitive active labour market programs.

• **Output indicators:** Number of men and women refugees or host community members –

  2.1.1: – completed technical and vocational trainings  
  2.1.2: – benefitting from entrepreneurship or business start-up support  
  2.1.3: – placed in jobs  
  2.1.4: – generating income through self-employment  
  2.1.5: – participating in skills-training (e.g. basic life skills and language)  
  2.1.6: – benefitting from income-generating activities (i.e. cash for work or other short-term employment)

Most of the livelihoods activities implemented by organisations within the livelihoods sector working group are delivered in eastern Turkey. According to a planning documents from 2017 and meeting minutes from 2018, only four of the working group member organisations delivered livelihoods activities in Izmir at this time: UNHCR, UNDP, IOM and Mercy Corps19. These activities were all focused on job creation and vocational training (within Output 2.1) and delivered in multiple places across Turkey. UNHCR provided vocational training; entrepreneurship training; life skills training (including Turkish language); business start-up support; and employment information to Syrians across a number of provinces including Izmir during 2017 and 2018 (Cluster docs). In 2018 they also set up a Textile Machine Operator Training and Harmonisation Centre in Izmir (Izmir Field Office 2018 Operational Update). UNDP initiated a project in 2018 that focuses on the economic situation of Syrians in Turkey. This includes provision of vocational training, establishment of vocational training centres and value chain analysis (UNDP 2018) and part of the vocational training proportion is delivered in Izmir (UNHCR Livelihoods Cluster document Aug 2018). IOM has provided entrepreneurship training grants, aiming to provide relevant training to people with innovative business ideas. This is aimed at both Syrian and Turkish beneficiaries, with the purpose of promoting innovations that bring the two communities together (UNHCR Livelihoods Cluster document April 2018).

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19 Mercy Corps was subsequently banned from operating in Turkey and therefore had to cancel all activities in 2017.
**Inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir**

The number of organisations working with displaced people in Izmir has increased significantly since 2015 when the number of people passing through on their way to Europe was at its highest (Mackreath and Gülfer Sağniç 2017). This section will go through organisations in Izmir that were actively delivering livelihoods support at the time of data collection in 2017; legally registered with Turkish authorities and mentioned within previous research. All of these organisations were approached as a part of data collection for this study (see Chapter three), but all of them were not included as some did not respond or responded that their activities were not relevant at the time.

UNHCR and IOM both have field offices based in Izmir, and since 2016 they focus on the population within the province rather than just the Mediterranean situation. Another significant NGO that is active in Izmir is the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) which is an official working partner of UNHCR, and assist migrants in Turkey with registration and documentation (Tan 2017; Gökalp Aras and Şahin Mencütek 2019). They have delivered an assessment of livelihoods opportunities in a number of cities including Izmir, and continue to implement vocational and language training (ASAM 2019). MUDEM is another national Turkish organisation with an Izmir office, which focuses predominantly on protection activities (Kalaylıoğlu 2017), but also provides some vocational training and job placements in the textile sector for displaced Syrians in Izmir (MUDEM 2019). Another organisation that has been mentioned in existing studies is The People’s Bridge Association, which describes itself as a solidarity movement that rejects the idea of providing charity to refugees (Çamur and Gözler Çamur 2018; Mackreath and Gülfer Sağniç 2017; Tan 2017). It has been classified as a rights-based organisation and often lobby on behalf of refugees. For example, when Turkish authorities decided that medication should be free for Syrians under temporary protection, The People’s Bridge Association approached all pharmacies in Izmir to ensure that they were aware of and compliant with this rule (Mackreath and Gülfer Sağniç 2017). They have described labour market integration for Syrians as a key issue in Turkey, and predominantly address this by lobbying government authorities and providing information about refugee rights (Halkların Köprüsü 2017). The Refugee Support Association (commonly known as Mülteci Der) is another

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20 *Sığınmacılar ve Göçmenlerle Dayanışma Derneği* (SGDD) in Turkish.
21 *Halkların Köprüsü Derneği* in Turkish.
22 *Mülteci Dayanışma Derneği* in Turkish.
organisation that provides information to refugees, particularly about their legal rights regarding employment and livelihoods. A study from 2017 states that they do not conduct outreach activities, but mainly support refugees who attend their offices (Tan 2017). Finally, the Syrian Refugee Support Association\(^{23}\) (SMDD) is an NGO that was started by Syrian refugees in Izmir. Their main livelihoods activity is providing information services aiming to connect employers with job seekers. The organisation itself is formal and registered, but it operates on a very informal basis, for example by job matching through Facebook pages (ibid).

These existing studies suggest that inter- and non-governmental organisations do shape the environment they work within in Turkey, even though they are also likely to face multiple levels of accountability that do not necessarily align. This raises questions around what their work looks like in practice, and who makes these (likely very difficult) decisions, based on what information. My thesis aims to address these issues, by looking at self-reliance and livelihoods support as it is implemented in Izmir.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the context within which my thesis approaches self-reliance, in order to analyse its conceptualisation within inter- and non-governmental organisations, as well as its gendered aspects. It has shown how the global trend of attempting to facilitate self-reliance and integrate refugees into existing systems and economies clashes with the Turkish policy built on temporariness and guest status. For inter- and non-governmental actors who implement international refugee support in Turkey, this creates a restricted remit and difficult working situation with multiple levels of accountability that do not always align. When the global regime aims to keep Syrians in Turkey by creating self-reliance, and the Turkish government works to prevent this by keeping all policies temporary, I/NGOs have to balance a very thin line in between the two, while attempting to do what they perceive to be best for the displaced Syrians. All of these dynamics are visible within the situation in Izmir, where my study is focused.

The next chapter introduces the analytical framework I use to analyse how self-reliance is gendered. This is made up of three concepts: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. Based on previous studies of both refugee self-reliance

\(^{23}\) Suriyeli Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneği (SMDD) in Turkish.
and economies, I believe that these three concepts are relevant ones to look at in relation to self-reliance and its gendered aspects in the Izmir context. Chapter two introduces each of them in turn, and establishes existing gaps between policy and implementation within each concept. The methodology chapter then addresses how my thesis focuses on what these gaps look like in Izmir, as well as how staff and volunteers navigate dilemmas within them, before the three analytical chapters will present findings within each of the three areas, and how they relate to self-reliance and its gendered aspects.
Chapter Two
The three faces of self-reliance

Self-reliance is a complex concept, with a number of scholarly debates attached to it. In order to analyse self-reliance in the context of livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir, I have chosen to approach it through three related concepts that each form an element of self-reliance: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. Each of them is in itself an established development agenda with its own literature, debates and contestations, and as such they have all informed my understanding of self-reliance and its gendered aspects, as it relates to the Izmir context outlined in the previous chapter.

From an examination of the literature on refugee self-reliance and economies, sustainability was the first one that stood out to me as a key concept, as long term impact of livelihoods support is consistently constructed as crucial to the idea of creating self-reliance (Crisp 2003; Betts et al. 2014; Omata 2017). As such, sustainability captures the ambiguous timeframes that inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir have to work within as they navigate between global and local priorities. Secondly, I look at women’s economic empowerment, which is rarely mentioned within studies focusing specifically on refugee self-reliance, but frequently comes up in studies of displaced women as a key motivation for providing them with livelihoods support (Beucher and Aniyamuzaala 2016; Jabbar and Zaza 2015; Kaya and Luchtenberg 2018). Thirdly, although paid labour is often presented as something that will give meaning to the lives of displaced persons, the idea of decent work and what might make labour meaningful comes up surprisingly little in literature and policy on refugee self-reliance (UNHCR 2006; UNHCR 2014). This relates both to sustainability, as decent work likely affects the potential for long term impacts, and to women’s economic empowerment, as development actors often perceive and present income earning as particularly liberating for women (Cronin-Furman et al. 2017). Again, there are also likely to be gendered aspects of decent work visible in Izmir, as previous studies have shown that displaced Syrian women in Turkey are exposed to very different labour conditions, and particularly lower paid jobs, compared to Syrian men (Duran 2018; Erol et al. 2017).
As such, sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work all have clear connections to the self-reliance concept, making up important aspects of its gendered construction. However, there is also potential for both overlap and contestations between these concepts, and unpacking these will thereby contribute to understanding the complexities found within self-reliance. Since self-reliance is usually measured at the individual level, sustainability within livelihoods support is unlikely to be achieved if women are not included, which in turn creates a focus on inclusion within women’s economic empowerment. However, women’s economic empowerment is in itself a much broader goal than simply creating income generation for women in a sustainable manner, as it also contains an element of improving women’s social positions and decision making power (Batliwala 2013). Further, as the idea of sustainability is built on paid labour, there is a risk of reproducing assumptions around paid labour automatically being empowering for women, and paid labour being more meaningful to individuals than unpaid labour. These issues all raise questions around what is prioritised within livelihoods support and how these three concepts relate to self-reliance in practice, which my work aims to address.

This chapter begins by presenting relevant literature on self-reliance, both within international development more broadly and specifically in relation to refugee support and displaced economies, pointing towards connections to the three concepts outlined above. Sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work are then presented in turn, with reference to both academic scholarship and development policy within these areas. This reveals a number of gaps between the theoretical concepts as they are understood within literature as well as policy, and their implementation in development practice, particularly surrounding the goal of refugee self-reliance. My methodology (Chapter three) then goes on to present how I have set out to uncover what these gaps look like within livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir; and analyse how staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations delivering this support go about navigating the dilemmas found within these gaps.

**Self-reliance in international development**

In order to understand where the concept of self-reliance fits within broader development theory, I will present a short overview of the context within which self-reliance in international development has emerged.
In the 1950s there was a strong belief in modernisation within international development, built on the assumption that the global south, at the time commonly known as the Third World, would naturally progress along the same path of development once taken by countries in the global north. Economic growth was perceived as key to creating progress in other areas, and traditional and cultural practices often presented as blocks to development (Payne and Phillips 2010). Dependency theory emerged as a criticism to this, arguing that the developing world is not simply behind on a set path towards modernity, but exploited by developed countries who have built their own development on the disadvantage of others. According to this view, the development of the global north has been directly dependent on the under-development of the global south, where every actor in the capitalist food chain can profit from the disadvantage of someone poorer by letting them rely on sub-standard technologies, which limits their ability to compete on the market. Rich countries then profit from poorer ones; while elites within poorer countries can also exploit and profit from poorer parts of the population (Robbins 2013). This creates what Schumacher calls a “dual economy” where a small proportion of the population has access to technology and economic opportunities that are not available to the majority (Schumacher 1973: 135).

The predicament for development actors, then, becomes ensuring that aid money does not simply benefit the already advantaged minority within developing countries, which is always a risk with interventions that focus on country-level economic goals that concentrate development efforts to cities and industries (ibid). Dependency theory has been criticised for being western-centric in precisely this way, as it focuses on ensuring that the developing country catches up to the developed world, often through top-down solutions within the economic system at national level (Hanlin and Brown 2013).

However, there are alternative approaches that accept the broad premise of dependency theory, which is the idea of an exploitative world order, but focus on bottom-up solutions that are smaller in scale, and focused on the most disadvantaged (ibid). It is within this context that the emergence of self-reliance in international development can best be understood. Self-reliance is a concept that contrasts against top-down and growth-focused economic development, focusing on enabling villages and communities that are far from industrial development efforts to become economically self-sufficient regardless of country-level policies (Pandey 2008).
As such, self-reliance in this form is a collective endeavour rooted in participatory development, where solutions are driven by local people rather than development organisations or donors. For example, Gandhi envisioned the economic development of a post-colonial India as being driven by and centred around its rural villages, rather than the “factory civilization” favoured in the past (ibid: 142). Another example is the Tanzanian development programme *ujamaa*, which aimed to build the country’s economy on village collectives that cooperated for self-sufficiency (Lal 2012). These are both development initiatives built on the idea of going from the bottom up, in what might be described as a “shift of emphasis from goods to people” (Schumacher 1973: 158). However, despite this shift towards people, the end goal remains at the structural and national level, which was the norm in development at the time (Payne and Phillips 2010).

In the 1990s there was another paradigm shift within international development, namely that of *human development*. Rather than focusing on the position of countries within a global world order, and the position of villages and communities within their respective countries, human development asks what every individual is able to be and do within their particular circumstances (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2011). The first Human Development Report was released in 1990, and its opening statement declares that “people must be at the centre of all development” and that “the purpose of development is to offer people more options” (UNDP 1990: iii). Compared to Schumacher’s call for putting people over products in the context of national economic development, this goes a step further by making development outcomes about individuals rather than states and their economies.

Within this individualistic development paradigm that arguably still dominates today, self-reliance has come to occupy a very different sphere of development interventions than the collective and rural approach that pre-dates it. When development itself is understood in terms of the individual’s freedom to live out their own capacities and desires (Sen 1999), becoming economically self-sufficient fills an enabling function for each individual rather than for the state’s development and welfare capacity. As such, self-reliance has become more strongly associated with the individual’s ability to earn money and support themselves within a neo-liberal economic system. It places emphasis on entrepreneurship and supporting the individual’s engagement in paid labour (Hébert and Mincyte 2014).

It is this individually focused version of self-reliance that has been adopted into global refugee policy and promoted as a solution for displaced populations and individuals,
as I will continue to describe below. This type of self-reliance is closely tied to livelihoods as well as economic empowerment, which are both concepts that I will continue to engage with throughout my thesis. Ironically, given its origins in human development as a people-centred approach, development solutions rooted in self-reliance at the individual level (such as, for example, microfinance) are often criticised for over-emphasising income generation in a way that overlooks people’s structural positions within the economy and broader society (Batliwala 2013; Cronin-Furman 2017; Hickey and duToit 2014). In this sense, the self-reliance concept in international development has come full circle: from being a structural economic concern, to an individual one, and back again.

**Self-reliance and displaced economies**

In the context of forced displacement, self-reliance is a policy goal that “has arguably been the holy grail of the global refugee regime” (Betts et al. 2017:13). Since around the early 2000s, international organisations have begun to present it as a solution that benefits individual refugees by giving them ways to support themselves and stronger connections to host communities while awaiting repatriation or resettlement (Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018). It is further seen as a way to “reduce the burden on host communities and governments” by integrating refugees into local economies and development plans (UNHCR 2014a:8). Self-reliance programmes thereby aim to create ways for refugees to meet their own essential needs without relying on aid, but also without having to live in poverty or applying negative coping strategies such as prostitution or criminality (Crisp et al. 2012; Rohwerder 2016).

An important factor to consider here is how self-reliance policy and livelihoods support relate to the rest of the global refugee support regime, and how it compares to previously dominant support models. While some academics have described self-reliance policy as an innovation within refugee support (Betts et al. 2014), others argue that it is only innovative by comparison to the immediately preceding support model within UNHCR (Easton-Calabria 2014). Decades before the creation of the United Nations and the High Commissioner for Refugees, the League of Nations Conference on Russian Refugees in 1921 established that employment opportunities should be found in other countries to allow refugees to settle there, and states were encouraged to refrain from applying restrictions normally affecting foreign workers to the Russian refugees. Even though the economic depression made many states reluctant to make such promises, the refugee support regime
was structured around matching refugees with employment opportunities according to the needs of both individuals and host states in a way that is unusual today (Jackson 2003). As the mandate of the High Commissioner for Russian Refugees, under Dr Fridtjof Nansen, was expanded to also include Armenian, Turkish and Assyrian refugees, Nansen continued to consider employment the core of refugee resettlement, and successfully negotiated opportunities with host states and the International Labour Organisation (Chetail 2003). The Nansen Office is considered a predecessor to today’s UNHCR, but the approach changed drastically as the new office was instated after World War II. There was an expansion of humanitarian aid, and a shift in approach towards treating refugees as vulnerable persons in need of support, rather than capable individuals in need of new opportunities. This led into the era of refugee encampment and aid-based support, and it took a long time for that to start shifting back (Easton-Calabria 2015). It was not until 2008, almost 90 years after the conference on Russian refugees, that a unit for livelihoods was created within UNHCR. Since then self-reliance and livelihoods support have a given place within in refugee responses that continue beyond the emergency phase.

In order to unpack and understand self-reliance, I have decided to split it into three analytical concepts that I believe are relevant to its gendered implementation in Izmir: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. Their relation to literature and policy on self-reliance will be presented in turn below, before I go on to presenting academic debates and policy positions within each of the concepts.

Despite its big appeal factor as a cost-effective and humane alternative, self-reliance support has proved difficult to implement (Betts et al. 2017; Crisp 2003). Part of this difficulty is that it is not always clear what self-reliance is or when it has been achieved, particularly as humanitarian agencies often perceive it as achieved as soon as aid is withdrawn (Omata 2017). As such, it appears that aid agencies do not necessarily define refugee self-reliance as a complete lack of dependency, as for example remittances from abroad or loans between friends and relatives are not considered dependence in the same way that external aid is. This crucial question of when self-reliance is expected to occur as a result of refugee livelihoods support is captured by addressing sustainability as the first analytical concept within my thesis. Even though the goal is long term self-reliance that enables refugees to support themselves, livelihoods support can also be delivered as short term initiatives, for example through cash-for-work-programmes that will only generate incomes for as long as the programme is supported by aid money (Crisp 2003; Crisp et al.
There is thereby a large variation in the time frames within which livelihoods support is provided, and not always a given that support aiming for self-reliance is more long term oriented than direct aid. This makes sustainability a very relevant concept to look at in order to understand self-reliance.

The difficulty of determining when self-reliance has been achieved has created vague goals within refugee livelihoods support, as many livelihoods support activities aim to contribute to self-reliance rather than creating it (see for example 3RP 2019). Aside from the potentially mismatching timelines between long term goals and short term programming covered within the sustainability concept, this also raises questions around what this kind of partially reached self-reliance may look like, and whether different people can reach different kinds or levels of self-reliance. This is particularly relevant to consider in relation to displaced women. The global refugee support regime aims to make livelihoods support equally accessible to displaced men and women (UNHCR 2006; UNHCR 2014), but for women the goal of it is often described as economic empowerment rather than self-reliance. Women’s economic empowerment aims to increase women’s access to and control over economic resources, which will in turn contribute to women’s self-reliance (UNHCR 2018b). It thereby appears that women’s economic empowerment has become a partial goal that is expected to eventually lead to self-reliance, which makes it a very relevant concept to look at in order to understand self-reliance, and particularly its gendered aspects.

A significant part of the problem with protracted displacement that self-reliance attempts to address is the sense of hopelessness that many refugees experience in protracted displacement, if they feel unable to affect their own situations (Harrell-Bond 1986; Van Damme 1995; Dick 2003). Short term livelihoods programmes that have been criticised for failing to reduce aid dependency may still improve the mental and physical well-being of refugees by providing them with an occupation and a way to earn some money (Crisp 2003). This side of self-reliance is not discussed very much within refugee self-reliance policy, but it is rather assumed that paid labour in and of itself can provide meaning to the lives of displaced people. The idea of decent work is thereby much more central to self-reliance than it may appear from policy documents, precisely because this assumption is never discussed or questioned. It raises questions around what makes work meaningful, as well as the potentially problematic gendered consequences that follow from assuming that paid labour grants people independence and self-fulfilment in a way than unpaid
labour does not (Peterson 2015). This makes decent work a very relevant concept to look at in order to understand self-reliance and its gendered aspects.

It should be acknowledged that these three concepts are by no means the only ones that are relevant in relation to self-reliance, and that there may be other ways of framing and understanding self-reliance and its gendered aspects that are equally valid and useful. However, as explained above, these are the three concepts that stand out to me as the most important aspects in relation to my work and its context. As established in Chapter one, sustainability is crucial question in Turkey due to the guest status of Syrians under temporary protection, which means that governmental actors work on different timeframes compared to global actors aiming to create long term economic integration for the Syrian population (Mackreath and Gülfer Sağniç 2017). As a country where women’s labour market participation is relatively low (World Bank Data 2019), and informal work is a very significant part of the Turkish economy (Batalla and Tolay 2018), women’s economic empowerment and decent work are also likely to be very current concerns for inter-and non-governmental organisations providing livelihoods support to displaced Syrians in Turkey. These concerns were all particularly relevant and current in the city of Izmir at the time of data collection in 2017, as Izmir had recently gone from being a throughway for Syrians on their way to Europe to being a destination in itself where inter- and non-governmental organisations were increasingly starting to provide livelihoods support (Yildiz 2017).

For these reasons, my work continues to focus on understanding self-reliance and its implementation in Izmir through sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. Analysing the gendered aspects of self-reliance in this way provides a new angle to emerging literature on refugee economies, and the economic position of refugees. This scholarship has been developed by a research team at Oxford University, and has presented a theoretical framework that aims to address this by capturing “what is economically distinct about being a refugee” (Betts et al. 2017: 41). They highlight that previous studies of refugee economies have focused in isolation on the livelihoods strategies that refugees employ (see for example Jacobsen 2005) and the impact refugees have on the economies of host states (Betts et al. 2014), and that it is therefore important to create a more holistic understanding of the institutional context that shapes the economic lives of refugees through constraints and opportunities. As this framework is highly relevant to how self-reliance is understood in both academia and policy, I use it as an
example to demonstrate the relevance of my approach to understanding the gendered aspects of self-reliance in Turkey.

The theoretical framework of refugee economies (Betts et al. 2017) is built on the unique economic position, shaped by intersections in three areas where refugees occupy a space somewhere in between regular frameworks: in between national and international regulations; in between formal and informal economies; and in between national and transnational economies. Firstly, the international refugee regime has a mandate to protect refugees that overlaps with the governance mandate of the state where they are seeking refuge. As there are several authorities responsible for refugees, from national governments to aid agencies and I/NGOs, refugees are subject to a very specific type of “citizenship.” It varies in form, as some countries shift all responsibility for refugees within their borders to UNHCR, while others provide services through national legislation and mechanisms (ibid). This is very relevant to the Syrian population in Turkey, as their position is not necessarily agreed upon by the various actors that support them (Sunata and Tosun 2018). I aim to capture that part of their economic position, and how their “citizenship” is shaped by conflicting timeframes within the idea of refugee self-reliance by looking at sustainability. I also see this position as very likely to be different for men and women respectively, shaped by gendered structures present within Turkish institutions as well as refugee support organisations (Duran 2018; El-Masri et al. 2013).

Secondly, the framework highlights that all refugees have social networks that span across at least two states, if not more. Where their protection is not secured by the state they are in, they often rely on these networks, for example through remittances, or trading across borders (Betts et al. 2017). Since Syrian women are much less likely to have been in paid employment before the conflict (World Bank 2019), I relate this position closely to gendered structures. Economically, men are more likely to have transnational networks that can enable for example trade, even in situations where women also engage in such activities (Meagher 2010). I aim to capture this difference, and the particular situation it creates for displaced Syrian women as well as how it is addressed by organisations that try to support their self-reliance, by looking at women’s economic empowerment.

Thirdly, the refugee economies framework focuses on restrictions on the right to work that are very common for refugees. They often end up supporting themselves through informal economies, or a combination of formal and informal work. Where legal routes to employment are available, there are still often institutional barriers like expensive work
permits, culture or language barriers, that prevent refugees from relying completely on the formal economy to secure their livelihoods (Betts et al. 2017). This is very relevant to Syrians in Turkey, as the number of Syrians who have been granted formal work permits to date is a very small proportion of the working population (Mülteciler Derneği 2019), and most Syrians thereby remain within the informal economy. I aim to capture this position by looking at decent work, as the necessity of finding economic opportunities despite all these barriers likely impact what is viewed as decent and meaningful work by organisations supporting displaced Syrians in Turkey. Further, gender is again relevant here, as women are more likely than men to work informally within the Turkish economy, and more likely to be combining their paid labour with unpaid care duties, which will affect their positions and priorities (İnan and Aşık 2014).

In combination, the authors presenting this framework argue that these three positions make refugee economies unique and separate from those of other citizens or migrants, and that individual refugees act within these structures to shape their own livelihoods. They highlight that these conditions, which may cause constraints, can also create opportunities to engage in economic activities that citizens or other migrants would not be able to do. Importantly, it is seen as up to the individual refugee to navigate their position within displaced economies and create livelihood opportunities for themselves (Betts et al. 2017). This emphasis placed on the position of individual refugees make gender an extremely important concern within this framework, as there are many factors (some of which are outlined above) that make the economic position of refugee women different from that of men.

There are examples of this within the empirical examples the authors present alongside the theoretical framework. For example, the study presents empirical data on the livelihoods activities of urban refugees in Kampala (ibid: 92-97). The authors compare Somali refugees, who are more likely to be in formal employment through large Somali-Ugandan companies, with Congolese refugees, who predominantly support themselves through small-scale informal trade of traditional fabrics. It is specified that the Congolese refugees engaging in petty trade are mostly women, which points towards a specific and gendered position within that particular economy. In the case of the Somalis, the sex ratio of the formally employed majority is not mentioned, but since the authors state in a different section that Somali women in Kampala often come together in cooperatives that enable them to start home-based businesses through small loans, it seems reasonable to
assume that the formally employed Somalis working in large companies are predominantly men. As such, the economic positions that are in this case analysed by the refugees’ state of origin are very likely to also be influenced by gender and gendered structures that go beyond the visible division of labour.

Such structures are particularly important to consider where refugee self-reliance is a goal, as the authors also argue that livelihoods support should work within existing structures and support economic activities from the bottom up (ibid). While this framework is very useful and relevant for understanding the current position of displaced Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, my work argues that there is also a danger in basing livelihoods support purely on existing structures, since this may also reinforce existing inequalities (Hammar 2014). Understanding the gendered structures present within the economic lives of refugees is thereby crucial to determining where livelihoods may risk contributing to unequal structures. This is a big part of my motivation for looking at the gendered aspects of self-reliance within my thesis, and why I have designed my study in this particular way to look at sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. The rest of this chapter goes through each of the concepts in turn, and how they relate to refugee self-reliance policy.

**Sustainability**

UNHCR presents sustainability within refugee self-reliance policy as a guiding principle for their livelihoods support for refugees, establishing that self-reliance in the long term is the goal of all livelihoods planning (UNHCR 2014a). Sustainability is in this sense applied as a programmatic concept, as it focuses on creating impacts that continue to benefit target populations beyond the time frame of the programme itself (Taylor 2014). It strives to create cost-effective programming that will reduce the need for future investments in the same issue, and enable behaviours that are considered favourable for society, such as creating a norm for refugees to engage in paid labour instead of receiving benefits and aid (Ilcan 2018; Omata 2017). In the policy context, then, sustainability is about spending development resources wisely to yield economic return, and creating a desirable social outcome. However, academic debates around the term sustainability and its use within development practice build heavily on a third aspect, namely environmental sustainability, and how the three pillars of environmental, economic and social sustainability interact with (and at times contradict) each other (Baker 2016). Programmatic sustainability has not
been the subject of academic debate to the same extent, even though it holds an important place in development policy (Taylor 2014). In order to understand how the term is debated in research, it is therefore relevant to briefly go through the environmental side of sustainability; how it relates to the social and economic aspects; and how the term has evolved into its current application within refugee self-reliance policy.

The idea that development itself could be made sustainable was initially an agenda that went against the dominant theory around modernisation of poor countries, which built heavily on promoting economic growth. The concern was that too much growth-oriented development would risk damaging the ecological environment and put too much strain on natural resources (Payne and Phillips 2010). The solution was to promote “development that ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their needs’” (Butcher and Papaioannou 2013: 148), in the words of the Brundtland Commission Report from 1987. This report established that the needs of future generations should be considered across three areas: environmental, economic and social needs. Since then, this idea has been widely adopted into mainstream development policy (Baker 2016). However, academic debates have highlighted that the three pillars create an inherent contradiction within sustainability itself, as one side is concerned with preserving resources, and another with spending them to create economic growth and generate investment in social welfare (Dhahri and Omri 2018). If all three aspects are to be considered equally, it is not only wrong to create economic growth in the present at the expense of future generations’ access to natural resources, but equally problematic to prevent economic growth for future generations based on a concern for natural resources in the present. This has created a theoretical distinction between strong sustainability, which concerns itself with the environmental impacts of development progress, and weak sustainability, which focuses only on the economic and social sides (Daly 1994). While some argue that weak sustainability builds on an economic system that is in itself unsustainable (van den Bergh 2017), and an instrumental view of nature as something that is only useful if it benefits human beings (O’Riordan 1981), it is also easier to implement in development programming than strong sustainability, which only lends itself to very small-scale development and community-based interventions (Baker et al. 1997).

This tension between development progress and resource conservation remains a crucial issue within development policy. For example, the Sustainable Development Goals from 2015 attempt to include all the three pillars to make development sustainable,
including protection of ecosystems (SDG 15), economic growth (SDG 8), and human well-being (SDG 3). With 169 targets and 230 indicators, this has created both overlap and contradiction within and between the goals themselves (Munasinghe 2019). This has made weak sustainability the dominant version within most development policy and practice today, as environmental concerns are addressed with separate goals, rather than considered within economic and social ones. For example, a report published by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) calls the Brundtland definition of sustainability “traditional” and broad, while stating that “in reality, a more useful working definition could be considered to be ‘the ability to contain a defined behaviour indefinitely’” (UK Aid Direct 2016: 1). In practice, these behaviours may be environmental, economic or social, but the attempts to combine the three into concerns for future generations are lost in this definition. It has narrowed the weak sustainability concept even further into what Taylor (2014) calls “sustainability of ends” within development programming (Taylor 2014: 118). This means that a development programme should contribute resources and capacities that can continue beyond the scope of the programme itself, and leave behind a contained behaviour.

This is the kind of sustainability that is applied within refugee self-reliance and livelihoods support. UNHCR defines self-reliance as “the ability of an individual, household or community to meet essential needs and enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable manner and with dignity” (UNHCR 2014a: 7). Self-reliance programmes thereby aim to create ways for refugees to meet their own essential needs without continued aid, but also without having to live in poverty or applying negative coping strategies such as prostitution or criminality (Crisp et al. 2012; Rohwerder 2016a). The ability of displaced populations to meet their own needs is thereby the sustainable behaviour this policy aims to create. However, as outlined in the previous section, there is significant debates around what this might look like in practice, and whether self-reliance should be understood as the absence of aid rather than a complete lack of dependency (Omata 2017; Ferguson 2015). The behaviour that refugee self-reliance policy and programming aim to create and sustain is thereby a very specific form of self-sustenance.

The way in which this is delivered also varies, which creates further nuance in the practical meaning of sustainability within such programmes. According to research conducted by the Humanitarian Policy Group (Crawford et al. 2015), all self-reliance support provided to displaced populations is underpinned by one of three theories of change,
depending on the timeline for displacement and the environment displaced persons find themselves in. This framework provides a useful illustration of how a particular understanding sustainability can change what self-reliance means in practice.

The first proposed theory of change is care and maintenance, which underpins support that is emergency-oriented and built on the idea of supporting people in exile during a temporary state of displacement, from which they can then return to their country of origin or be resettled in a different country. The aim of this support is basic service provision even though it is done through livelihoods, for example through cash-for-work programmes or cash transfers. Livelihoods support within this model takes place where the environment prevent displaced populations from acting within local economies, perhaps most notably within refugee camps that restrict freedom of movement and employment within existing economies (ibid: 19-20). Within UNHCR, care and maintenance as a support model has been criticised by academics in studies focusing on the negative consequences of delivering direct aid to refugees in long-term encampment (Harrell-Bond 1986; Van Damme 1995; Dick 2003). This school of thought often presents self-reliance and livelihoods support as more humane alternatives to care and maintenance support (Hovil 2007; Polzer 2014), even though livelihoods support can in practice build on the same care and maintenance model that is criticised for being short-term and emergency focused (Crawford et al. 2015). The issue with this support model is that the emergency phase can be extended into protracted displacement, leaving displaced people “trapped in a state of limbo” (Crisp 2003: 114). As such, it is not necessarily as simple as self-reliance and livelihoods support being the opposite of care and maintenance.

The second proposed theory of change is partial integration, which is the most common type applied within refugee self-reliance policy and programming. This type of policy recognises the potential for long-term displacement and aim to reduce aid dependency as well as aid provision costs. It creates economic opportunities for displaced persons, works within existing economies and aims to reduce the duplication of services that is common when populations are kept segregated. This model of support may include micro finance, start-up grants and self-employment support, subsidies for agricultural equipment and vocational training, either within refugee camps and settlements or in urban or rural-based communities. It is more holistic in its approach than support within the care and maintenance model, but does not have a wide enough time frame to go beyond short-term and simplistic solutions to refugees’ problems (Crawford et al.: 20-22). Much of the
appeal around this support model in policy and programming is based on the contrast between it and encamped care and maintenance aid. However, it is problematic to present this as a natural progression from aid dependency in camps to self-reliance outside of camps, since this has more to do with the structure of refugee support than the behaviour of refugees (Easton-Calabria 2015). Even during the UNHCR’s era of encampment, displaced populations opting to live in urban areas have always existed alongside encamped refugee populations (Harrell-Bond 1986; Harrell-Bond 1998; Hovil 2007). Within Barbara Harrell-Bond’s seminal study of refugee support from 1986, she established that refugees who choose to self-settle outside of camps are completely overlooked by the international support regime and thereby have no choice but to become self-reliant (Harrell-Bond 1986). As such, displaced persons have always found ways to support themselves regardless of what is provided for them, whether inside or outside camps, and most rely on multiple sources of income to survive that may or may not include humanitarian support (Crisp 2003; Jacobsen 2005; Hovil 2007; Crabtree 2010; Lindley 2011; Betts et al. 2014). While the partial integration support model may therefore be a significant contrast to care and maintenance and encampment, it still assumes that displacement is temporary and that a durable solution (repatriation, resettlement or local integration) will eventually take place (Crawford et al. 2015).

The third proposed theory of change is de-facto integration, which is the only one accepting that displacement may not end with a traditional durable solution, but can involve prolonged exile and onward or circular migration. It also recognises that displaced persons themselves have agency to affect their situations and the livelihoods they choose to engage in, and support is oriented around existing economic activities building on analysis of local markets and integration with host communities. This type of support is aimed at urban displaced populations who have the right to work within local economies, and will include longer term development strategies for both displaced and local populations (ibid: 22-24). The reason this approach is less common within global refugee support is that it requires long-term integration strategies, which is often met with political resistance from host governments and communities (Long 2014). Further, the international regime for refugee support has had a humanitarian emergency relief focus since the end of World War II (Easton-Calabria 2015). As a result of this, long-term planning is difficult to do in practice, and protracted refugee situations often end up in the middle of what is commonly known as the humanitarian-development divide. The most common distinction made between
humanitarian and development is that humanitarian actors (including UNHCR) address emergency situations, such as famines or wars, while development actors instead work to address the status quo of poverty (Barnett 2010). However, when an emergency has gone on for long enough to become the status quo, traditionally humanitarian actors are forced to think more about long-term solutions, and start working together with development actors to continue to deliver their support, and in the process the mandates between humanitarian and development spheres become more blurred (Barnett 2011). In such situations, refugee self-reliance livelihood support is often presented in policy documents as a bridge between humanitarian and development, where access to economic opportunities can address both the immediate needs like food and shelter, as well as building assets that will last. However, in practice livelihoods support is commonly implemented as either care and maintenance self-reliance, or partial integration self-reliance, as local integration is only an option where host governments choose to implement it as one (Crawford et al. 2015).

As these examples demonstrate, there are a number of different implementations of refugee self-reliance policy, with various elements of programmatic sustainability through the behaviours they aim to create and sustain. Care and maintenance aims to sustain displaced populations through a meaningful occupation during an emergency phase; partial integration aims to sustain displaced populations through employment while they await a durable solution; and de-facto integration aims to do the same in the long term. The understanding of sustainability and the time-frames within which livelihoods support is applied are thereby crucial to how refugee self-reliance is understood and implemented.

The Syrian conflict will soon be entering its tenth year, and self-reliance and livelihoods support have been prioritised within the global response since 2015, when humanitarian response plans were replaced by resilience plans. They integrated refugee support with the needs of host communities, and expanded the response to include both humanitarian and development actors. The budget and targets for livelihoods responses then increased dramatically. In 2014 the target for livelihoods support was 300,000 people across the region, compared to 1.8 million in 2015 (3RP 2015). The focus on livelihoods and self-reliance was further established in 2016, when the international community pledged to create 1.1 million employment opportunities for Syrians in neighbouring countries by 2018. This resulted in several country specific action plans, or compacts, significant funding pledges, and promises of technical support to the neighbouring countries that they are
usually not eligible for as middle-income countries (IRC 2017). The Brussels II Conference held in 2018 reaffirmed this commitment, and “agreed that increased focus is required to support reform and longer-term development in a sustainable manner,” including job creation and labour market integration (Council of the EU 2018).

The term sustainability is thus being applied in a very particular way within refugee self-reliance policy, which is also evident in policies and programming on Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries. Compared to academic debates around the concept, sustainability is narrowly conceptualised in policy, in that it aims to create and sustain certain behaviours in relation to employment and labour market participation among refugees. Another notable point is that self-reliance policy often refers to sustainability by pointing to long-term benefits that according to researchers are specific to the time-frame of de-facto integration, even though the programmes presented in the same policies are much more short-term oriented. It thereby appears that the meaning of sustainability fluctuates even within refugee self-reliance policy to mean one thing in theory and another in practice.

**Women’s economic empowerment**

Livelihoods support and self-reliance policy for refugees aim to contribute to the self-sufficiency of all displaced people, including women. UNHCR’s global strategy for self-reliance refers to the ability of individuals to meet their own needs, and fully enjoy social and economic rights within host communities. This can be measured at household and community levels, which commonly overlooks women, but within programming it is most often considered at the individual level (UNHCR 2014: 7). What this entails for women specifically is covered in a separate UNHCR document called the Age Gender and Diversity policy. The specific commitment relating to self-reliance within this policy is women’s economic empowerment, defined as “control over economic resources” (UNHCR 2018b: 14). UNHCR aims to expand this by providing displaced women with equal access to economic opportunities and decent work. At a minimum, this means that any livelihoods programming provided to displaced populations should reach men and women equally (ibid).

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24 This refers to ILO’s definition of decent work, which will be discussed in the next section.
Women’s economic empowerment is therefore a central concept within refugee self-reliance policy. If sustainability defines the broad appeal of refugee self-reliance policy, women’s economic empowerment defines its importance to women in particular. This builds on a dominant policy approach in development more broadly, where including women in market and growth-oriented activities is presented as a central component of gender equality by most international donor organisations and NGOs, including for example OECD, UN Women, Care International and Oxfam. However, in academia economic empowerment is a debated concept. Empowerment in its original form was put forward by women in the global south as a political movement, aiming to address women’s inferior position and lack of political power and voice (Batliwala 2013; Cornwall 2016; Cornwall and Rivas 2015). The global adoption of empowerment into the international development agenda came as the Women In Development approach had received criticism for simply including women in oppressive systems rather than attempting to change them (Momsen 2010; Sardenberg 2008). In 1995 the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action proclaimed that systemic changes are needed within the economic, political and social spheres to promote women’s empowerment. This included commitments to advance women’s freedom of expression and thought; ensure women’s participation in decision making processes; increase women’s control over their own bodies and reproductive health; and ensure equal access to education, training and work (UN Women 2014).

Empowerment was thereby presented as a much broader development concept to begin with, but international organisations soon started to focus on getting women into labour markets, for example through pledges to promote women’s access to employment opportunities and advance their control over economic resources. The Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000 and the subsequent Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 have incorporated commitments to increase the number of women participating in wage labour. Additional international protocols and convention promoting women’s right to employment have also been adopted by the International Labour Organisation ILO (Alkitkat 2018). Within development policy, this inclusion-based type of gender equality started to be promoted as sensible economics. For example, the World Bank’s Global Development Report on gender equality highlights that excluding women from paid labour has grave economic consequences. Including women creates potential for

25 This argument has also been made by a number of academics in relation to the Turkish economy. See for example İlkkaracan 2016; Karaalp-Orhan 2017; Karacayır and Yaprak Sacik 2016.
expanding economic growth in the country, but it also contributes to other development outcomes because women are more inclined to spend their money on others, for example by investing in their children's education. Earning money is also presented as a way for women to expand their own freedoms, opportunities and influence over decision making (World Bank 2012). This reflects a dominant view in development policy that income earning and labour market inclusion for women is empowering (Cronin-Furman et al. 2017).

Sardenberg (2008) refers to this as “liberal empowerment” which focuses on individual interests and rationality, as well as liberal market ideals such as economic growth. By contrast, liberating empowerment, which is the label Sardenberg gives to the original understanding of the concept, focuses on the need for collective action to challenge patriarchal power relations. Compared to the original vision of empowerment, the liberal version has been criticised for being drained of political power, focusing only on women’s practical circumstances and needs without addressing their inferior position in society (Batliwala 2013; Cornwall 2016; Cornwall and Rivas 2015; Cronin-Furman et al. 2017). A recent report frames this as a way of portraying culture rather than lack of political power as the oppressive force keeping women down, which then creates a space where (white) development actors can come along to teach (non-white) women what they need to know in order to free themselves of oppressive gender roles (Cronin-Firman et al. 2017). Empowerment is then something that can easily be achieved by training non-western women, for example by teaching them ways to earn money. This is particularly problematic because it assumes that women who do not engage in paid labour automatically lack agency and choice, and that they need to be educated by external actors in order to change that (ibid).

Some academics argue that this is a far cry from political empowerment, and potentially even damaging to women’s equality. In Sardenberg’s words “the concept of empowerment has been appropriated in this fashion in development discourse, legitimising practices that have little to do with the original concept developed by feminists from the South” (Sardenberg 2008: 21). Others, however, view improvements to women’s economic situations as a “necessary condition” for other types of equality, rather than something that will bring about these changes in and of itself (Anal 2013: 147). While the focus is still on individual interests over collective ones, the small-scale power shift that can follow from income generation can be a positive change for women. An example of this is described in a recent report on economic empowerment among Syrian women in Kurdish Iraq. It states
that women who have adopted the role as income earner report significant changes in status within the household and in relation to their husbands. Even though advancing their own position is not a stated priority for them, as their main concern is providing for their families, they still experienced a change to their social position due to participation in paid labour (Kaya and Luchtenberg 2018).

A problem with this, however, is that this kind of programming works to include women in an economic system that is already inherently unequal. Despite benefits income earning may have for individual women, it is well established that labour markets and economies are gendered in ways that create exclusion for them at the same time (Beneria et al. 2016). Gendered divisions of labour influence what kind of employment is considered socially and culturally appropriate. While this applies to both men and women, these structures tend to channel women into lower paid jobs. An example of this is outsourced housework. As a type of labour that is increasingly rejected by those who can afford to do so, this work has not shifted onto men as more women in the western world have entered formal employment, but has rather shifted to other, poorer women (Beneria and Sen 1981; Beneria et al. 2016; Koggel 2003). While it may be seen as positive that this constitutes a form of paid labour that is easily available to women, it is often an underpaid, informal and very insecure form of labour. Particularly where migrant women are employed as house workers in wealthier parts of the world, their own families are likely to suffer the most, as nobody is left to do that same (unpaid) labour for them (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003).

Another issue that creates gendered distortions within all economies and labour markets is the fact that the majority of unpaid labour within the household is done by women in all parts of the world. This limits women’s ability to participate in labour markets even further, because they are restricted to jobs that they are able to combine with unpaid duties in the home. For this reason, they are more likely than men to go into informal or part-time employment, which tends to be paid less (Beneria et al. 2016; Heinz 2010; Petersen 2015). An example of this is women who engage in informal trade of home-produced crafts. This type of work often provides highly insecure and irregular incomes, and in places where informal trade is common among both men and women, women tend to be on the lower end of the income scale. In many African countries informal economies are expanding, but rather than benefitting women who are often the dominant actors within informal economies, this has instead exacerbated women’s disadvantage. As men have shifted from formal employment into some of the more lucrative informal trades, like for
example tailoring, these markets have grown to become global, building on transnational trading networks across the continent and increasing profits. Most of these global networks are exclusively male, leaving women constrained to the lower income, and more insecure forms of petty trade (Meagher 2010).

A third issue is that work perceived as female is valued lower than work perceived as male, and thereby also paid less. Skills learnt by women within the home tend to be seen as “natural” talents and thereby qualified as unskilled labour, whereas similarly technical jobs dominated by men are classified as skilled labour, and paid more (Beneria et al. 2016; Momsen 2010). An example of this is garment factories, where women are the preferred labour force because they usually know how to weave and sow, but can still be paid as unskilled workers because no formally recognised training is required (Elson and Pearson 1981). As women tend to spend more time on unpaid labour, they often do have less formal work experience and education, which enables employers to pay them less. Because women are then perceived as low educated by employers even when this might not be the case, this in turn creates a vicious circle, as education and training for women are not seen as worthwhile investments since the return in the form of a salary will be lower than that of a man. With the trend of moving production to lower income countries, the structure of employment has changed into more informal and insecure forms of labour, which are conditions that “attract” female workers who have less choice and lower rates of organised worker union participation (Mills 2003; Momsen 2010; Pearson 2014). However, when conditions improve, the women do not necessarily benefit. In Mexico, where garment factories were previously female-dominated in the way that many south east Asian factories are today, a masculinisation of the workforce occurred as the “female” jobs have relocated to cheaper, lower income economies. As Mexico upgraded its global industry by moving from garment production towards more lucrative technological markets, the existing female labour force did not benefit from this shift, but was instead replaced by male workers. As a result, working in the factories is no longer considered a “female” occupation in Mexico (Pearson 2010).

Even though these examples demonstrate that gender roles are changing and adapting rather than fixed, they also point to a systemic problem that render women more likely find themselves in the most informal and lowest paid jobs, when they are incorporated into existing economies. Some of this critique against women’s economic empowerment programming is closely related to earlier criticisms of previous development
policy approaches towards women. Prior to the International Women’s Decade (1975-1985) women had predominantly been targeted by welfare programmes that focused on their roles as mothers and wives. Feminist critics then started to highlight that both women’s contributions to development and their rightful role as equal beneficiaries of development support are made invisible within such a policy. This led to an increased focus on including women, particularly in economic development through targeted income generation projects (Momsen 2010; Sardenberg 2008). However, the approach that followed, known as Women In Development (WID) was soon to be criticised for being too simplistic in its attempts to simply insert women into the existing development agenda without attempting to change gendered structures or systems within it. By the 1990s it had largely been replaced by Gender And Development (GAD) or gender mainstreaming, which builds on idea that gender roles should be analysed and included in development programming at all stages, in order to understand how gender may influence and be influenced by development (Crewe and Harrison 1998). While this is the dominant approach within development policy today, some of the old approaches linger, particularly within liberal approaches to women’s empowerment. As outlined above, it builds on incorporating women into a system where they are already disadvantaged, in the same way WID approaches did. The focus on women’s instrumental role in creating desirable outcomes for others was also a key criticism of WID (Momsen 2010), which has returned through the focus on women’s ability to create economic growth through labour force participation.

A common example of how women’s economic empowerment policy is implemented today is micro-finance. By granting low-income households access to credit, these development programmes aim to enable people who do not have access to regular financial capital to start businesses to generate an income. It is very common for such programmes to target women as a part of an economic empowerment agenda, but also because women are often perceived by loan agencies as more reliable than men when it comes to repayments (Mohamed 2010). Some of these programmes include non-economic aspects that aim to provide other types of support for women accessing loans, such as business and entrepreneurship training or workshops to promote the women’s social and political participation. Among the most often cited benefits are women’s increased influence within the household; improved nutrition and education levels among their children; and increased community participation among the women themselves (Momsen 2010; Swain 2010; Weber and Ahmad 2014).
However, it has also been established that micro loans can contribute to keeping women in disadvantaged positions (Bateman 2010; Karim 2014). For example, it is not a given that women will retain control of the money she is loaned, and women who start earning money in a household where the man sees himself as being in charge of money may risk being threatened or beaten if they do not give up their earnings. Women are more likely to be able to retain control over their earnings if they conduct business within a traditionally “female” area of work, or if their husbands are not present (Bibars 2010; Momsen 2010). As a result, this type of economic empowerment programming is likely to reinforce the gendered structures that keep women restricted to certain parts of the labour market. Women are likely to generate very small incomes through businesses supported by micro finance, which will not lead to a significant change to their overall situation (Maclean 2010).

These problems present themselves if women are successful in starting businesses that generate incomes, but there are also issues with the fact that this is not always the outcome. If women attempt to start businesses that are not successful, this can land them with large debts and few possibilities of repaying them (Green 2019). Further, women in developing countries are not always interested in starting businesses. A study of micro finance programmes in Tanzania (Mohamed 2010) has shown that women often have other priorities when capital is offered to them, such as covering medical expenses or buying food and clothing. The presumption that loans have to be invested in businesses to be considered successful demonstrates a poor understanding of gendered poverty, as connections with their communities are often a more important form of social security for women in low income households than income generation (ibid; Ferguson 2015). This makes women’s motivations for repaying loans very different from the perceptions of the loan agencies. Despite this, micro loans are likely to be evaluated as successful as long as loans are repaid, regardless of whether or not a successful income generating business was started as a result (Mohamed 2010).

In the displaced context, micro finance and entrepreneurship are important aspects of refugee self-reliance policy (See for example UNHCR’s Age Gender and Diversity Policy 2018). For women, this most likely means being confined to a home-based form of enterprise, such as sewing and selling clothes. Crafts production is a common type of enterprise among displaced women, and business is often dependent on intermediaries in the form of organisations acting as donors or contractors. They donate materials for the
production, and mediate access to clients through their contact networks (Bruni et al. 2004; Ahl and Marlow 2012; Al-Dajani and Marlow 2013). An example of this is among displaced Palestinian women in Jordan, where NGOs have started livelihoods programmes that build on traditional crafts production. The NGOs contract work to home-based women, provide materials and retail opportunities, which while it generates some income also creates dependency on these intermediaries who dictate terms of production (Al-Dajani et al. 2015). This is also an example of where a women’s economic empowerment programme can reinforce gendered divisions of labour. Displacement adds another aspect to this, as preserving traditional ways of life can be considered even more important within displaced communities (ibid; Hammer 2014).

Within global refugee self-reliance policy in general, and the Syrian response in particular, women’s economic empowerment as a strategy is closely related to that of sustainability. According to UNHCR statistics, 19.8% of the total number of registered refugees in the region are women of working age (18-59). Since self-reliance is being promoted as a sustainable solution for refugees, and usually conceptualised at the individual level within programmes, the response cannot afford overlook such a significant proportion of beneficiaries. The UN-coordinated response to the Syrian refugee situation presents women’s economic empowerment as an explicit goal of livelihoods support, as programming aims to include Syrian women on labour markets in countries of displacement (3RP 2019). The response plan for Turkey states that it will target women with specific livelihoods activities in order to address the existing gender gap on the Turkish labour market (3RP Turkey 2019; see Chapter five).

Similar to sustainability, it is a narrow version of women’s economic empowerment that is applied in policy, compared to academic debates on the concept. Programming focuses on income generation and labour market inclusion, while policy documents points towards benefits that are actually specific to a broader version of empowerment. As women’s economic empowerment is framed by refugee self-reliance policy as a contributing factor that will eventually lead to women’s economic independence, the version of the concept that is actually being implemented matters to how self-reliance is understood.
Decent work

Refugee self-reliance policy frequently refers to decent work as a goal\textsuperscript{26}. My thesis defines decent work broadly, going beyond the International Labour Organisation’s definition that focuses on fair and equitable labour conditions (ILC 1999), to also include what makes work meaningful and rewarding for the individuals performing it. My reason for expanding decent work in this way is that refugee self-reliance policy itself often refers to psychological benefits of paid labour as a key reason for providing livelihoods support for refugees. By way of illustration, UNHCR’s Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2014-2018 opens with a quote from Albert Einstein saying that “work is the only thing that gives substance to life” (UNHCR 2014: 1). The global refugee support regime is thereby implying that there is more to the term decent work than labour conditions, even though the international Decent Work Agenda led by ILO is very much focused on labour conditions and workers’ rights rather than the fulfilling aspects of labour (ILO 2019).

Under the ILO definition, decent work includes a number of labour conditions, but some of the most important ones are fair wages; security of continued employment; and freedom of association for workers to unite and organise (Nizami and Prasad 2017; UNHCR 2018a). In September 2015 the Decent Work Agenda was adopted into the Sustainable Development Goals as a part of Goal 8, aiming to “protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment” (SDG Target 8.8). Refugee self-reliance policy often makes reference to decent work, for example by stating that “decent work for all” is a goal (UNHCR 2014: 16), or describing the lack of decent work as a problem for refugees (UNHCR 2009: 24). However, there is no mention of how better labour conditions than the current ones will be guaranteed within jobs resulting from livelihoods support for refugees (ibid: 16-17). Refugee self-reliance policy thereby neglects decent work in two ways. Firstly, it does so by assuming that work is psychologically beneficial for refugees without discussing what makes it meaningful and rewarding; and secondly, by recognising the importance of fair labour conditions without ensuring them within their own programme delivery. In practice, the focus lies on creating income generating and employment opportunities, while the factors that make work decent are overlooked.

\textsuperscript{26} See for example UNHCR Handbook for self-reliance (2005); UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas (2009); UNHCR Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2014-2018; UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy (2018).
This problem is not specific to refugee support, but a broader issue within international development. The livelihoods development agenda has been criticised for being overly simplistic in its focus on jobs as a solution to poverty (Appendini 2001; Bebbington 1999; deHaan and Zoomers 2005). When the livelihoods agenda was gaining traction within development in the early 1990s, a livelihood was defined simply as “the means of gaining a living” (Chambers and Conway 1992: 5). While the livelihoods approach is also concerned with the “capabilities and assets” required to achieve those means (ibid: 7), the assumption remains that as soon as the means of making a living have been reached, the individual in question will be able to escape poverty. Assuming in this way that an income solves all the predicaments of being poor is problematic in multiple ways. Firstly, it overlooks structural poverty and systemic issues that may keep the poor marginalised regardless of livelihoods access (Appendini 2001; deHaan and Zoomers 2005; Solesbury 2003). Secondly, it overlooks the fact that paid labour may cause new problems for the poor by subjecting them to exploitative labour conditions, or work that lacks meaning and future prospects (Kavak 2016; Phillips 2011).

The livelihoods approach is closely tied to the Human Development Agenda, which focuses on human well-being in a way that livelihoods does not (Chambers and Conway 1992). However, it does so by shifting focus from the actual jobs towards what those jobs may enable people to do (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2011). The focus is no longer on economic resources or how they are obtained, but the capabilities and freedoms that can result from them (Nizami and Prasad 2017). Human well-being thereby becomes a separate consideration from paid employment opportunities themselves, and rather something that may follow as a result. Neither one of these approaches captures root causes of poverty, but instead addresses its symptoms (Laderchi et al. 2003).

The Decent Work Agenda has brought some attention to the fact that jobs need to meet certain requirements to be considered helpful to the poor. The very concept of decency implies that there is a philosophical element to the idea of decent work, and that it is considered a dignity that should be afforded to all people regardless of their income level (Nizam and Prasad 2017). When the Decent Work Agenda was launched by ILO in 1999, it promoted the position that the goal of ILO’s work is “not just the creation of jobs, but the creation of jobs of acceptable quality” (ILC 1999). A precarious labour situation is thereby considered a significant infringement on freedoms as well as life quality, which should be considered important within the Human Development Agenda (Nizami and Prasad 2017).
However, the connection between the Decent Work Agenda and development practice within livelihoods or human development remains poor. Even though development policy often uses broad concepts relating to well-being, such as decency and dignity, development programming focuses on measurable outcomes. For example, development initiatives can measure a reduced number of work-related accidents or a higher number of registered workers’ unions in a certain place (SDG Indicators 8.8.1 and 8.8.2). While these are relevant factors to consider in relation to labour conditions, they do not encompass the entire decent work concept, which may then continue to be overlooked within development practice.

In order to capture decent work as it is referenced within refugee self-reliance policy, where work is described as psychologically beneficial and rewarding for refugees, we need to also consider the idea of meaningful work. Frankl (1985) emphasises that what makes work meaningful is personal to the individual doing the work, rather than attributed to specific vocations. He attaches meaning strongly to the potential for creativity and self-fulfilment of individual workers, for example by allowing the individual worker to serve their community in some way, or work in a field they feel passionately about (Devivere 2018: 222). This can be contrasted with researchers who argue that meaningful work should be fairly distributed by states, which is a viewpoint that assigns objective value to some professions over others. Meaningful professions are then defined as those requiring intelligent input from the worker, even though it is not always clear what that entails (Schwartz 1982). Others who oppose the subjectiveness of meaningful work as self-fulfilling argue that work can also be meaningful in a broader sense, for example by contributing to public good, even if individual workers find it meaningless (Veltman 2016). Even though work that is meaningful in the broadest sense of the word should then be both subjectively meaningful to the worker, and objectively meaningful to the world (Wolf 2012), my thesis continues to focus on the subjective side of meaningful work, since it is benefits to the individual that are cited within refugee self-reliance policy as a reason for providing livelihoods support (UNHCR 2006; UNHCR 2014a; UNHCR 2018).

Recent studies on the mental health of refugees demonstrate that engaging in a meaningful occupation can help refugees work through mental traumas, provided that it provides enough income for them to comfortably support themselves and their families (Goodkind et al. 2014; Yakushko et al. 2008). This points to the importance of both meeting some level of standards regarding labour conditions, and providing refugees with
subjectively rewarding work. For resettled refugees, work is closely related to opportunities for integration in the new country (Hess et al. 2018). Social inclusion is, then, one of the factors that can make work meaningful for resettled refugees, which should also be relevant for displaced people residing in low- or middle-income countries in their home regions. However, the terms social inclusion and exclusion originate within social work, and are thereby usually reserved for high-income contexts (Lyons and Huegler 2011). As such, social exclusion is another factor that is usually overlooked within refugee self-reliance and livelihoods support, despite its relevance to refugees.

The term social exclusion aims to capture systemic structures that may cause and contribute to poverty in a broader sense, beyond the economic aspects. It can refer to a range of things, like denial of rights, or lack of inclusion within important societal functions such as political process and employment, that may in turn cause or contribute to material poverty for a certain group (Madanipur 1998; Walker and Walker 1997). This approach has been applied in the context of livelihoods research to widen the understanding of what a livelihood is beyond an economic income, and pointing to potential blockages in income access for the poor (Gore 1994; deHaan and Zoomers 2005). In development policy, this led to a surge in the early 2000s towards livelihoods support for the poor being addressed in a more systemic manner, through the Making Markets Work for the Poor agenda (M4P). This shifted focus from individuals’ access to employment to a broader understanding of the economic markets that poor people operate within, aiming to identify systemic changes that can work to the benefit of the poor and create more employment opportunities. Through comprehensive analysis of livelihoods strategies and value chains affecting economic opportunities, aid agencies take a facilitating role in allowing markets to run more effectively. Despite the lack of direct interaction with beneficiaries, many donors deemed this a more effective way to spend aid money compared to direct interventions, holding that it is more effective to address underlying issues than to provide short-term support to address symptoms of wider market problems. It also tied development more closely to private sector actors, where focus had previously been on governments only (Bekker et al. 2008; DFID 2008; Elliot et al. 2008). In recent years increased market access and financial inclusion have become much more broadly adopted in policy. The ultimate aim of financial inclusion is to expand the choices available to the poor. This kind of programming builds on the assumption that increasing access to financial services for previously excluded people will increase usage of these services, which will in turn improve living standards and...
broaden the financial system to reach even further, by stimulating growth and job creation. However, it can be difficult to verify in programme evaluations to what extent economic behaviours of the poor actually do change as a result of such development interventions (Berndt 2015; Porteous and Zollmann 2016).

These policy approaches build on the idea of systemic exclusion as a central cause of poverty, as they aim to include poor people in financial systems they have previously been excluded from. Academics have however criticised the assumption that simply including poor people in the structures they have previously been excluded from is the solution. Going back to the example about land use, if a poor person is given access to a plot of land, and any other barriers that prevent them from earning money from that plot (such as transport costs, access to tools, means of selling crops etc.) are addressed, there is still a risk that they have not been included on equal terms. If poor people are given the very worst plots of land in the area, yielding fewer crops of lower quality compared to other plots, they will have to work harder for less return and likely struggle to move up from that subordinate position in the long term. This is called adverse incorporation, and refers to social exclusion that does not necessarily constitute full exclusion from a certain part of society, but rather on inclusion on unequal or adverse terms (Hickey and du Toit 2007).

Looking specifically at livelihoods, this means that workers are not necessarily excluded from participating in the labour market, but rather included on terms that exploit their subordinate position (Kavak 2016; Phillips 2011). This is an issue that is overlooked within development policy addressing livelihoods through market inclusion.

When it comes to migrant labour, adverse incorporation is extremely common, as the demand for migrant workers is often high in precarious sectors that local workers reject because of the poor working conditions (see Chapter six). Migrants are thereby often over-represented within precarious labour forces, along with other potentially marginalised groups (Lewis et al. 2015; Şenses 2016). There are scholars who argue that migration is a positive force for development because of migrant labour, which is in line with M4P policy and the agenda in favour of creating as much labour market inclusion for migrants as possible. Remittances sent back to family members remaining at home can significantly improve their living standards and access to education and other opportunities, and migrant labour thereby becomes a type of development support that richer countries can provide to poorer ones, that also benefits their own economies (Bakewell 2008; Castles 2009). However, the risk with that type of development is that improvements for future
generations are done at the expense of today’s migrant workers and their well-being because they are adversely incorporated into labour markets in ways that trap them within subordinate positions.

Precariousness and precarity are terms that are commonly used to understand and analyse this as “insecure, volatile, or vulnerable human situations that are socioeconomically linked to the labour-market dynamics” (della Porta et al. 2015: 1). This can for example be situations where the workers have less control over their own situations and the conditions they work within, such as irregular labour where hours are unpredictable and waiting time not compensated, or work with a high risk of being replaced at little or no notice. If there is no legal protection for workers to organise in unions, this will likely make conditions even more precarious (Rodgers 1989). Guy Standing refers to precarious workers as a new social class - the precariat, born out of the neo-liberal economics that became dominant in the late 1970s and brought with it a tendency in many countries to backtrack on workers’ rights from the post-war period, and instead focus on flexibility in order to accommodate market demand. Labour became more precarious as de-regulation allowed wages to drop, working hours to become irregular and contracts temporary. Risks were shifted from employer to employee, as workers had to adapt to the prospects of having no guaranteed hours or wage; or being made redundant with little or no compensation (Standing 2011). Others have argued that precarious labour standards should be understood as a norm rather than a new phenomenon, since historically the broader pattern within capitalism makes Europe’s post-war welfare states the exception rather than the rule (Neilsson and Rossiter 2008). Scholars have also criticised the vagueness in terms of who is to be included in the precariat, and whether the focus should be on actual labour conditions or a perception of security and satisfaction among workers (della Porta et al. 2015; Doogan 2015).

As such, there are a number of approaches to creating livelihood opportunities and employment for poor and displaced populations, focusing either on their individual livelihoods access or systemic inclusion into financial systems. However, both perspectives run the risk of overlooking the extent to which the work created is decent, both with regards to labour conditions and how meaningful the job is.

The UN-coordinated regional response to Syrian refugees aims to create employment opportunities for refugees through short term employment creation; skills training improving their employability; and improved information and market assessments.
One of the goals is “improved business environments and working conditions” but activities within this focus on creating access to employment and financial services more in line with the M4P agenda than decent labour concerns (3RP Regional Strategic Overview 2019: 31). The response plan for Turkey similarly highlights that refugee families remain vulnerable to exploitation through informal labour and poor working conditions, but just like the regional plan the focus is on employment creation. The main objective of the livelihoods sector in Turkey is “improved livelihoods and living conditions, including better and improved decent work conditions”, but the indicators do not include any measurement of labour conditions. Instead it counts the number of people who have gained access to an income; and the number of people whose employability has improved as a result of training opportunities (3RP Turkey 2019: 92).

As such, while the Syrian refugee response is in line with global self-reliance policy in its approach to decent labour, there is no way of measuring labour conditions or meaningfulness within employment opportunities that are created through livelihoods support. Instead, a lot of emphasis is placed on labour market value chain analysis to inform job creation interventions and skills development opportunity. The only activity within the Turkey response that mentions labour conditions directly is the provision of information services, aimed at “awareness-raising on the importance of formal employment and social security” (ibid: 89). This type of activity is provided both to the displaced population as well as employers, to inform them of rights and obligations under the work permit regulation. However, the relevant outputs focus on the number of sessions delivered, rather than the number of people who have seen their employment conditions improved as a result (ibid: 93).

The decent work concept thereby contains a number of issues that are not captured within refugee self-reliance policy or programming, and my thesis aims to investigate what this absence of concern for decent work looks like in practice. Where sustainability and economic empowerment appear to have solid connections between academia and policy, even in cases where policy applies narrower versions of the concepts, with decent work it is rather a case of an absent connection. When the term decent work is mentioned in policy, it is defined through the ILO with reference to labour conditions, even though work is also implied to be meaningful, while programming overlooks both aspects. As such, the gap between theory and practice appears somewhat bigger compared to the two other concepts.
Conclusion

This chapter has outlined relevant literature and policy debates surrounding the three concepts I use to unpack self-reliance: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. It has established the relevance of these concepts to understanding how self-reliance is gendered, and how each of them relates to the particular context of displaced Syrians in Izmir, as described in the Chapter one. It has further outlined the relationship between academic scholarship, development policy agendas, and refugee self-reliance policy within each concept, and pointed to significant gaps between theory and implementation practice.

The backgrounds to sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work point towards challenging aspects of achieving refugee self-reliance for displaced men and women. Chapter one spelled out the particular challenges currently facing displaced Syrians in Turkey in relation to their livelihoods and economic lives, and given these combined challenges it is important to ask how they are addressed and understood by the people who work in the midst of them. My thesis poses questions around how staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir implement livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population, as well as how they understand and navigate the dilemmas within it. It asks to what extent these challenges are explicitly acknowledged, and what informs the potentially difficult choices that I/NGO workers will have to make throughout the implementation process. In Chapter three I present the research questions I pose to address these issues within my thesis, and outline how data was collected and analysed in order to answer them. I then introduce the three analytical chapters, where sustainability (Chapter four), women’s economic empowerment (Chapter five), and decent work (Chapter six) are explored in turn through the context of refugee self-reliance policy and livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir.
Chapter Three
Methodology

Despite the trend of promoting self-reliance within the global refugee support regime, it is not always clear when refugee self-reliance has been achieved (Omata 2017) and to what extent livelihoods support for displaced populations actually contributes to it (Crisp 2003; Betts et al. 2014; Betts et al. 2017). This creates a number of programmatic difficulties that need to be addressed by anyone who intends to deliver refugee livelihoods support. The previous chapter outlined how I approach these challenges using three concepts: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment and decent work. It established the relevance of these concepts to the gendered aspects of self-reliance, and placed these in relation to the context of Syrian displacement to Izmir, as described in Chapter one. This chapter now goes on to describe how my thesis analyses the ways in which inter- and non-governmental organisations delivering livelihoods support to the displaced Syrian population in Izmir go about addressing these challenges, as well as how they understand and navigate them. I then present thesis findings in relation to sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work in turn, and discuss what they tell us about self-reliance as a concept and its gendered aspects, as well as how refugees themselves are constructed within livelihoods support and refugee self-reliance.

My thesis explores how refugee self-reliance is gendered, by asking the following two research questions:

1. What do sustainability, women’s economic empowerment and decent work look like within the context of inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir?
2. How are sustainability, women’s economic empowerment and decent work understood and navigated by the staff and volunteers who implement this support?

The first question focuses on what the implementation of self-reliance looks like within the specific context of displaced Syrians in Izmir. It provides an account of the situation that inter- and non-governmental organisations operate within, and the livelihoods support they
provide to the Syrian population. This provides an empirical contribution to the relatively few studies on what support is available to the Syrian population in Izmir, and how their economic lives are perceived by those providing this support. The second question addresses how staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations understand and reason around their own work, and the dilemmas they come across within the theory-practice gaps that surround these concepts, described in Chapter two. This provides a conceptual contribution towards a deeper and more nuanced understanding of self-reliance as a concept, with a particular focus on how it is gendered.

This chapter starts by outlining and justifying the research approach, and the choices I have made within this study, including the focus on Turkey, Izmir, and the Syrian population. I then go on to discuss my own positionality within the research, including my position as a researcher in Turkey, and the role of language in accessing sources and information. I then present and justify the use of qualitative interviews and document analysis as my chosen methods of data collection, and reiterate how I have used sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work as a framework for analysis of self-reliance and its gendered aspects. Ethical concerns and limitations to my study are discussed throughout the chapter (rather than in a specific section), in an attempt to integrate them into all my methodological discussions. Finally, I present the structure for data analysis applied to each of my three data chapters, which address sustainability (Chapter four), women’s economic empowerment (Chapter five), and decent work (Chapter six) in relation to livelihoods support provided by inter- and non-governmental organisations to the displaced Syrian population in Izmir.

Research approach

My thesis sets out to understand how self-reliance is gendered in the ways it is implemented through livelihoods support for the displaced population in Izmir, and how dilemmas within this implementation is navigated and understood by the people delivering this support. As such, the analytical focus is on staff and volunteers working within inter- and non-governmental organisations supporting displaced Syrians in Izmir, aiming to shed light on the operational environment they are working within, and how they make sense of it in relation to self-reliance and the three analytical concepts sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. My main source of data has therefore been
 qualitative interviews with individuals who were involved in delivering livelihoods support in Izmir at the time of data collection in 2017.

It has been my intention to put the subjective knowledge of staff and volunteers at the forefront, by asking them to provide me with their own personal views on the work they do and why it is important (DeVault and McCoy 2002). I see this as a version of Sandra Harding’s feminist standpoint epistemology (Harding 1993), which urges researchers to go beyond speaking to experts and people who have “centre” positions in society, and instead explore the “margins” where facts that may appear objective truths from the centre position may have very different and subjective views on the same matters (Harding and Figueroa 2003: 3). In the case of refugee self-reliance policy, I see policy makers and donor organisations as the centre, since they are the ones to set priorities through high-level decision making procedures, often based on political positions in the donor countries (see Chapter one). Staff and volunteers in Izmir, on the other hand, become individual cogs in the machinery that delivers refugee self-reliance. As such, they may have very different subjective viewpoints since they are the ones who have to deliver these priorities in very difficult operational environments. They may not always have the ability to question the goals they are working towards, and it is therefore worth asking whether self-reliance is perceived the same way from the ground as it is presented in policy. By using programme documents and reports as a complement to interviews, I aim to tease out where subjective viewpoints differ from organisational ones, and where they align.

My study is concerned with the narratives that individual I/NGO workers create around their own livelihoods support; how they explain it and how they understand it, and what this in turn means for self-reliance as a concept. I do not see this as a study of aid workers themselves, “as an object of enquiry in their own right” (Harrison 2013: 263) but rather as a way of understanding how self-reliance is conceptualised based on practice as well as policy, from the point of view of those implementing it. As demonstrated by the literature review (see Chapter two), sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work all contain gaps between theory (policy) and practice (implementation). This is a common occurrence in development, as gaps between policy and implementation are common. David Mosse (2004) has argued that this is often presented as an imperfection. The solution is then to implement policy better, or to write more implementable policy in order to close the gap. However, since this gap is seemingly always there in some form, the most interesting thing is not necessarily that it exists within self-reliance policy, but what
happens within it. How do staff and volunteers operate in that imperfect space between theory and practice? What issues do they encounter there, and how do they reason about these issues? These are the questions my work aims to address, through qualitative interviews and analysis of organisational documents.

**Choices and positionality**

When I started my PhD in September 2015, Europe was in the midst of the so-called refugee crisis. Between April and October 2015, the vast majority of migrants entering Europe came from Syria, and even though the war itself was of course an underlying reason, reduced aid and worsening living situations in the neighbouring countries were also cited as contributing factors (Sly 2015). I wanted to look into the situation in Turkey by focusing my research on refugee support there, as it quickly became a prime location for European wishes to deliver long-term solutions for refugees without allowing them to seek refuge in their own countries. By the time I was choosing a more specific location in Turkey in 2016, İzmir came up as a particularly interesting one as I found out from informal conversations that several international organisations were in the process of developing livelihoods support programmes there.

As a result of the EU-Turkey agreement in March 2016, displaced Syrians were much more likely to remain in İzmir. As family reunification was also made more difficult in many European countries, women who were waiting to join their spouses in Europe found themselves waiting for much longer than anticipated (Yıldız and Üzgören 2016). In combination with the fast growing urban-based population of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey (İçduygu 2015), and the lack of municipal services available to them in İzmir (Çamur 2017), there was a new space for inter- and non-governmental organisations to expand their livelihoods support in Turkey to İzmir at the time, and I saw an opportunity to follow these developments from the start. Since many humanitarian and development organisations often have short institutional memories due to high staff turnover (Larson and Foropon 2018), researching relatively new programmes also increased my chances of reaching I/NGO workers who had been involved in setting up these programmes, and thereby get closer to the reasoning behind this programming. However, it should also be acknowledged that fewer practical problems may have been encountered at this early stage of programming compared to more established livelihoods support.
I chose to focus specifically on the Syrian population in Izmir predominantly because of the international attention granted to the Syrian situation and the role of self-reliance within this. While there are around 400,000 displaced persons of other nationalities in Turkey (DGMM 2019), there is much less public debate and international focus on their future prospects and their self-reliance. There are also fewer organisations in Izmir that provide support to migrants of other nationalities, as many of them have started specifically as responses to the Syrian situation (see Chapter one). I did initially want to keep my research open to all displaced populations in Izmir, but it proved much easier to focus on one population in order to include analysis of their collective situation, for example in relation to labour market participation in pre-war Syria, but also their current legal status in Turkey and conflict developments in Syria. While it is unfortunate that non-Syrian displaced people in Turkey are more overlooked within both research and support, my study was not very well placed to address this issue.

My own position within this research is closely related to my personal position in Turkey, which is best described as something in between a foreigner and a national. I am not originally from Turkey, and very clearly perceived as an outsider with my non-Turkish name27 and northern European looks. On the other hand, my husband is from Turkey, and living with someone from there has made Turkish politics and current events a given part of my everyday life, long before I conducted any research on Turkey. My understandings of Turkey and Izmir are therefore not only based on my own experiences, but also informed by members of my extended family who are locals living there. This gives me an additional insider perspective that few people expect me to have based on my appearance. I believe this has benefitted me as a researcher, since my informants have always assumed little prior knowledge of Turkey when it comes to political context and cultural dynamics. This made them explain things in more detail than I believe they otherwise would have, and I could then place those explanations within the context of knowledge I already had. On the other hand, my pre-existing knowledge is quite specific to the secular upper middle class of western Turkey, and may therefore have made me draw general conclusions that do not necessarily apply to the whole country.

My Turkish language skills have developed significantly throughout the course of my research, which has also created a shift within my positionality. Before I started the PhD

27 It is worth noting here that I did not have my Turkish surname at the time of data collection in 2017.
I had completed the first level of language classes (A1) and was able to hold very basic conversations in Turkish, but I did not have the ability to speak about my research or understand much of what I heard in the streets. Four years later, my competence has increased to C-level, and this has changed my access to both oral and written information. I believe that day-to-day interactions have helped me form a more complete picture of the situation for Syrians in Turkey, for example “eavesdropping” on public transport conversations about Syrians, or discussing my work with locals who have no relation to the Syrian population. Since I was not able to collect data in Turkey (see below) I have not used any of this explicitly within my analysis, but I think it has still made an important contribution to my work and my perception of the overall situation. I have also made a conscious effort in the last year to read academic articles in Turkish, which has significantly broadened the background information my study is based upon, as my thesis now includes both international and local perspectives. However, since Turkish sources have generally not been available through my university library, I have been limited to open access sources and may therefore not have a complete picture of the Turkish literature on this topic.

**Planned fieldwork**

I had originally planned to conduct fieldwork in Turkey during 2017, but my first year progression board in Edinburgh decided not to allow this. It was thought that doing fieldwork in Turkey at this time would put me at risk, due to the governmental purge on academics that had escalated following the attempted military coup on 15 July 2016. The board recommended that I either change countries to look at refugee self-reliance in a different neighbouring country to Syria, or shift towards a desk-based study focused on mapping livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Turkey, rather than the qualitative understanding of it that I had originally set out to research.

This was very difficult for me because I found neither of these two options very appealing. Due to the limited timeframe of the PhD and my funding, I did not have enough time to prepare, set up and seek approval for fieldwork elsewhere. I looked into Lebanon and Greece as potential options, but the circumstances for Syrians there were too different from Turkey to allow me to keep my original research plan, and as such it involved more work to relocate than I had time for. The desk-based option I rejected on the basis that I am much more interested in fieldwork-based research, and that study was too far from the research I wanted to conduct to motivate going forward with it for another three years.
Eventually I found my way towards a compromise; I kept my original research plan and my focus on Turkey, but conducted data collection remotely. This was enabled by a scoping visit where I informally spent three months in Turkey prior to collecting my data. This allowed me to go beyond a completely desk-based study by finding what organisations were active on the ground in Izmir, and building my networks around them. During this trip I visited a number of organisations supporting the displaced population in Izmir and elsewhere in Turkey, and had informal conversations about livelihoods support, self-reliance and gender. I also met with researchers working on similar research topics, mainly in Izmir and Istanbul. This work informed my research design by allowing me to go beyond desk-based mapping towards a more qualitative approach. Even though this was not formally a part of my data collection, I could not have accessed the same data without it.

Methodologically, I tried to keep as much of my original focus as possible without collecting data in Turkey. Since I am naturally more interested in the kind of data that can be obtained from being on the ground where humanitarian and development support is delivered, I have at times pushed the boundaries by posing questions within my thesis that would be better answered by a more ethnographic study. For example, when I ask how the concepts within my study are understood by staff and volunteers, I have attempted to also use existing evidence to discuss the implications this has for refugees. Ideally, I would have had my own data on the views of refugees themselves as well as organisation representatives, but since I could not collect data in Turkey that was not possible. However, this is an angle of the work that I am deeply interested in and for that reason I did not want to drop it completely from my study.

On a personal level, it was important to me to find this compromise because I did not fully agree with the decision made in my progression board. I believe this is another example of my dual position as both an insider an outsider in Turkey, as I perceived the situation very differently from the board members and others. Outsiders with no connection to Turkey, including members of my extended family in Sweden, many of my friends, and university representatives in Edinburgh, perceived Turkey as a dangerous place where I would risk being arbitrarily arrested as a researcher, based on the negative media reports that dominated between the time of the military coup attempt in July 2016 and the time of the referendum on the Turkish constitution in April 2017. My own perspective, however, based on what I heard from my Turkish family and friends, was that this was politically motivated persecution that had been going on for many years, and was simply
speeding up as a result of the state of emergency. From this point of view I was far from any risk as a foreign national with no political involvement in Turkey. Immersed in this perspective, I failed to even consider that my research could appear dangerous to anyone else, as it did to my progression board. As a result of this, I adapted my research design to take both perspectives into account, by not collecting data in Turkey while continuing to conduct research there.

While it was a conscious decision to spend time in Turkey before data collection, this did of course cause a delay to my thesis progression. I had already taken time off for Turkish language training in 2016, and had planned to commence data collection immediately after my first year progression board in January 2017. However, because of the re-design process and pre-data collection trip to Turkey, my data collection was delayed until November 2017 and continued into 2018. This was quite a significant delay to my original timeline, and left me with less scope for following up on interviews and programme outcomes. Had I designed my project on remote data collection to begin with, I would have considered collecting interview data at multiple points during the course of livelihoods programme design, implementation and evaluation, but since this approach was developed later in the project, this was not realistically possible within the timeframe of my PhD.

**Selection and organisation access**

I have collected data from ten non-governmental organisations that were planning and/or implementing livelihoods support for Syrians under temporary protection in Izmir at the time of data collection in 2017. My starting point for selection of organisations was the Livelihoods Cluster Working Group documents, as well as the existing studies on Izmir outlined in Chapter one. I then used my personal networks, as well as the connections I made during scoping visits in 2016 and 2017 to snowball connections, as one organisation put me in touch with another. This eventually expanded my access far beyond my initial personal connections. In the end I was able to include the majority of relevant organisations operating in Izmir at the time of data collection, but there are four additional organisations that I approached and intended to include, but did not manage to reach within the limited timeframe for data collection.
Two of the included organisations are intergovernmental organisations, one of which has a field office in Izmir, and the other one running activities in Izmir from its office in Ankara. I have also included a third UN-agency (making eleven organisations in total) that did not provide livelihoods activities in Izmir at the time. Despite its lack of presence in Izmir, I deemed this organisation to be very influential in the livelihoods sector in Turkey, and thereby still relevant to livelihoods activities in Izmir that are not directly implemented by them. The activities that are implemented by intergovernmental organisations in Izmir are predominantly vocational and language training, provided in collaboration with Turkish authorities. One of these organisations focus specifically with supporting refugees and migrants, whereas the other two work on other issues and populations too. Informants from these organisations also frequently bring up examples of livelihoods support that are not specific to Izmir, such as community centres targeting Syrian women with income generation opportunities, as well as efforts to formalise informal labour through Turkish employers. They also produce information about the rights of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey that is distributed through their implementing partners. These organisations are all members of the UN-coordinated Livelihoods Cluster in Turkey.
Four of the organisations are established NGOs with offices in multiple Turkish cities, who receive funding from international donors and intergovernmental organisations. Three of them have offices in Izmir, while one is running its Izmir-based activities from its office in Istanbul. All of them were established and active before the Syrian population came to Turkey. Two of them focus their work specifically with migrants and asylum seekers in Turkey, while two of them provide support more broadly to disadvantaged populations in Turkey. All of them developed programmes specific to the Syrian population after 2015, and started to implement livelihoods support in Izmir during 2016 and 2017. Two of them provide vocational training similar to that of the intergovernmental organisations, aiming to provide beneficiaries with formal jobs at the end of the training programmes. Three of the organisations provide information to the Syrian population as well as potential employers, particularly regarding the right to work and work permits for Syrians under temporary protection, as well as consultations aiming to help Syrians to find jobs. One NGO also provides business start-up support and entrepreneurship training. One of these organisations has closed down since the time of data collection in 2017, while the other three are still active. Two of them are members of the UN-coordinated Livelihoods Cluster in Turkey.

The remaining four organisations are local, and thereby specific to Izmir. All of them were founded as a result of the increased migration to Izmir that started in 2015, when Syrians as well as migrants of other nationalities were travelling to and through Izmir in large numbers. Two of the organisations were started by displaced Syrians, and focus specifically on the Syrian population in Izmir, while the other two operate as community centres open to everyone residing in the local area, whether they are Turkish, Syrian or any other nationality. Two of them offer income generation support targeted at Syrian women, and one offers training courses also targeting women, including language training for Syrian women. One of them focuses on helping Syrians find jobs through different types of consultations, and another two also facilitate job searching through physical and online information points aimed at the Syrian population, where information is distributed in Arabic. Two of these organisations are officially registered with Turkish authorities, one of which received their official permit during the time of my data collection. The other two are unregistered and operate without legal permits. All of these organisations are based in

28 These are generally informal jobs within the Turkish economy.
Konak municipality in central Izmir, focusing on populations in different areas of Basmane and Kadifekale.

Because some of the organisations participating in my study are engaging in illegal activities\footnote{This can, for example, include hiring Syrians without official work permits; delivering teaching activities without registering this with the Turkish Ministry of Education; or operating without being legally registered as an NGO.} (or were at the time of data collection), I have chosen to apply blanket anonymity to all organisations. Even though all participating organisations already have information about themselves and their activities available online in the public domain, particularly through social media pages, I wanted to retain the ability to discuss within my findings which activities are legal and which ones are not without putting participating organisations and individuals at further risk. This does not detract from my analysis, since I treat the knowledge shared by my informants as subjective rather than representative of the institutions they work for. It is therefore not necessary to know exactly which organisation they work for in order to situate their knowledge, and I have deemed it more important to be able to describe and discuss the organisations’ activities, including potentially illegal ones, in more detail.

The organisations that are named in the background section (Chapter one) have all been named in previous studies that are publicly available online. In that section, I have omitted organisations that I know are not legally registered in Izmir even if they have been mentioned in other research. I did consider the option of naming some organisations and leaving others anonymous within my study, but decided against this on the basis of Izmir being such a small operational space, and that naming some may therefore render others more easily identifiable. Further, since this is such a quickly changing legal environment, I did not want to take it upon myself to determine what is legal and what is not, in case this were to change during the course of writing up my findings. As a number of organisations of all sizes have been closed down in Turkey due to a lack of legal compliance (Weise 2017) I did not want to risk naming any organisations at all. For this reason I have also omitted names of other organisations mentioned by informants, regardless of whether or not they are included in my study. For international informants I have also omitted any reference to their countries of origin, as this may render them and their organisations more easily identifiable. A reader who is familiar with refugee support networks in Izmir may still be able to guess the identity of participating organisations purely on the basis of their
activities, but without including any identifying information that could substantiate these guesses, it seems unlikely that my work could be used against them in any way.

**Interviews**

While my informants can be described as experts in the field of delivering livelihoods support in Izmir, I am equally interested in their subjective standpoints as individuals who have found themselves within the refugee self-reliance paradigm. My work therefore takes a subjective viewpoint to explore the everyday working lives of my informants, aiming to uncover their particular positions and actions within the social rules that are generated, experienced and performed within the organisations where they work (Campbell and Gregor 2002; Smith 2006). With this in mind, I asked questions that aimed to prompt informants to speak not only about their knowledge of the situation, but also of their personal opinions about what was going on.

This type of interview can open up space for informants to ventilate their personal frustrations surrounding their jobs, because of my position outside of their organisations (Kvale and Brinkmann 2014). Some informants reflected on the usefulness of attempting to summarise, explain and make sense of their own work in this way. A limitation of this approach, however, is that I have no way of knowing whether informants share their personal opinions rather than for example their organisational positions. In some cases informants have pointed this out themselves, but in most cases I have made an educated guess based on the extent to which it aligns with organisational documents. In cases where informants are repeating the organisational lines without adding or commenting much, I have concluded that this is less likely to be their personal views. Where possible, I did my best to prompt informants to speak from a personal point of view, but it was of course ultimately up to each individual what they chose to share with me. While this may come down to a number of factors including personality, I did sense a pattern where those more accustomed to speaking publicly about their work (often those in more senior positions) were less inclined to be personal, compared to informants who seemed less used to being interviewed.

At the beginning of each interview (see appendix for interview guide), the informant was asked to describe what the situation looks like for Syrian refugees in Izmir, and whether or not they think this situation is different for women compared to the men. The primary intention with these questions was not to find factual answers, but rather to
gauge what concerns stand out as the most important ones to the interviewee in question, and what their own gender analysis looks like in this context. After describing the situation in their own words, the interviewees were asked what they think should be done about this situation. This was a deliberately broad question that I often had to follow up with reassurance that I was not looking for a solution, but rather for their personal opinion about what is needed. Getting respondents to describe the situation for Syrians in their own words worked as a way to uncover their personal understanding of what the lives of displaced persons look like in Izmir, and what should be done to address their problems. It also provided an easy way to gauge whether respondents took the question about what should be done as an opportunity to talk about the solutions offered by their particular organisation, which many of them did, or whether they took a broader view of the issues facing refugees, for example by discussing political approaches.

The second part of each interview focused on the organisations and their work. Respondents were asked very broadly to describe the organisations they work for, and elaborate on their personal roles within them. They were then asked how the organisation’s activities came about, and what kind of information or knowledge has informed the choice of creating those particular interventions. This gave me a good sense of where livelihoods support fits into the organisation’s wider portfolio of activities, as well as insight into how the organisation in question is run, and how decisions are made within it. Informants were then asked to describe any impact they can see from their work. This question had a slightly different function for grassroots level respondents compared to those working within established organisations, as the former were more likely to tell stories of what inspired the creation of an NGO or the particular activities they work on and anecdotal evidence of impact they may have seen. Respondents from established organisations were more likely to point towards assessments and impact frameworks in response to these questions, rather than speaking about their personal viewpoints.

The third part of each interview focused on employment and livelihoods support. Respondents were asked to talk specifically about the job situation for refugee men and women respectively (provided they had not already done so in the first section). They were then asked to describe what kind of job support is available to the refugee population in Izmir; who this support is aimed at; and whether there are gendered differences in support access. These questions filled a similar function to the first section within the specific area of jobs and livelihoods; to get respondents to talk about their own view of the situation and
what is needed in the livelihoods area, but also share their views on the work of other organisations than their own. They were then asked to describe their own organisation’s response to these particular issues, and whether they have any gender specific targets within their livelihoods support. Talking about general livelihoods strategies among refugees and available livelihoods support allowed me to go deeper into these particular activities to try and understand why they were designed as they were. I also intended these questions to provide an indirect way into the respondents’ understandings of gender and livelihoods, without asking directly whether they see self-reliance as a gendered concept.

In the final part of each interview respondents were asked to name other organisations working with livelihoods and self-reliance in Izmir, as a way of ensuring my reach within the inter- and non-governmental response in Izmir, but also to find out which organisations may be aware of each other or working together. Before wrapping up the interviewees were asked if they had any questions for me, and encouraged them to contact me at a later date if they thought of any.

While all interviews followed this same general structure, I maintained a semi-structured approach that allowed scope for respondents to take the interview in different directions. I also asked follow-up questions and remained within the same topic with additional questions (Kvale and Brinkmann 2014). Each interview also contained a detailed discussion about data protection and anonymity, where interviewees were free to ask me any questions about how their account would be handled. Some informants were concerned about expressing criticism towards the government, and I could then assure them that no raw data would ever reach Turkey, and that the final product would be completely anonymised. Others had no concerns at all and said I could name them if I wish to do so, but I decided to keep everyone anonymous regardless of their own opinions on this, since naming some and not other might still render anonymous participants more easily identifiable.

All interviewees were approached online, via email or another online messenger service, where I explained my research and provided an information sheet about my project (see appendix). All interviewees participated with informed consent, but because of the strict anonymity I did not ask for signed copies of the consent forms, as this might have made some respondents more uncomfortable participating. Instead I shared the form (see appendix) with them in advance of the interview, and went through it at the start of each interview to discuss any concerns the interviewee had. I always made clear that
participating in my research is completely voluntary and that I will never put pressure on them to continue participating if they wish to withdraw. I refrained from recording interviews when respondents were uncomfortable with this, and have also explained in detail how I handle interview notes and transcripts. In cases where interviewees asked to see their own transcripts, I have shared them. Where I have used direct quotes in my thesis, I have also shared transcripts again, highlighting which sections are quoted. Further, I tried to give respondents as much freedom as possible to choose when and where to conduct their interviews, as some were more comfortable speaking from home at night time rather than from their office during the day.

I have collected data from a total of 22 interviews between November 2017 and March 2018. Out of these, seven respondents came from intergovernmental organisations; six from Turkish organisations active in multiple cities; and nine from local organisations based in Izmir, making a total of twelve paid staff and eight volunteers. Within the intergovernmental organisations, two respondents were gender specialists while the other five were programme staff; six were Turkish and one international (neither Turkish nor Syrian); two were men and five were women. Within the established Turkish organisations, all six respondents were programme staff; five were Turkish, and one international; two were men and four women. Within the grassroots organisations four respondents were the founders of their NGOs while the other five were volunteers; one was Turkish, three were Syrian, and five international; five were men and four were women. The distribution of nationalities reflects a norm, as all legally registered NGOs need to have a staff force that is 80% Turkish by law. Grassroots organisations that are volunteer-run are much more likely to be dominated by international people, some of whom visit temporarily. However, I did not want to include short-term volunteers in this study to ensure that all informants had been in their positions long enough to create a good understanding of the work and form personal opinions about it. All volunteers I interviewed had therefore been in their positions for a minimum of six months, and most of the Syrian and international ones had been living in Turkey for much longer than that.

I refrained from gathering personal data as I saw the lack of personal questions as reassurance of anonymity for the informants, but I now see this as a limitation as I can only guess for example their educational backgrounds. Ages range from 20 to 60 with a majority

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30 Some volunteers do get paid informally, but since this is not legal in Turkey I did not ask them to specify whether or not that was the case.

31 This is 90% for all other companies, but 80% for NGOs.
being professionals in their 30s and 40s. Both the youngest and the oldest can be found among the volunteers, and there were also volunteers who were mid-career in completely different fields from refugee support. It seems a reasonable assumption that most informants are educated to degree level, since this is a requirement for most jobs within the aid and development sector in Turkey, and most volunteers had previously held other qualified jobs. At UN-level many positions also require a masters’ degree. At least two informants mentioned that they hold PhDs, one working within an intergovernmental agency and the other one volunteering at the grassroots level. My level of insight into their previous experience has been up to each informant to decide, and the extent to which I am able to apply this knowledge in the analysis therefore varies a lot. This has skewed my sample towards those who were more inclined to share personal details, as it is easier for me to draw conclusions about their personal positions compared to those who simply answered my questions directly. Since for example their previous understanding of gender is likely informed by their education, this would have been relevant to ask.

I aimed to include as many relevant respondents as possible, but because of the limited time frame for my data collection I stopped searching for new respondents once I noticed the same themes and responses were being repeated. This saturation (Bryman 2008) occurred first with grassroots organisations, and then again with the larger organisations as respondents from the two groups tended to bring up slightly different themes from one another. All interviewees were selected based on recommendation from others working in the same field, either within the same organisation or other organisations supporting the Syrian population. Once I had established a point of contact, I asked to be put in touch with the most relevant people in relation to the organisation’s livelihoods support activities. (In some cases only one such person was available within an organisation.) I made all contacts via email, often through introductions from another contact, and in some cases I had informal conversations in person during my scoping trips to Turkey, or over Skype with the respondents prior to the interview. There is a risk of selection bias if some organisations are more inclined to recommend each other, or others who share their personal opinions, but I attempted to work against this by also using personal contacts (for example family friends), which eventually led me to the same organisations through different routes.

As a remote researcher, I conducted all interviews using internet phone services like Skype and WhatsApp, even in cases where I had met the interviewee in person during my
scoping trips. I believe it was helpful to have informal meetings and conversations in person before conducting an interview, but it did also cause some confusion among informants who struggled to understand why I was not able to just interview them on the spot. I did not notice any significant difference to Skype interviewing compared to my previous experience of interviewing people in person, but I did make an effort to ensure that there was space for informal chatting that would normally occur during a face-to-face meeting, in order to make informants more comfortable. Remote interviewing was also helpful in that it provided much needed flexibility in scheduling, which allowed me to let the informant choose where to call from without having to provide a space for them. Poor internet connections and electricity cuts did at times interfere, which meant that I had to cut interviews short or continue at a later date. One interviewee who struggled with their connection on several occasions provided answers to interview questions over email, which I then followed up on with a phone call. The semi-structured format does enable respondents to participate over email by responding directly to questions, but I found this account much more limited because it lacks elaboration and spontaneous thoughts that often come up during the interview. The lack of immediate follow-up questions also limits the amount of data that come from this kind of interview, which is why I opted for re-scheduling wherever possible.

Interviews have been coded randomly from A to V. In order to guarantee full respondent anonymity in a relatively small operational space, the various job roles and positions of individuals will not be disclosed. I have also limited the amount of detail I share about each organisation (see previous section) by not coding organisations and attributing activities directly to them, and refraining from matching up interviewees with the organisations (by stating for example that Interview A works for Organisation X). Because Izmir is such a small space, it would be much easier to identify individuals if this information were to be disclosed. As outlined above, this study is based on subjective knowledge of informants, which makes it less relevant to know exactly who works where, beyond the distinctions I make between UN-agencies, established organisations and grassroots organisations. However, I have strived to make it clear in the data analysis what position an interviewee is speaking from within each examples, for example whether the situation they describe is something they have experienced in their current role; something they have heard from others; or something they have experienced in their personal lives or other work. In cases where examples do come from their current roles, I have disclosed a little bit
of detail relating to their position within that particular example, for example as manager of a livelihoods programme, or initiator of a cash-for-work initiative.

20 out of 22 interviews were conducted by me in English. In cases where Turkish was the respondent’s first language, I still chose to conduct interviews in English because all respondents were used to having English as a working language. This is a potential limitation as some informants may have spoken more freely and personally in their first language. In many cases I failed to clarify before the interview that I speak Turkish and that this would have been an option, as interviewees assumed I was a foreign researcher without the ability to let them speak their own language.

The remaining two interviews were conducted in Arabic, and subsequently translated into English. I arranged this by hiring an Arabic-speaking research assistant, as I wanted to include initiatives where Arabic was the operational language. I was introduced to my research assistant Yousef while I was in Izmir, as he volunteered with a local organisation and offered to show me around and introduced me to others working there. As it transpired that much of the work within the two organisations we visited was conducted in Arabic, I later asked him if he would be willing to work for me to conduct these interviews. As he was already a volunteer himself, he already had established relationships with both interview subjects. Prior to the interviews Yousef translated the same interview guide I used for the English language interviews, as well as the consent form, making sure that any questions relating to the research could be referred back to me. He was paid on an hourly basis for the combined time spent conducting, transcribing and translating these interviews.

The use of bilingual research assistants is a common way for researchers to cross language barriers (Williamson et al. 2011) and I generally found that it worked really well. Yousef and I kept in regular contact during the time of his interactions with interview subjects, and discussed interview guides and areas of interest in advance to prepare him as far as possible what might be most relevant to my research. However, picking out themes of particular interest for follow-up questions was undoubtedly easier for me as the main researcher. This led to slightly less deep conversations within particularly the first of these two interviews, making that one somewhat less relevant to my research analysis. We considered working with an interpreter-model instead where I would conduct interviews with his help interpreting between English and Arabic, but as I was collecting data remotely this proved difficult to arrange for practical reasons.
All interviews have been fully transcribed. Two respondents chose not to be recorded, and in these cases I transcribed interviews from notes and memory only. All interviewees who requested to see their transcripts have been given the opportunity to do so, and all interviewees have been contacted with a full thesis draft and their transcript near the time of PhD completion. Even though I tried to be very transparent with the process, I could have been clearer about the timeline, as many of the informants did not seem aware that it would take so long (in some cases almost two years from the interview) for the research to be completed. I have made sure that all interviewees have been able to contact me throughout that time, but I have not been able to reach all of them with a thesis draft, as some have moved positions and changed their contact details. This is not only a limitation in terms of validity and allowing interviewees to check that the information they have provided is accurate, but also something I should have considered as expectation management. Some respondents expressed that they really appreciated the fact that I was doing research on gender and livelihoods and that this was important to them, and it is worth considering that they might have had different outputs in mind apart from my PhD thesis. Even though I will do my best to find out whether there is any way my research findings can benefit their work following the completion of my thesis, in the future I will strive to find out from informants in advance whether this is the case.

**Documents**

I chose to include documents in my data collection to be able to situate interview data within the context of the relevant organisations. Documents form crucial part of any organisation, and more importantly it provides a way to understand the way in which that organisation is socially organised and structures. They can also reveal power relations and hierarchies within organisational settings, for example by highlighting how decisions are made (Prior 2003; Smith 1984). As stated in the previous section, a limitation of relying on personal narratives is that the researcher cannot verify to what extent they really are personal. In this case, I believe the most likely example of where narratives are not personal is where they come from the organisation itself. Comparing interview narratives with those within organisation documents thereby becomes a way of determining whether that statement is representative of the organisation. If it is not, it is more likely to be the personal view of the respondent.
The documents I have used within this study can be split into three categories: documents in the public domain that I have chosen to attribute; documents in the public domain that I have chosen to anonymise; and documents that are not in the public domain, all of which I have chosen to anonymise. I have accessed documents in the public domain from websites and social media accounts of the participating organisations, while non-public documents have been shared with me by staff or volunteers at the organisation in question.

The first category includes only UN-level documents that are publicly available on the UNHCR data portal, predominantly programme reports and meeting minutes\textsuperscript{32} from the Livelihoods Cluster. Since this group has a wide membership and activities that stretches across Turkey (see organisation section), none of the information within these documents will jeopardise the anonymity of individuals or organisations participating in this study. It is important to note that these documents will also include information that is not specific to the organisations participating in this study, but rather generic to the broader livelihoods support efforts in Turkey.

The second category of documents are published in the public domain by smaller organisations, and since these are specific to each organisation they cannot be attributed without naming the participating organisations. These documents are programme descriptions and reports from organisation websites and social media pages. In order to protect anonymity I never quote these documents directly, but always paraphrase to make sure that the identity of a participating organisation cannot be confirmed using internet searches. Even though this particular information is already available in the public domain, I do not wish to attribute it since my thesis also includes a lot more detailed and personal information from people working within these organisations, and it is the combination of the two that I want to protect from being publicly available through my thesis.

Finally, some respondents have shared internal documents that are not available in the public domain. Most of them are presentations used to explain their programmes to external actors and do not contain particularly sensitive information, but in order to preserve anonymity these will not be attributed directly to any organisations. Again, as I have chosen not to code organisations, there will be no direct attribution to these documents at all.

\textsuperscript{32} The meeting minutes from 2017-2019 were only made available online in April 2019, so it is worth noting that these documents were not available at the initial analysis phase. These programme reports also tend to come out with a significant delay.
Within my data analysis, I do not treat these documents as objects of analysis in and of themselves, but rather as a way to deepen my understanding of the interviewees and their accounts. Since I am not analysing the livelihoods programmes but rather how the underlying concepts are understood by people implementing the programmes, document information was not as crucial to my analysis as the personal points of view of informants. I did not gather document data systematically, but simply took what was available. I did ask interviewees to share any programme information they could, but if I had explained the purpose of this better from the start, I may have found more personal accounts within documents as well. However, as it is, these documents serve as background information while the qualitative interview data and narrative of informants remain at the centre of my data analysis.

Analysis

As outlined in Chapter two, I have chosen to structure my analysis of self-reliance around three related concepts: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment and decent work. While my research questions focus on these three concepts, I did not bring them up specifically during interviews because I wanted to be able to analyse the extent to which they did or did not come up naturally in these conversations. Equally, I did not ask informants about self-reliance or how they understand it, but the information sheet I shared with them in advance of interviews clearly stated that my research focus on self-reliance and gender, while the three analytical concepts were not mentioned anywhere. As such, I know that they came up at the initiative of informants themselves.

This set up allows me to analyse silences, and instances where these concepts did not come up, as well as where they did. Sustainability was often expressed as a perception that humanitarian support for refugees was something different (and in many ways inferior) to the livelihoods support the informants and their organisations work on. Women’s economic empowerment was discussed in relation to livelihoods support targeting women, and often in response to my study’s focus on gender that informants were aware of in advance. Decent work was never mentioned explicitly, but labour conditions came up as an observation of the fact that most Syrians in Izmir do have jobs but work under poor conditions. With one exception, labour conditions beyond formality were not discussed at all in relation to livelihoods support. Some informants observed that livelihoods support for
women is often less sustainable than other livelihoods support, but otherwise connections were not explicitly made between the three areas.

Once I had collected my interview data, I coded it according to these three themes using NVIVO. I then structured my three data chapters around each of the concepts, each chapter covering both descriptive account of how each concept is visible within livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir (RQ1), and reflections around how informants navigate dilemmas they come across in this implementation (RQ2). I have used then document data to expand on the accounts provided in interviews, to enable me to go into more detail about the specific examples given by informants.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the methodological choices I have made within this study, in relation to the specific challenges facing inter- and non-governmental organisation supporting the displaced Syrian population in Turkey (see Chapter one), and the conceptual challenges within the three concepts I use to analyse self-reliance and its gendered aspects: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work (see Chapter two). My methodological approach focuses on how staff and volunteers within inter- and non-governmental organisations providing livelihoods support understand their own work, and how they navigate difficulties within it. As such, using qualitative interviews and document analysis has enabled me to collect data that makes an empirical contribution on how self-reliance is being implemented in the context of displaced Syrians in Izmir, and the gendered aspects of this (RQ1). Further, it enables me to also make a conceptual contribution towards understanding self-reliance as a gendered concept, and how its construction within organisations supporting displaced populations contributes to the construction of an ideal refugee (RQ2).

The following three chapters present my thesis findings, addressing sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work in turn. Each chapter begins by outlining a more detailed background to the specific situation for Syrians in Turkey in relation to each concept, focusing on the legal status of Syrians under temporary protection (Chapter four); women’s labour market participation in Turkey and Syria (Chapter five); and migrant work and labour conditions in Turkey (Chapter six). Each chapter then presents examples of how the concepts are visible within implementation of livelihoods support in Izmir, and highlight where there are differences between local grassroots organisations and
larger organisations receiving international funding. I then go on to discuss the dilemmas surrounding each concept faced by staff and volunteers as they implement livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population, and describe how they go about re-defining each concept into a narrower form through their implementation and reasonings. Each chapter will also discuss how sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work relate to each other within the Izmir context.
Chapter Four
Sustainability

This chapter is the first of my three analytical chapters, each of which addresses one of the three concepts I use to understand self-reliance and its gendered aspects: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. The previous chapters have established how the global trend of attempting to facilitate self-reliance and integrate refugees into existing economies clashes with the Turkish policy (Chapter one); how the challenges facing the displaced Syrian population in Izmir relate to the additional challenges found within the concepts sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work (Chapter two); and how I approach the questions that arise from this within my thesis (Chapter three). This chapter focuses on my findings in relation to sustainability, asking how inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir work towards sustainability within their livelihoods support for displaced Syrians, and how staff and volunteers delivering this support navigate the dilemmas they are faced with surrounding sustainability.

As outlined in Chapter two, sustainability is a well known concept within international development that is not always clearly defined by those who apply it to their programming. At its broadest, sustainability is interpreted to mean anything that will continue beyond the scope of the development intervention itself (Taylor 2014). Within the refugee livelihoods agenda, this type of thinking is central. Jobs are presumed to provide a sustainable solution for refugees precisely because an income will (in theory) last beyond interventions in a way that direct aid does not (Betts et al. 2017). The problem is that this theoretical solution cannot be applied very well in practice in Turkey, because laws and policies actively prevent Syrians under temporary protection from obtaining permanent and reliable jobs (see the first section of this chapter). However, organisations at all levels within the refugee response in Turkey are nevertheless trying to provide jobs for the displaced population with the motivation that jobs are sustainable. There is thereby a significant gap between theory (policy) and practice (implementation) in this area (Mosse 2004: see Chapter three), and this chapter will explore firstly what that gap looks like in the Izmir context (RQ1), and secondly how dilemmas within it are understood and navigated by the people providing this support to displaced Syrians in Izmir (RQ2).
A clear majority of the staff and volunteers that I have interviewed for this work very explicitly distinguish themselves from what they call humanitarian organisations, whose activities they describe as handing out food and clothing with no consideration for long term impacts. This points towards a perceived norm within the I/NGOs in Izmir that engage in livelihoods support, where integration and long term planning for the Syrian population in Turkey are privileged over direct aid. I understand this differentiation as an illustration of I/NGO workers’ views on sustainability, and I go on to elaborate on what this means for the livelihoods support they deliver. Firstly, this chapter outlines the legal context of migration in Turkey, looking particularly at the current situation for Syrians under temporary protection and their right to work. Secondly, I describe how inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir work towards sustainability, and demonstrate that livelihoods support very rarely creates jobs for Syrians under temporary protection. Thirdly, I analyse how individual I/NGO workers understand sustainability within their work, and demonstrate how their views of what sustainability means in practice create a very particular understanding of the displaced population they are working to support, which, in turn, has gendered consequences for how the needs of refugees are perceived and addressed, as well as how self-reliance is gendered as a concept.

Turkey’s legal framework for refugee labour

This section outlines Turkey’s current legal framework for refugee protection and a brief history of preceding laws, as this forms an important part of how inter- and non-governmental organisations work on sustainability within their livelihoods support for displaced Syrians today. Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, but has not signed the Additional Protocol of 1967 and is thereby retaining the convention’s original geographical limitations, only recognising refugees fleeing from Europe. As a result, the vast majority of displaced people in Turkey are not recognised as refugees under international law, but instead have their rights regulated through national mechanisms (Kaygısız 2017; Koç et al. 2015).

Migration management in its current format is relatively new, as legal reforms were initiated in the mid-2000s as a part of Turkey’s bid to join the European Union (Kaya 2009). Prior to 2013 when the new migration law resulting from this process was adopted by parliament, Turkey had no comprehensive law on immigration but governed it through a number of different laws and regulations (Suter 2013). The Law on Settlement from 1934
established that people of Turkish decent had the right to enter, settle and apply for asylum in Turkey, and this law was applied to grant protection to for example Bulgarian Turks and Bosnian Muslims\(^{33}\) (İçduygu 2003). During the cold war period, Turkey accepted individual refugees from eastern Europe and the Soviet Union under the 1951 Convention, but expected them to resettle elsewhere once refugee status had been granted (Kirişçi 1996). Protection was also granted en masse to non-European populations during this time, for example during the Iran-Iraq war, but this was done on a case-by-case basis with no legal regulations guaranteeing protection or rights (İçduygu 2003).

Up until 1994 Turkey did not process any individual asylum claims from non-European nationals through national legal mechanisms. All applications for refugee status from non-Europeans were instead managed by UNHCR. Individual applicants would be allowed temporary residence in Turkey for the duration of the UNHCR status determination process, but would then be expected to leave and settle elsewhere (Suter 2013). As a result of this system, there were instances where refugees would enter Turkey illegally, gain international refugee status through UNHCR and then be detained by Turkish authorities and deported back to their country of origin despite their internationally recognised status, since Turkey still considered them illegal. To avoid such disagreements with UNHCR on who could legally reside in the country, a new Asylum Regulation\(^{34}\) was adopted in 1994 (Kirişçi 1996). This retained the system of UNHCR processing asylum claims from non-Europeans claiming international refugee status, but with an additional asylum process in Turkey to prevent refugees from circumventing Turkish authorities (Suter 2013). As such, it was only from 1994 onwards that individuals could seek asylum in Turkey in accordance with the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol\(^{35}\) and be granted asylum even if they came from outside Europe. This regulation also included provisions for mass influxes of groups seeking protection in Turkey, thereby legalising the rights that were previously granted arbitrarily (Kirişçi 1996).

The 1994 regulation was praised at the time for providing clarity on who can and cannot reside in Turkey and who is responsible for what within the asylum process; for

\(^{33}\) However, this was not applied consistently, as Turkey also refused entry to refugees of Turkish decent from Chechnya in 2000.

\(^{34}\) Officially ‘The Regulation on the Procedures and the Principles Related to Mass Influx and the Foreigners Arriving in Turkey either as Individuals or in Groups Wishing to Seek Asylum either from Turkey or Requesting Residence Permits with the Intention of Seeking Asylum from a Third Country’ published in Official Gazette no. 22127, English translation by UNHCR Ankara.

\(^{35}\) Even though Turkey had still not signed the 1967 Protocol, the refugee definition from it was copied into national law.
establishing laws around protection practices that had previously been unclear; and for recognising the principle of non-refoulement of refugees as outlined in the 1951 Convention (ibid). However, despite a higher degree of consistency in the legal text, in practice the law could still be arbitrarily applied by Turkish authorities. For example, if an individual applicant from outside of Europe was granted international refugee status by UNHCR, they could still be denied asylum by the Turkish government and legally deported to their country of origin. Despite applying the same criteria found within the Convention, Turkish authorities frequently interpreted the legal text differently and denied asylum to refugees who had gained the international status on the same grounds (İçduygü 2003). Further, even though protection for groups of people fleeing a specific crisis in their country of origin had become guaranteed by law, it was still up to the Turkish government to decide what constitutes a crisis, and importantly also when that crisis was considered to be over and people who had previously enjoyed protection had to return to their country of origin (Kirişçi 1996). Deportations of people from both of these categories received harsh criticism from European governments and international organisations, and Turkey eventually embarked on the process of updating the law in a broader attempt to adjust their legal framework to reach European Union membership standards (Suter 2013).

This resulted in the 2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection,\(^{36}\) which is the migration law currently in place. This is the first national law to encompass all aspects of migration to Turkey, from entry to stay and exit. It also shifted management responsibilities from the police and military to civilian authorities by creating the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) within the Ministry of Interior (Sarı and Dinçer 2017). Initially, UNHCR continued to be involved in the registration of non-European individuals applying for asylum on the basis of international refugee protection, but since 2018 this is done only by DGMM at its provincial departments. Applications for international protection are done at an individual basis to receive “conditional refugee status” in Turkey (AIDA 2019: 99). This means that individuals who are considered refugees under the 1951 Convention are given temporary asylum in Turkey. While they are protected from return to their country of origin, their residence in Turkey is temporary until they can resettle to a third country. In the meantime, their rights in Turkey are restricted, particularly when it comes to labour force participation (Conditional Refugees, DGMM 2015).

\(^{36}\) Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu (YUKK) in Turkish.
The process for Syrians is different, as they are considered part of a mass influx. In April 2011 Turkey opened its borders to the first Syrian refugees (in line with the 1994 legal framework), assuming they needed temporary shelter along the border and would soon return to Syria (Erdoğan 2014). In October the same year, when the Turkish government had broken all its previous ties with the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, Turkey declared a temporary protection policy for all Syrians, under which they were guaranteed basic services and not being returned to Syria against their will (Kirişçi 2014; Salur and Erdoğan 2017). This policy also lifted all visa requirements for Syrian citizens entering Turkey, including stateless persons crossing the border from Syria (AIDA 2015; Hürriyet Daily News 2016). Visas are required since 2016 for Syrian citizens arriving by air or sea from a country other than Syria, but they are still not needed for people arriving by land directly from Syria (AIDA 2019). Even though there is officially still an open border policy, there is no legally guaranteed right to be admitted into the country upon seeking refuge at the Turkish border. In recent years security concerns have led to more frequent border closures, and since 2016 the border has been closed more consistently. In practice this means only guarded border crossings are available, where Syrians risk being denied entry (Ineli-Ciger 2016; Batalla and Tolay 2018).

Since the new law was adopted in 2013, displaced Syrians are governed by Article 91 on Temporary Protection (AIDA 2019). It states that “temporary protection may be provided for foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country that they have left, and have arrived or crossed the borders of Turkey in a mass influx seeking immediate and temporary protection” (YUKK 2013: 93). The Temporary Protection Regulation of October 2014 then replaced the 2011 policy in accordance with the new law. As such, the 2014 Regulation is specific to the Syrian displacement situation, but has to be in line with the 2013 legal text which is general to any situation where a group of people seek mass protection in Turkey (AIDA 2019).

In practice, this means that Syrians do not have to go through refugee status determination or asylum processes to gain the right to reside in Turkey, as temporary protection status is granted prima facie to all Syrian nationals who register for it. The status grants access to basic services like health care and education; and the right to remain in Turkey. Stateless Palestinians residing in Syria prior to the war are also eligible for Temporary Protection status in Turkey, but people with international refugee status who were residing in Syria before the war (for example Iraqi refugees) have to instead launch a
new claim for international protection to become conditional refugees in Turkey through the process outlined above (AIDA 2019; Temporary Protection Regulation 2014). Turkish authorities do not appear too strict with requiring documents to prove Syrian nationality from people crossing the land border, and no issues have been reported for people who for example lack a valid passport. This is positive for refugees, since most Syrians are without passports, and it can be very difficult to renew ID documents in Syria because of the conflict (Şenses 2016). However, there are examples of people who are registered as Syrians in Turkey who have been determined to be of different nationality once they arrive in Greece (Interview C37, international female volunteer, November 2017). Since for example Iraqis need to go through a much more difficult process to be granted the same rights as Syrians in Turkey, even if they were living as refugees in Syria before the war and are affected by the conflict in the same way, it seems likely that the Turkish system encourages that type of fraud, which can get refugees into trouble further down the line.

In order to claim temporary protection once they have entered the country, Syrians have to register with Turkish authorities. No fines are imposed on Syrians who have entered the country illegally, but they can be fined if they do not make themselves known to authorities within a “reasonable time period” from the time of entry with a valid reason for their illicit entry (AIDA 2019: 22). Since it is not in any way specified what constitutes a reasonable time period or a valid reason, these conditions can be applied arbitrarily by Turkish authorities. Within the 1994 regulation, migrants had to make themselves known to authorities within five days of entering the country, and if they appeared any later than this with an asylum claim they would be deported (Kirişçi 1996). International governments and NGOs were highly critical of this practice, and in 2006 the five day rule was replaced with the vague language that still remains today (Suter 2013). In this way, Turkey avoids international criticism for being too rigid on the time frame within which asylum should be sought, while retaining the possibility of deporting migrants who do not make themselves known promptly.

Since March 2016 registration of Syrians under temporary protection is done in two stages, starting with pre-registration where demographic information is provided. Identification documents are not required, but proof of address in Turkey is. If the person is then deemed to be eligible for temporary protection another registration will take place,

37 Before coming to Izmir, this interviewee spent two years working with refugees arriving from Turkey on the Greek island of Lesbos.
where a Foreigner ID number is issued. This ID (kimlik) grants access to all rights afforded to people under temporary protection (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017; UNHCR 2018). Since the end of 2016 the Turkish government and UNHCR have been carrying out verifications of Syrians under temporary protection, and so everyone who registered before 31 December 2016 has to attend a meeting to verify their status in order to retain their rights. This is being carried out in zones across the country, and according to the latest progress report from September 2017 16% of the population under temporary protection had been verified at that time. (UNHCR 2017; UNHCR 2018) In 2018 ten provinces, including Istanbul, suspended registration of new arrivals seeking temporary protection because there is a lack of capacity to deliver this alongside verifications. In this situation the legal requirement to register within a reasonable time period becomes a problem, as unregistered people run the risk of being arrested and returned to Syria. This could be an unofficial way of encouraging dispersal, since Syrians who are not allowed to register in some places have the option to simply go to a different province and register there, rather than running the risk of deportation as well as living with the general difficulty of not accessing services (AIDA 2018; HRW 2018). In Izmir the verification process is ongoing, and no suspension of other registrations has been reported.

Initially, Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey did not have the formal right to work. All foreigners applying for work permits in Turkey are required to apply with their passport, and since most Syrians in Turkey do not have valid passports, they were in practice excluded from the formal labour market. It was also specified by law that no foreigner could fill a position unless no Turkish person was available for that job, making it even more difficult (Şenses 2016). Under the new regulation, Syrians are only required to hold a temporary protection ID card for at least six months in order to be eligible (Kızıl 2016). There are no additional restrictions on the sectors they can work within, but it should be noted here that all foreigners in Turkey are prohibited from entering some professions, including dentistry, medical and pharmaceutical jobs as well as legal professions (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017). This is not specific to Syrians under temporary protection, but prevents all foreign work permits from being issued within these professions. Some exceptions have been made for Syrian professionals serving the Syrian population, for example in health care and education where Syrians can now be made exempt from this prohibition if they obtain an official permit for doing so. This means that it is now possible to hire Syrian doctors and nurses are employed to provide services for other Syrians (Göksel 2018). For teachers
working in this way in eastern Turkey, salaries are paid directly by UNICEF (ILO; UNDP; WFP 2017). Syrians working in seasonal agriculture and husbandry are completely exempt from work permits, but this is not an automatic exemption, and so they still have to apply for an exemption instead of applying for a work permit. This has to be done in their city of registration, even if seasonal work may be carried out elsewhere in the country (UNHCR FAQ 2017).

It is not specified by law who a temporary protection work permit application should come from, but generally the employer applies on behalf of the employee to make sure the employer meet certain criteria. Importantly, they can only recruit Syrians to cover a maximum of 10% of the whole workforce, unless it can be demonstrated that no Turkish citizen is qualified enough to do the same job. Work places with less than 10 employees can only hire one Syrian (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017). Once a work permit has been granted, it is specific to that employer and will cease to be valid if the permit holder leaves their job to find employment elsewhere. The law requires employers to pay workers minimum wage, and social security premiums on their behalf. There are fines in place for employers as well as employees for illegal work, and the work permit fee was recently reduced to make it more affordable. Syrians under temporary protection can also apply for a work permit on their own behalf as a self-employed, independent worker, but this is much less common. In order to do this, they need to have a registered business and a tax number before applying for a work permit (ibid; UNHCR FAQ 2017). A financial assessment conducted by one of the NGOs participating in my study has determined that access to credit is limited for Syrians under temporary protection, as many Turkish banks are sceptical towards Syrian costumers, and property laws prohibits anyone under temporary protection from owning property in Turkey, which might further limit opportunities to start and run a business (Non-public programme document). Since the work permit regulation came into force in January 2016, the uptake has been low. In the first two years, a total of 20,970 work permits were issued to Syrian nationals, and by March 2019 this number has reached 31,185 (Mülteciler Derneği 2019). In 2015 4,016 Syrian nationals obtained work permits, so while numbers have increased significantly with the new regulation it is very small in relation to the 3.5 million

38 Minimum wage in 2019 equals a net salary of 2000 Turkish Lira per month, which has increased from 1600 TL in 2018 and 1000 TL in 2015 (Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı 2018; Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı 2019).
39 In 2019 the work permit fee for Syrians has been reduced to 283.20 Turkish Lira, compared to 761.10 Turkish Lira for other one year foreign work permits (Ata Kurumsal Danışmanlık 2019; Ata Kurumsal Danışmanlık 2019).
Syrians registered for temporary protection in Turkey (Mülteciler Derneği 2018). In Izmir, there were 181 work permits issued to Syrians under temporary protection applying for the first time, and an additional six extensions to previously issued work permits. This number was slightly higher in 2017 when 382 first time work permits and 33 extensions were issued (Sivis and Yıldız 2019).

Even though the new 2013 migration law has been praised as an improvement, many of the issues from the 1994 legislation remain, particularly issues around arbitrary application of the legal text. Turkish authorities are still in charge, and there is a lack of international oversight or protection when refugees and migrants are mistreated. Apart from that general problem, the existing legal framework for people under temporary and international protection has deliberately made it difficult for refugees to access the paid labour market in Turkey. This makes it hard for inter- and non-governmental organisations to create sustainable jobs for Syrians under temporary protection, and I/NGO-workers in Izmir have reflected in interviews on their vision of livelihoods support as something sustainable, and on the legal situation which makes this difficult to implement. The next sections will describe what this looks like in practice, and how staff and volunteers go about working towards sustainability within their livelihoods support.

**Sustainability in practice**

This section will outline how sustainability is operationalised within livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir. As described in the previous section, there are various legal restrictions on employment for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, which inter- and non-governmental organisations aiming to support the Syrian population have to adapt to. Consequentially, very few Syrians come out of livelihoods support with a job, and those who do are restricted to temporary employment, as their work permits are only valid for up to one year at the time. The gap between policy and practice that is visible within the literature review on sustainability is thereby reflected in the Izmir context, as it is difficult for I/NGOs to provide the sustainable solutions they strive for.

Because of the restrictive legal framework, most inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support focus on interventions that are intended to make it easier for displaced Syrians to find jobs by themselves, rather than organisations directly finding jobs for them. Within intergovernmental organisations and larger NGOs, this is most commonly done through language and vocational training. This type of livelihoods support is easier to
deliver than direct job placements, and within the UN-coordinated initiatives target around five times as many people (3RP Turkey 2018). The official motivation for providing this type of support is to “enhance employability” within the displaced population (3RP Regional Strategic Overview 2018: 44) by addressing an existing skills gap in both language and vocation (Interviews B; K; Q; U). However, the number of Syrians with formal jobs in Turkey remains low. In the first three quarters of 2019, a total of 47,111 people have been provided with livelihoods support from the UN-coordinated response (Turkey Livelihoods Sector, September 2019). Considering the total number of work permits issued to displaced Syrians between 2016 and 2019 is below this at 31,185 (Mülteciler Derneği 2019), it is clear that not all livelihoods support results in jobs.

In Turkey, an important component of improving employability is language training for the Syrian population. The problem with providing training as livelihoods support is that it is difficult to know whether or not it actually does improve employability and leads to employment. For example, an intergovernmental organisation provides language training courses for displaced Syrians in a number of Turkish cities, including Izmir. The project offers three months of Turkish classes, which according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) covers the level of a basic user (A2), where a person is expected to be able to communicate simple phrases on familiar topics (Council of Europe 2013). At the end of the course, Syrians are referred to the Turkish employment agency İŞKUR where they can receive help to look for employment, but without guarantees of being given opportunities (Interview P, Turkish male IGO staff, January 2018). Since the job of actually finding them employment is thereby outside of the programme scope, under the responsibility of the Turkish employment agency, it is difficult for programme staff to follow up on any potential impact their programme has had on employment.

Vocational training that is more directly tied to the labour market is also an important part of the Livelihoods Cluster response. Intergovernmental organisations and larger NGOs provide sector-specific vocational training in collaboration with local employers as well as government agencies (Interviews B; N; Q; P). In Izmir this type of training is particularly concentrated to the textile sector, where a significant market demand has been identified by the organisations prior to programme design. A vocational training

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40 It is worth noting that refugee self-reliance generally builds on the idea that labour demand should exist prior to refugees entering a particular labour market (CRRF 2019), which is based on a very particular understanding of how labour markets work. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter six.
course arranged by several I/NGOs in Izmir in collaboration with chambers of commerce for the textile industry in Izmir has a much more direct connection to potential labour market opportunities. The participating organisations have designed a vocational training project to teach participants how to use textile machinery to make shirts, in order to meet existing labour market demand within the sector. However, there is still a difficulty with ensuring that these opportunities are actually provided to the Syrians who have completed the training. The organisations try to negotiate employment opportunities in textile factories for at least 50% of those who have completed this training, but this creates employment for a maximum of 25 people as the project is very small in scale with a total of 50 participants (Interview N, international female IGO staff, January 2018). Within a larger project of 5,000 participants, only around 300 people are estimated to have been employed after completing vocational training. In many cases it can also be difficult for NGOs to follow up on what happens to individual persons after training courses, as they have no way of accessing this information (Interview P, Turkish male IGO staff, January 2018). Overall, the low uptake of work permits for people under temporary protection in Turkey to date also suggests that very few displaced Syrians find formal employment as a result of training courses.

Within grassroots organisations, it is more common to provide livelihoods support that indirectly helps displaced Syrians in the process of getting a legal job with a work permit. At the community level, this can be quite far removed from real employment opportunities, but instead based on specific needs that volunteers have found within the displaced community. For example, a common problem for Syrians in Izmir is that their temporary protection ID card is not valid because they have moved to Izmir from another Turkish city. Proof of address in Turkey is required to obtain temporary protection status, and the status is then specific to the city of residence. If a Syrian moves to a different Turkish city, their ID needs to be updated, and interviewees at the grassroots level report that it is common for Syrians to have lived and registered in eastern Turkey before moving to Izmir (Interviews A; F). In order to update their IDs to be valid in Izmir, they are required to travel to the previous city of residence to register their new address in Izmir with authorities there. Many displaced Syrians struggle to afford return travel across the country, and two organisations state that they provide financial support to enable travel for ID renewal.
Another related issue is informal housing. Syrians in Izmir often live in houses that have been built or extended without permits, and can thereby not be recognised as an official address where a displaced family can be registered as resident to get their ID cards (Interviews A; F). One grassroots NGO, whose work is based on home visits, focus actively on housing and support refugees by looking for alternatives if they find a family in substandard accommodation, and speaking to landlords and housing agencies on behalf of displaced Syrians. Another organisation has stated that they do not wish to actively interfere with the home situations of displaced people, but they do also provide financial support to cover rent in a better location, or enable Syrians to travel for ID-renewal (Interviews A; F). While this kind of support is not directly related to livelihoods, it helps displaced Syrians meet the minimum requirements for accessing formal employment, since it is not possible to do this without a valid ID card.

Aside from the prevalence of livelihoods support that does not in fact lead to jobs, another important factor for sustainability is that employment for Syrians under temporary protection in itself is always temporary in Turkey. Even when NGOs do manage to find jobs for Syrians, these will only support them in the short term since the work permit regulation has been written to only grant work permits for up to one year at the time. All informants in my study have pointed to the fact that the regulation itself makes it difficult for Syrians to work legally, since there is no incentive for employers to pay extra to formally hire them, and some livelihoods support (at established organisations) focuses on trying to create such incentives. This is usually done through financial support, where the organisation will step in to pay the extra costs of hiring a Syrian on behalf of the employer, but incentives can also come in the form of providing vocational training in exchange for a certain number of formalised workers (Interviews B; N; P; U; V).

Some organisations have brought up examples where displaced Syrians themselves prefer to work informally. After speaking to employers and Syrians about participating in a programme to formalise informal Syrian workers, informants state that it is not necessarily always about the employer’s lack of incentive for doing this, but also about the lack of incentive for Syrians themselves. Many displaced Syrians depend on other types of aid, where formal employment makes them ineligible, and according to these NGOs this deters many from working formally. Since there are no guarantees that a formal job will last, the prospect of losing other aid can outweigh the benefits of formality (Interviews U; P).
The best example of this is the EU-funded cash programme Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)\(^{41}\) that runs in collaboration with the Turkish government and the Turkish Red Crescent society Kızılay. This programme grants cash support of 120 Turkish lira per person per month to eligible families, both Syrian and other nationalities. Assistance is provided through a universally accepted debit card that can be used in cash machines as well as shops across Turkey, issued by state owned Halkbank. An evolution from 2018 reports that 1.2 million refugees were benefitting from these cash payments at the time (WFP 2018). A requirement for this programme is that no individual within the household receiving support is registered for social security, as this is a different type of social support that is also provided by the Turkish state. However, social security benefits are not equivalent to cash support as these benefits will only be paid for the individual employee in cases of inability to work, and the salary of one formal job does not equate that of one informal salary plus ESSN-provided cash support. The average household receiving support through ESSN consists of 5.9 individuals (ibid), and since it is more difficult for Syrian women to find formal employment in Turkey, the family will likely have to survive on only one formal income. Many families survive on a combination of informal labour and cash support, and only one formal wage does not provide enough income or security to make up for the lost cash support. As such, a formal job does not necessarily provide a sustainable solution for displaced Syrians.

While livelihoods support aims to create and support employment for Syrians under temporary protection, there are severe limitations to doing this in practice. When Syrians do find jobs, they are still restricted to temporary work permits that expire after one year, and many continue to work informally even if they are given the opportunity to formalise their work. Even though the I/NGO workers within my study perceive livelihoods support as sustainable, the majority of this support is implemented as temporary training courses that do not necessarily lead to employment for the displaced Syrian population. This raises questions around how sustainability is understood within the livelihoods support that is delivered, as there are a number of dilemmas that prevent the long term solutions envisioned within refugee self-reliance policy from being implemented for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir. The next section discusses how sustainability is perceived as a factor within these difficult situations by staff and volunteers who deliver this support.

\(^{41}\) See the official website \texttt{essncard.com} for more information.
Timeframes of sustainability

The first factor I explore in relation to sustainability is the timeframes within which it is understood and implemented. This is relevant because most of the I/NGO workers within my study understand paid employment as sustainable, whereas temporary cash-for-work initiatives are not. This says a lot about how they understand sustainability itself, as the timeframes in Turkey are not necessarily longer in employment than in aid supported initiatives. Paid training courses are a good example of this.

As described in the previous section, vocational training is by far the most common form of livelihoods support in Turkey (3RP 2019), which is also reflected within the livelihoods support provided to displaced Syrians in Izmir. The provided courses are intended to be a stepping stone for displaced people towards finding a job. In this sense, sustainability within such interventions as programmatic (Taylor 2014), as the vocational training programmes are intended to create and sustain a certain behaviour, which in this case is for Syrians to enter paid and formal employment to earn money for themselves without the continued involvement of NGOs (UNHCR 2014). Training activities are thereby understood to be contributing to sustainability, even though the outcome that is perceived as sustainable (finding a job) does not necessarily occur within the time frame of the programme (Interviews B; J; N; P; Q; T; U; V). Even in cases where this has not occurred at all (which is most of the time, as detailed in the previous section), there is still a possibility that it will occur in the future. This flexible timeframe thereby stretches the meaning of what a sustainable contribution to displaced livelihoods can be.

A Turkish member of staff at an intergovernmental organisation with an overseeing role provides an example of this view, as he describes what happens if the possibility of finding formal employment after a training course is removed.

There are a lot of vocational training activities, a lot of Syrians are getting trained and actually now also one of the biggest problem is that some of them just see these training activities as an income source, because for them to attend the courses we have to pay. We are paying incentives to Syrians, so [our organisation] pays incentives, then they go to a [other intergovernmental organisation] course and they pay incentives, then they go to one of the INGO courses and they pay incentives. So it becomes an income source for them, which nobody wants. So the coordination is super important among the organisations.

Interview P, male Turkish IGO staff, January 2018
This interviewee describes his organisation’s view of the reason behind providing vocational training, which is consistent with that of policy documents and programme reports. The idea is for vocational training to allow the Syrian population to develop their skills in areas that are relevant to the Turkish labour market, and they pay incentives to allow displaced Syrians to take these courses without losing their incomes, since most people would otherwise not be able to attend them. This is understood as an investment in their future careers, as they would be able to move up from their current, informal employment, into more qualified and formal work. The interviewee then describes what he sees as a misconception among the beneficiaries, as they do not appear to view the support this way. The Syrian beneficiaries do not necessarily see vocational training as a step towards finding a job, but rather as an income earning opportunity. When the interviewee says that “nobody” wants that to happen, he is not referring to the beneficiaries, but to the I/NGO-community, which implies that other people working at other organisations share his view on this. Better coordination is then presented as the solution, because keeping track of who is trained where will actively prevent people from attending more than one training course.

The clash in perceptions between I/NGO workers and beneficiaries is key here, because the two groups appear to have interpreted sustainability differently within this situation. Given the low number of work permits issued to Syrians under temporary protection in the last three years (Mülteciler Derneği 2019), it is not unlikely that finding a position within a paid training course is both easier and more rewarding than finding an employer who is willing to hire a Syrian worker formally and pay for their work permit. Since conditions are often poor for Syrian workers despite formality, it is not necessarily a better option for the Syrians themselves (Erol et al. 2018; Mutlu et al. 2018; Taş et al. 2017).

To the informant, on the other hand, his understanding of programmatic sustainability relies on what could happen after the vocational training programme. Even though he is aware that the number of formal jobs that have been provided is quite low, the intention is for Syrians under temporary protection to use the skills they have acquired through vocational training to find themselves jobs at some point in the future. In cases where that does not happen straight away, there is still a possibility that it will happen. As such, sustainability is still considered a part of the vocational training intervention, even though the courses in themselves are temporary and aid funded. However, when the beneficiaries start to go from one course to the next, they are effectively preventing that

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42 The majority of them are Syrian, but some are also local.
sustainable future possibility from ever becoming a reality. If the Syrian population start supporting themselves in this way, through the aid economy, this kind of intervention cannot be considered sustainable, because as soon as the aid funding is discontinued they will again be left without an income.

In this way, the meaning of sustainability is shifted from being concerned with how long a displaced person can conceivably continue to support themselves as a result of livelihoods support, towards a pre-conceived idea of the correct way of doing so. Not being dependent on aid has previously been pointed to as an over-simplified understanding of self-reliance, and one that many NGOs subscribe to (Omata 2017). When the primary understanding of sustainability is avoiding aid dependency, this produces a version of self-reliance that is concerned with creating a certain type of refugee; one that is not dependent on aid, but engages in paid labour to support themselves. It promotes a certain behaviour that is considered consistent with being a good citizen in a market-driven world.

By encouraging participation in market economies, organisations aim to create beneficiaries that take responsibility for their own well-being in an independent and self-sufficient manner (Ilcan 2017). In the same way that self-reliance can be simplified down to non-dependence on aid in this way, sustainability is here reduced to mean any job within the local economy, regardless of how long that job will last or how well it will support the displaced person who does it. However, since this can happen at any point in relation to the livelihoods support, the fact that so few Syrians actually do find formal employment is not necessarily perceived by NGOs as a lack of programmatic sustainability.

This reasoning also demonstrates that this particular perception of sustainability trumps other goals within this type of livelihoods support. If the primary goal is to provide displaced Syrians with incomes to support themselves with, the practice of course-hopping would not be considered so disruptive. This points towards a perceived difference between jobs within the Turkish economy, and livelihoods initiatives that are running within the aid economy. However, jobs within the Turkish labour market are not necessarily permanent or reliable (Aygül 2018; Kocadaş 2018; Mutlu et al. 2018). This is not specific to Turkey, but a broader problem for migrants in the world where labour demand exist in particularly precarious sectors (Castles and Miller 2003). As such, there is little evidence to suggest that relying on employment is a sustainable approach, when positions and entire professions can be made redundant as society develops and changes, and this is simply a part of the market system (Ferguson 2015; Standing 2011). There are also examples of aid economies
remaining in place for decades, for example in refugee camps (Slaughter and Crisp 2009). While the goal of inter- and non-governmental organisations is to provide the Syrian population with incomes that they perceive as sustainable, it is not a given that Syrians themselves perceive jobs within the Turkish economy are more sustainable or indeed more reliable than income generation programmes within the aid economy.

As I/NGO workers perceive jobs within the Turkish economy as a sustainable solution that can occur at any time in relation to livelihoods support, this belief enables them to view livelihoods support as sustainable even though it is short term and temporary in nature. This shifts the goal within refugee self-reliance from creating a sustainable behaviour of self-sufficiency, towards creating a sustainable behaviour that is perceived as desirable within market economies. Paid labour within local economies is thereby the desired outcome for Syrians under temporary protection in Izmir, regardless of how the Syrians themselves feel about this priority. This creates a position of power where inter- and non-governmental organisations are able to decide what is sustainable and what is not, which raises questions around how I/NGO workers perceive themselves and their own remits in relation to displaced populations. This is the second point I will explore in relation to sustainability.

The remit of inter- and non-governmental organisations

The most notable thing about how my informants understand their own remit in relation to sustainability is that all of the organisations included in my study present themselves as fundamentally different from organisations who deliver aid. At the grassroots level, a significant proportion of interviewed NGO workers (6 out of 8) describe a process of coming into the refugee response in Izmir in 2015 when the needs were really different considering most displaced people were on their way to Greece, and not staying in Izmir for particularly long periods of time. Direct aid made sense in this situation, since new people with the same needs kept appearing and leaving again. Many of the interviewees describe making a conscious and personal decision to then change their approach towards something more long-term oriented. Some did this by changing the approach within their organisations, others by starting or joining new organisations that they agreed with more. As such, the decision to go into livelihoods support was in most cases based on the NGO workers’ own perceptions that direct aid does not make sense because it has to be delivered again and
again. They wanted to provide what they perceive to be long-term solutions for the displaced population in Izmir, and this then became the norm (Interviews A, C, D, E, G, I).

The decision to deliver something other than direct aid despite the practical difficulties and legal barriers demonstrates an ambitious view of their own remit, where grassroots NGOs seem to overestimate their own ability to provide permanent solutions for displaced Syrians. They strive to create local integration for the Syrian population in a way that is not at all consistent with Turkish government policy (Erdoğan 2014; Yıldız and Uzgören 2016). Since the government treats Syrians as temporary guests in Turkey, NGO-workers in this position tend to get frustrated when they find themselves unable to provide the kind of long-term livelihoods support they want to offer. They experience government regulations of displaced labour as a hindrance to their work, and as a result they tend to have little respect for legal restrictions, and instead attempt to work around them to provide what they see as the best solutions. This places them on a collision course with the Turkish government. Several international grassroots volunteers from NGOs within this study have been detained by Turkish authorities when entering Turkey, and questioned about their organisations’ activities (Online programme documents). This creates a perception that the government is trying to prevent them from helping the Syrian population, even though the Turkish public and opposition rather see the government as too friendly to the Syrian population (Saraçoğlu and Bélanger 2019).

Within larger organisations receiving international funding, there is a lot more acceptance of the Turkish state among staff, and an understanding of their own limitations within the Turkish system. Among my informants, there is a higher proportion of Turkish nationals within larger organisations, which could have an influence on this. Within livelihoods support, most IGOs and larger NGOs cooperate with state actors, local authorities and private sector stakeholders, and the actual job provision within livelihoods support tends to fall outside of the organisation’s remit. Commonly, the I/NGO will provide training or money, and other actors will provide labour opportunities. This produces the opposite scenario from the one of grassroots organisations described above, where organisations tie themselves to state regulations and allow other actors, who may have

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43 An example of this is the financial support for refugee businesses described in the previous section, where the NGO helps refugees open and run their own businesses without the required permits.

44 An example of this is the language training programme described in the previous section, where participants are referred to the Turkish employment agency İŞKUR to find jobs after the completed training.
very different views of what should be done, to take charge of their provisions for the
displaced Syrian population.

The official line of these organisations is that state systems should not be
duplicated by non-governmental actors, and since the Turkish state has taken such a strong
lead, the best way for NGOs to support displaced Syrians in Turkey is to support local
authorities (Interview P; 3RP 2019 Progress Report). There are places where this is working
really well, and local authorities cooperate with international NGOs and receive
international funding to extend their services to the Syrian population. They city of
Gaziantep in eastern Turkey is often upheld as a positive example of this (IOM 2018).
However, as the decision making power lies completely with Turkish authorities, this set-up
leaves I/NGOs with very little room for manoeuvre in cases where it is not working so well.
While it is established by law that all Syrians under temporary protection have certain rights
within Turkey, in practice the provision of these services is left to each municipality. For
example, Syrians have access to health care in theory, but in practice it is very difficult to
access this without extra services put in place, such as interpreters and information in
Arabic. It is up to each municipality whether or not to provide these extra services for
refugees, and if they decide not to then very little will be done by the state.45

In Izmir, this is exactly what happened. In the words of one interviewee who
approached local municipalities to cooperate on livelihoods support for the displaced
population, “for them Syrians were like people from the moon.” (Interview H, international
female NGO staff, December 2017). At this point in time (2017) there was no recognition
from local authorities in Izmir that Syrians even existed within their city, let alone that they
had certain needs or rights. The interviewee continued to say that she found cooperation
between I/NGOs and municipalities in Izmir was not at the level “one might imagine” for a
city with such a considerable Syrian population, which in turn made it a lot more difficult
for I/NGOs to provide livelihoods support that actually leads to jobs. At the same time, the
interviewee sees it as understandable that Turkish authorities need to regulate the services
that inter- and non-governmental actors provide. In her view, no developed country would
accept that non-governmental actors suddenly show up and start providing state services
without regulation, and it is therefore naive to expect Turkey to be any different in this
respect. That does, however, mean that if local authorities decide not to provide jobs (or

45 NGOs do step in to fill gaps, for example with hospital interpretation, but within livelihoods
support it is much less straightforward to fill these gaps since NGOs cannot legally provide such
services.
services) for Syrians, then NGOs have to adapt to this and simply provide whatever limited assistance they can without state involvement.

The position of larger organisations does not make the same claim to knowing the right solutions as grassroots organisations do, but instead it limits the independence of non-governmental actors and their accountability towards beneficiaries. I/NGOs who align their agendas too closely with donor governments and their priorities (which is often necessary to receive funding) have been criticised for creating accountability mechanisms that overlook the voices of intended beneficiaries (Hielscher et al. 2017). A recent study of humanitarian organisations supporting Syrian refugees in Turkey found that NGOs do struggle to combine accountability to beneficiaries and donors. This results in weak downwards accountability structures within organisations, as donor accountability is prioritised in order to receive funding (Acar et al. 2017). Within livelihoods support, the Turkish government is yet another powerful actor that requires accountability, on top of donor governments, which leaves even less space for I/NGOs to take beneficiaries into consideration.

When staff interpret their remit as one that delivers international priorities by supporting the Turkish government, it creates upwards accountability towards donors, while at the same time making it impossible for NGOs to openly criticise Turkish government policy on behalf of the displaced Syrian population. An example of this is the work permit regulation from 2016. Officially, all larger I/NGOs within my study praise the Turkish government for giving Syrians a legal route to employment, since this is the international priority. In practice, the regulation is there, but contains so many barriers and negative incentives that it is really difficult for Syrians to actually make use of the opportunity to work legally. Individually, all NGO-workers are aware that legalising refugee labour on paper is not the same as providing the opportunity in practice (Interviews B; H; J; N; P; Q; S; T; U; V), but since NGOs depend on government actors to be able to provide their livelihoods support, NGOs cannot openly criticise the shortcomings of the work permit regulation regardless of all the complaints they hear from Syrians.

The remit that I/NGO workers see for themselves differs between local grassroots organisations, and larger inter- or non-governmental organisations working across different Turkish cities. The former shapes their view of sustainability as an anti-thesis to the government’s priorities, creating legitimacy in working against the Turkish state on behalf of the Syrian population. Within larger organisations, on the other hand, they shape their
understanding of sustainability in line with the government’s priorities through additional lines of accountability. Interestingly, both categories of organisations end up with the same conclusion, namely that jobs are sustainable for the Syrian population, even though larger organisations place more emphasis on creating legal jobs with formal work permits (see Chapter six for more detail about what this entails).

**Dominant and exceptional views of sustainability**

The way in which I/NGO workers view their own remit, particularly in relation to the Turkish state, thereby shapes their views on what is sustainable within livelihoods support. This has created the dominant views, outlined above, that jobs are sustainable solutions that the displaced Syrians in Izmir want. There is, however, a notable exception to this perspective, found within a grassroots organisation that works as a community centre in Basmane (Online programme document). One of the organisation founders describe it as “a space for solidarity” where people can meet and socialise, rather than “a standard humanitarian organisation” that distributes food and clothes (Interview G, male international organisation founder, December 2017). While some of the other informants express very similar opinions towards direct aid, this organisation is the only one that has actively put a stop to it. In their own view, this organisation chooses not to be made up of givers and receivers of aid, because they believe that this creates damaging hierarchies. Another founding member gives the example where the NGO received some clothes as a donation for refugees, but they chose to distribute these through an open market where volunteers and community members could all choose and take what they liked. In this way, nobody attending had to be labelled as poor or in need, because the set-up made them all equal (Interview I, male Turkish organisation founder, December 2017). This organisation also perceive sustainability very differently from the other organisations within my study, particularly in relation to jobs and job support.

More often than not it [livelihoods support] is not sustainable, I've seen a number of projects like that. Even I was involved once in a project in which we found work for a teenager, so the idea was to get him out of exploitation and find sustainable work that could allow him to get into school. But it was not sustainable in the end, like economically most of these jobs and these projects are not sustainable. The business model itself, it's just another type of charity. It's not a real independent business
model that would work if it weren't for the fact that it relies on the charity of people saying I want to give money to these people because they need it.

Interview G, male international organisation founder, December 2017

This interviewee describes the lack of sustainability he sees within livelihoods support initiatives, which is a contrasting view from how other organisations describe such activities. He describes available jobs as exploitative (which will be discussed more in Chapter six) and job initiatives as unsustainable because they rely on aid money or donations to remain in place. Where other informants point towards the possibility of finding a better job in the future, this volunteer instead draws the conclusion that livelihoods support is not the best way to help displaced Syrians in Izmir, precisely because he sees it as unsustainable. From this perspective, sustainability remains a goal for organisations to strive for within their support for displaced populations, and the interviewee shares the assumption that a job within the aid economy is not sustainable. However, he also rejects jobs within the local economy, and he sees no independent value in working for money. In his view all displaced labour in Turkey is either temporary or illegal or both, and reasons that it is better not to engage in livelihoods support at all.46

As such, this NGO worker frames the sustainability his organisation works for around other issues than jobs, and this sets him apart from other informants. He describes their goals from a broader community perspective, as they aim to create a better life for displaced Syrians within the community by giving them a space to socialise, but also connections they can use to build their lives in Izmir. Some Syrians have then used such connections to find jobs, but the intention is rather to provide them with a broader support network and ways to learn about their rights in Turkey (Interview G). Both interviewed founding members highlight that they have a clear political position within their organisation, and that they perceive a denial within other NGOs about the political nature of their work. For example, Syrians used to come asking them for food packages, but have stopped doing it since they realised this is not something their organisation delivers. There are plenty of other NGOs providing such support, and they are happy to direct them to one of them, but have also made it clear that they are against this kind of support within their own space.

46 This is the personal view of this interviewee; others within his organisation still provide livelihoods support in a similar way to the other organisations in this study.
They are similar to other organisations in that they are trying to promote certain behaviours within the Syrian population, but not for the same reasons. They believe that direct aid is damaging for the receiver at a human level, because it creates distance between the giver and receiver, which is common within humanitarian support for refugees (Malkin 2015). Further, they demonstrate an awareness of the fact that they are promoting their own point of views, which is unusual. They see this as a deliberate and political choice, both supporting displaced Syrians in the first place, and doing it in ways that reject perceived hierarchies within humanitarianism. They also reflect on the difficulties in delivering sustainable solutions through livelihoods support in a way that most others do not, even though everyone working in this environment comes across it. However, they have resolved this by refraining from engaging with livelihoods support and income generation. Sustainability is thereby framed as a goal in relation to integration and the long term futures of Syrians in Turkey. While this vision of the future will likely also include jobs and income generation, the organisation places its focus elsewhere. This, in turn, creates a very different type of self-reliance that has more to do with support networks and community connections that Syrians can continue to rely on.

However, the dominant view within inter-and non-governmental organisations is that jobs are sustainable, and that livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir is thereby sustainable simply because it aims to create jobs, regardless of whether or not the job creation happens within the programme timeframe. From a gender perspective there are some serious problems with the dominant views presented above. The focus on paid employment opportunities as a sustainable solution for displaced people frames refugee self-reliance at the individual level, where each person who engages in paid labour has the chance of becoming a self-sufficient individual. Organisations aim to create opportunities for individuals, and measure results by asking how many individuals have received job-related training, rather than asking whether the household income jobs resulting from this support is sufficient for the people living within that household (See for example 3RP documents). This is built on a norm of valorising paid labour over unpaid labour, which overlooks women’s work and contributions (Beneria et al. 2016). As childcare is expensive in Turkey it is often difficult for women in low-income jobs to earn enough to make it financially viable for them to work outside of the home (İnan and Aşık 2014), and women’s unpaid work is therefore a very significant financial contribution to household self-reliance. By upholding paid labour as the sustainable way towards self-reliance, inter- and non-
governmental organisations contribute to these contributions remaining overlooked and invisible. This makes self-reliance a male-oriented concept in its dominant form, and livelihoods support thereby much less accessible to women.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed sustainability as a component of self-reliance within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir. Sustainability as a concept is understood by most I/NGO workers in Izmir to be tied to employment opportunities within the Turkish economy, and providing opportunities that are perceived to improve the chances of displaced Syrians to be hired. Among most informants, this understanding of jobs as sustainable is built more on very particular ideas and perceptions around paid labour as positive, rather than the specific situation for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey.

The most common way for I/NGOs to deliver livelihoods support is through vocational training, which is also a good illustration of how sustainability is perceived. Even though vocational training activities very rarely lead to jobs for Syrian beneficiaries, I/NGO workers perceive a potential for delayed impact that can still improve job prospects in the future. Since the programmatic understanding of sustainability found in the literature is to create and sustain behaviours beyond the scope of the programme itself (Taylor 2014), this elusive time frame within which sustainability can occur means that I/NGO workers do not have to personally witness the sustainable outcome they are trying to achieve in order to perceive an intervention as sustainable. The gap between theory and practice that Mosse (2004) refers to is thereby not necessarily perceived by I/NGO workers as a gap, as sustainability can be understood as a long term goal that activities like vocational training contribute to, even though the impact is not visible yet.

The consequences of these viewpoints are particularly striking from a gender perspective, as inter- and non-governmental organisations promote jobs as a sustainable solution for all displaced Syrians without recognising that this will mean different things for Syrian men and women respectively. As demonstrated by the background section of this chapter, promoting jobs as sustainable is problematic in many ways within the Turkish context since work permits for displaced Syrians are temporary, but this chapter has also revealed that the dominant understanding of sustainability within I/NGOs means that displaced women are not necessarily included in the concept. Sustainability is understood
in a way that makes it more difficult for women to achieve because of the unequal
distribution of unpaid care work, and by extension this means that self-reliance in itself will
be constructed and understood differently for displaced women. Based on this, I argue that
sustainability is presented and understood by I/NGOs as a gender-neutral part of self-
reliance, but that it is better understood as a male-coded component of the concept. This
practice constructs an ideal refugee who is male, able bodied, and willing to take on the
role as the family breadwinner.

This opens up further questions around how self-reliance is understood when it
concerns displaced women, and the next chapter will address this by analysing women’s
economic empowerment within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for
displaced Syrians in Izmir. This analytical concept is central to how livelihoods support for
women is framed within refugee self-reliance policy, and similarly to the sustainability
concept, there are gaps between how the concept is theoretically presented within policy
and how it is implemented in practice. Analysing how these gaps are understood and
navigated by I/NGO workers that deliver livelihoods support, and placing this in relation to
this chapter’s analysis on sustainability, will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of
how self-reliance is gendered.
Chapter Five

Women’s economic empowerment

This chapter is the second of my three analytical chapters, each of which addresses one of the three concepts I use to understand self-reliance and its gendered aspects: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. The first chapters of my thesis have established how the global trend of attempting to facilitate self-reliance and integrate refugees into existing economies clashes with the Turkish temporary protection policy (Chapter one); how the particular challenges found in Izmir relate to the conceptual challenges found within sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work (Chapter two); and how I approach the questions that arise from this within my thesis (Chapter three).

The first analytical chapter (Chapter four) has described sustainability within livelihoods support in Izmir, and established that sustainability becomes gendered through the way that I/NGO workers navigate this implementation by focusing on creating paid labour opportunities within the local economy. This chapter focuses on how these findings relate to women’s economic empowerment as the second analytical concept. It further describes how women’s economic empowerment within livelihoods support in Izmir, and explores how dilemmas within implementation are navigated by the individuals and organisations doing this work. It also explores how women’s economic empowerment relates to the third analytical concept, decent work.

As outlined in Chapter two, including women in economic systems and labour markets is perceived by many global development actors (including for example The World Bank, OECD and Oxfam) as crucial to gender equality, and the organisations within my study are no exception to this. All of my informants have demonstrated awareness of gendered differences in access to labour, and how Syrian women’s living situations in Izmir differ from that of men. For various reasons depending on the organisation, this leads I/NGOs to deliberately adapt their livelihoods support to target and reach Syrian women, as women will otherwise risk being overlooked as recipients and beneficiaries of that support.

The word empowerment is often used to describe what this specifically targeted support for women will achieve. An offshoot of the broader empowerment agenda,
women’s economic empowerment within international development tends to focus on providing women with access to an income (Momsen 2010). Paid labour is commonly seen by NGOs as liberating and empowering, and a way for women to expand their freedoms, opportunities and influence over decision making in the home (Cronin-Furman et al. 2017). Even though increasing women’s influence is generally accepted as important (Kaya and Luchtenberg 2018), development interventions often start with income generation and access to economic resources as a pre-requisite for expanding women’s power and influence (Anal 2014). Critics of this approach refer to it as “liberal empowerment” that focuses on individual interests, rationality and promoting liberal market ideals instead of women’s rights and freedoms. Feminist scholars claim that it overlooks women’s lack of political power, and strips them of agency by claiming that their problems can be solved if they just learn new ways to earn money (Batliwala 2013; Cornwall 2016; Cornwall and Rivas 2015; Sardenberg 2008). Nevertheless, the approach is widely promoted in the world of development, not only as a positive for women but also as a way of reaching other development goals. For example, the World Bank’s Global Development Report on gender present women’s inclusion on labour markets as sensible economics. It highlights that women’s increased participation in paid labour can both expand economic growth and contribute to other development outcomes through for example increased proportions of incomes spent on children’s health and education, while it is also referred to as empowering for the women themselves (World Bank 2012).

Within refugee self-reliance policy, women’s economic empowerment relate closely to inclusion and ensuring that livelihoods support reach displaced women to the same extent as men. However, in practice, women are reached by completely different livelihoods support than men, usually far removed from the Turkish labour market and prospects of individual economic self-sufficiency. There is thereby a significant gap between the theory around women’s economic empowerment, and the practice of implementation in this area (Mosse 2004: see Chapter three). This chapter explores what that gap looks like in the Izmir context (RQ1), and how dilemmas within it are understood and navigated by the people providing this support to displaced Syrians in Izmir (RQ2). Firstly, I outline the context of women’s labour market participation in Turkey and Syria, and describe how livelihoods support for Syrian women is implemented by inter- and non-governmental organisations in practice. I then go on to analyse how individual I/NGO workers understand women’s economic empowerment within their work, and demonstrate how their views of what it
means in practice construct refugee women (in this case Syrian women) in very particular ways. This builds on my findings from Chapter four, where I demonstrated that the understanding of sustainability within inter- and non-governmental organisations delivering livelihoods support create an ideal refugee, which excludes women. This chapter points towards a very similar construction of an ideal female refugee, which has far reaching consequences for how their needs are understood and addressed.

**Displaced women and the Turkish labour market**

This section describes the labour market situation for women in pre-war Syria as well as in Turkey today. Compared to European countries, both Turkey and Syria have relatively low levels of female labour force participation, which is also visible among displaced Syrian women in Turkey (Duran 2018). According to ILO modelled estimates, the rate of female employment in Turkey was just over 36 per cent in 2017 among women between the ages of 15 and 64. In Syria female employment in the same age group has stagnated around 13 per cent since 2009, dipping from around 20 per cent in the early 2000s. Male employment within the same age group in 2017 was 77 per cent in Turkey and 73 per cent in Syria. As a comparison, employment within the same age group in 2017 averages at 67 per cent for women and 79 per cent for men in EU member states; and at 22 per cent for women and 78 per cent for men in the Middle East and North Africa Region (ILO STAT 2018).

The Syrian constitution from 1973 stipulates that men and women should have equality, and that any obstacles to women’s advancement should be removed, but to this day there are other laws that actively prevent this (Hilton 2017). For example, married Syrian women are not allowed to travel or work outside the home without permission from their husbands; Syrian women need consent from a male guardian to marry; and crimes towards women are legally considered much less severe if a male relative injures or kills a woman with the motive of defending family honour (Habib 2018). When Syrian women do participate in paid labour, they are very rarely paid equally to men, and women are considered responsible for household work and childcare even if they also work outside of the home (Hilton 2017). This is similar to the situation in Turkey, where female employment rates are significantly higher among unmarried and divorced women. Many Turkish women are restricted to unpaid domestic labour after they marry, and the lack of affordable childcare and care for the elderly and disabled means that only women with well paid jobs can afford to pay for domestic services. Women who are less educated often work in
informal sectors, where salaries are likely to be lower than the cost of care work, and women’s participation in paid labour is thereby less likely to be prioritised by families (İnan and Aşık 2014). In a World Bank study of female labour inactivity among low educated urban women in Turkey, most of the non-working women state that they are not working because they are housewives and that is their only profession. The main benefit the women see with this is the ability to prioritise their families, but they also bring up disadvantages of their position like dependence; stress and boredom; low self-esteem and a sense of being undervalued. Most women in the study state that they would like to earn money, but are either prevented by their families; lack of opportunities; lack of childcare; and poor employment conditions (World Bank 2009).

In pre-war Syria most working women were concentrated to certain sectors, such as agriculture, education and nursing. Since the conflict outbreak women’s paid labour has shifted towards informal work, as the formal economy is crippled by war. In recent years, small-scale income generation is more common, for example through informal provision of health care and education, or crafts production (Boucher and Aniyamuzzaala 2016; Hilton 2017). In Turkey, informal labour is estimated to comprise around 35 per cent per cent of the labour market (Erdoğan 2017) and the rate of informal employment among women is significantly higher at 52 per cent. Informal labour among Turkish women is concentrated to parts of the country where agriculture is the most prominent means of subsistence, and is much less common in cities (İlkaracan 2016). This forms a broader pattern across the Middle East and North Africa region, where women’s participation in agricultural labour has increased in the last few decades. In Syria this was a result of an already existing gendered labour division, as men’s labour was increasingly replaced by machinery and the demand for women’s manual labour increased (Abdelali-Martini and Dye de Pryck 2014). In Turkey the same trend took place somewhat earlier, and female labour force participation was a lot higher (70 per cent) in 1955 than today due to agricultural labour which is not as common today. With rural-urban migration, rural Turkish women who have previously been working informally in agriculture have not entered the urban labour market, and as a result women’s labour force participation started to decline with Turkey’s rural-urban shift (Karaalp-Orhan 2017). This is a common pattern in countries going through a rural-urban transformation, where women’s labour force participation over time form a U-shape that has only recently reached the bottom in Turkey. Since 2005 the number of women joining the urban labour force has been bigger than the number of women leaving the agricultural sector, and since
then female labour market participation has been increasing, but it remains low compared to international standards and particularly European countries (ibid; Karacayir and Yapar Sacik 2016).

Before the war, Syria had a well educated labour forced compared to other countries in the region. The ruling party invested heavily in education and public sector employment in the 1970s, and since there was a lot of demand for labour, educated women increasingly joined the public sector labour force. Women were also in higher education to a larger extent than before, and by the mid-2000s more than 50% per cent of all university students in Syria were female. However, with the 1980s economic recession and the subsequent lack of labour opportunities in the 1990s, women’s participation in paid labour started to decline again. Some argue that once the state no longer depended on urban women for public sector labour, they were encouraged to pursue being wives and mothers instead of working outside of the home (Spare 2008). Among higher educated women in Turkey, household responsibilities still impact their employment opportunities, as women in Turkey do three times more unpaid housework than men (ILO 2016). A recent study of the labour market in Istanbul demonstrates a clear gender segregation, where, similar to pre-war Syria, women are concentrated to much fewer occupations than men. In Turkey women tend to be in jobs that can be more easily combined with unpaid care work, which is likely influenced by the lack of child care and limited domestic chores done by partners.

Employers also state a preference for male candidates for around a third of all vacancies, which makes it even more difficult for women to find employment as more women enter the labour force. While more women want to join the paid labour force, the number of women who do find employment has not increased at the same speed. As a result, unemployment rates among women in non-agricultural sectors are much higher than the country average. The Istanbul study estimates that around two million women of working age were unemployed in the city in 2014, while the number of vacancies were fewer than 75,000 (İlkkaracan 2016). Efforts have been made by the Turkish government to enable more women to work. This includes legal changes in 2008 and 2011 that enabled domestic, home-based and agricultural workers to access social services that were previously limited to civil servants and formal employees. Unpaid care workers are also able to opt in to social security insurance and pension schemes, which has improved social protection for women who do not work (İnan and Aşık 2014).
In recent years the Turkish labour market has changed significantly with the influx of Syrian labour. As very few Syrians under temporary protection have received work permits, the increased labour supply mainly affects the informal labour market, and most of the expected displacement of local workers and decrease in wages have occurred there. Lower production costs have also increased the demand for formal labour within many industrial sectors, which has mainly benefitted lower educated men who are given the opportunity to upgrade from informal employment as Syrian labour fills positions from below (Ceritoğlu et al. 2017). In informal sectors rates of informality are much higher among women than men, and any formalisation resulting from the Syrian labour influx has been much more likely to benefit men. This is most notable in agriculture, where the rate of informal labour among women was as high as 96% per cent before the labour influx, and has remained unchanged despite many Syrians taking informal jobs in the sector. As a result, Turkish women are more likely to suffer from dropped wages and labour displacement because of the increased labour supply, while Turkish men are more likely to enjoy the advantages of formalisation. High-skilled labour is overall less affected, as both men and women with higher education levels tend to be employed in sectors with lower rates of informal labour (World Bank 2017).

Within the displaced Syrian population, around 45 per cent of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey are women, but the majority of labour force participation comes from men. According to statistics from the Turkish government, almost 800,000 Syrian women of working age (19-60) reside in Turkey, while the corresponding number for men is slightly higher at 1 million (DGMM 2019). It has been estimated that around 1 million Syrians are working informally in Turkey, in addition to the 31,185 who have been granted work permits since 2016 (Harekact/Birgün 2018). No gender breakdown of the working population is available from official sources, but it is safe to assume that most workers are men. Several studies of Syrian women’s labour in Turkey have concluded that less than 20 per cent have an income generating occupation (AFAD 2014; Mazlumder 2014; Çevik et al. 2018). The most recent study from UN Women presented a slightly higher number for the city of Izmir, where 26.4 per cent of women within the study participated in income generating activities. It also demonstrated higher labour force participation rates across Turkey among Syrian women who are divorced or unmarried, as well as those with a higher

47 The Turkish government has not published a gender breakdown of the 400,000 refugees under international protection in Turkey.
education diploma (Çevik et al. 2018: 45), which reflects the situation for Turkish women on the labour market. Out of non-working women in that study, 83 per cent stated that they are not looking for a job. In Izmir only 9.4 per cent stated that they are looking for employment, which is lower than in cities where employment rates are not as high. Those in employment have most often found work with help from other Syrians or host community members, or on their own, and only 3 per cent did so with the help of NGOs (ibid: 46-47).

A number of recent reports have indicated that many Syrian women displaced to various neighbouring countries including Iraq, Jordan and Turkey have gone into paid labour as a direct result of displacement (Boucher and Aniyamuzaala 2016; UNHCR 2014c). As a result, the workload for Syrian women is deemed to have increased significantly with displacement, as women’s responsibilities now stretch from household duties to also include income earning. This is mainly due to the fact that men’s income earning opportunities generate less money than in pre-conflict Syria, making it necessary for women to join the workforce. Children and adolescents, particularly boys, have also started to join the workforce in this way, as a direct result of displacement and poverty. However, men’s participation in unpaid labour has not increased to the same extent as women’s participation in paid labour, which has then increased women’s workload in displacement (Boucher and Aniyamuzaala 2016; World Bank 2017). In this situation, women’s economic activities are often described by displaced people themselves, both women and men, as a temporary necessity caused by displacement. Displaced women’s labour force participation is not necessarily perceived as a positive development, but rather as something of a last resort when the family needs to earn more (Kaya and Luchtenberg 2018; Hunt et al. 2017; UNHCR 2014). Syrian women also face additional difficulties in finding employment (Duran 2018). A study of the textile industry in Istanbul included 300 workers, out of which only 22 were women, all working below minimum wage (Erol et al. 2017).

Gender is an important factor on the Turkish labour market, and there are many similarities between Turkey and Syria in this area, particularly around women’s responsibility for unpaid care work and household labour and the constraints to paid labour this entails. The fact that women are usually confined to certain professions is also similar, but the limited number of professions considered “female” in urban areas of Turkey are not necessarily the same ones that Syrian women are used to from their home country. This will cause additional constraints for displaced Syrian women who try to enter the Turkish labour
market (Duran 2018). In the next section I describe how women’s economic empowerment manifests within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir.

Women’s economic empowerment in practice

This section outlines how women’s economic empowerment is operationalised within livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir. As described in the previous section, there are a number of barriers to women’s equal labour market participation in both Turkey and Syria that affect the employment opportunities of displaced Syrian women. Inter- and non-governmental organisations providing livelihoods support to the Syrian population in Izmir come across these barriers in their work, and adapt their support accordingly in order to reach women as well as men. Livelihoods support activities that are not aimed at any particular group, and thereby treated as gender neutral, are gendered in the sense that they predominantly reach men (see for example 3RP results documents). As discussed in Chapter four, sustainability is a key concern within this type of support, and thereby a gendered component of self-reliance. Having demonstrated that livelihoods support is not gender neutral by default, this section focuses on how livelihoods support targeted at women is different from that default.

As outlined in the background sections, most Syrian women who are in paid employment find work without the involvement of inter- and non-governmental organisations (Çevik et al. 2018). Interviewees from locally based organisations, who are in direct contact with Syrian women, paint a very similar picture of the labour situation in Izmir. They report that most working Syrian women they come across are employed as textile factory workers, or as dishwashers in restaurants (Interviews C, D, E, F, G, I). While a majority of Syrian workers struggle with poor labour conditions (see Chapter six), some interviewees point to specific difficulties faced by Syrian women. One interviewee from a community-based organisation states that Syrian women in Izmir commonly work over 12 hours for daily wages ranging from 25 to 55 Turkish Lira\(^48\). She describes these positions as “the worst jobs you can possibly imagine” and highlights that Syrian women have fewer employment opportunities available to them, and thereby fewer choices than men. For that reason, she argues, Syrian women and particularly single mothers, are more inclined to

\(^{48}\) The interviewee stated wages between 5 and 12 euros, so this is an estimate based on the exchange rate from December 2017 when the interview was conducted.
accept bad labour conditions and lower pay than men because they are so desperate to provide for their families (Interview E, international female organisation founder, November 2017). This particular organisation targets women specifically, and the founder points to these difficulties as a part of the motivation for focusing their support on Syrian women.

Similar to the rest of Turkey (AFAD 2014; Mazlumder 2014; Çevik et al. 2018), interviewees report that the majority of Syrian women they work with in Izmir are not in paid employment, but supporting their families predominantly through unpaid care work (Interviews B; J; N; Q; P; V). Some interviewees also point out that people in paid employment are less likely to be able to attend day time activities like the ones they are providing for women (Interviews G; I). It is therefore possible that the proportion of women who are not in paid labour is perceived to be larger based on the population attending community-based organisations than it is in the wider Syrian population. Since not being in paid labour is perceived as the standard situation for most Syrian women in Izmir, the livelihoods support provided to women is aimed at this group, rather than women who are employed. This type of livelihoods support does not generally lead to jobs or employment opportunities, but instead creates other types of short-term income generation that women with unpaid care duties can participate in alongside their home-based work.

Within intergovernmental organisations and larger NGOs, the reason given for designing livelihoods support targeted at women in this way is that they struggle to reach gender quotas without designing separate projects aimed at women. All projects within the UN-system carry a gender marker that evaluates the level of attention each project pays to gendered issues. The UN-led Syrian refugee livelihoods sector response for Turkey carries gender marker 2A (3RP 2019) which means projects pay “significant attention to gender” but do not have gender as a central focus of outputs (UNIDO Gender 2015: 2). In order to meet the requirements for this marker, the overall response is expected to reach at least 50 per cent women. While women are not deliberately excluded from other types of livelihoods initiatives, such as the vocational trainings described in the previous chapter, there is a clear pattern of such support reaching mostly men (3RP Regional Reports). Vocational trainings that are described as general (rather than aimed at any particular sex) are designed to target gaps within the Turkish labour market, and the relevant sectors are already dominated by men (Duran 2018; Erol et al. 2017; Mutlu et al. 2018). This means there are likely structural barriers (see previous section) preventing women from accessing work within these sectors, and as a result vocational training courses within these sectors
reach men to a higher extent than women, even though there are exceptions to this. For example, one interviewee refers to a shoe production factory in Hatay where the NGO supported an entirely female training class, and deemed it likely that the course would lead to employment. However, among my informants this is not a common pattern. The same interviewee states that “very few” of the Syrians employed after their vocational trainings are women (Interview P, Turkish male IGO staff, January 2018). It is much more common for organisations to develop targeted initiatives aimed specifically at women who are not in paid labour, and not necessarily looking for a way to enter into employment (Interviews N; P; Q; U).

The perception that most Syrian women are not in paid labour at all, in combination with the fact that interventions are designed with the specific aim of increasing female attendance, mean that the livelihoods support that Syrian women access is very different from that reaching Syrian men. An example of this is vocational training in hairdressing. Training courses in hairdressing provided by inter- and non-governmental organisations are often popular among Syrian women, (Interviews P; V) but the problem is that there was no demand for hairdressers in Turkey, and with all the vocational training courses there is now instead a huge surplus of Syrian women who are trained as hairdressers (Interview O, Turkish female staff member, January 2018). According to one interviewee, this has led to a situation where a small Turkish city now has “20,000 Syrian women who are hairdressers because it’s super easy to give hairdressing courses” (Interview P, Turkish male IGO staff, January 2018). As such, women who have been trained are very unlikely to be hired within the profession, even though it can lead to irregular income generation opportunities from offering haircuts to friends and neighbours (Interview V). Turkish news has reported about refugee women who struggle to support themselves as independent hairdressers in Turkey. The equipment they need for cutting and dying hair is too expensive, and being based in their own homes means that bills for electricity and water go up drastically. Both women in this particular article worked professionally as hairdressers for several years before coming to Turkey, but still struggle to compete with salons to make a living (CNN Türk 2018). As such, Syrian women who are trained for only a few months are very unlikely to be able to live off their hairdressing.

Even though the official aim of all vocational training is to get displaced persons employment within the profession they are trained within, these kinds of activities for women are often constructed as social activities that give them something to do (Interview
Q). Any income it can also generate is then a bonus, but not something that will make them self-reliant as individuals. This is further demonstrated by crafts production programmes, also very common at all levels of I/NGOs. These activities all follow a similar pattern, where the organisation train women to produce a certain product, such as jewellery or clothing, and provide them with equipment and materials to do this, either from home or in a community centre. The product will then be sold through the organisation, and the women will be paid for each product that has been sold. Compared to vocational trainings that pay incentives to replace a regular salary, the income for this type of livelihoods support will be extremely low and likely irregular. One interviewee who ran this type of programme through her NGO described it as “a stupid activity” because it was costing the participating women more than they were earning. Within that particular initiative, participants were trained to make and paint ceramic plates, and it took several days for one person to complete a single plate. Since the women were only paid as and when their products were sold, the long production process meant that it was not economically viable for them to pay bus fares and lunch every day to come to the community centre to produce the plates, when it would not generate enough income to cover those costs (Interview H, international female NGO staff member, December 2017).

Activities like these have created a situation where most livelihoods support for women does not connect them to labour market opportunities or incomes they can support themselves with, but instead provides them with social activities and potentially some extra cash. However, there are some exceptions to this rule. For example, some organisations provide crèche services for displaced women who are attending full time paid vocational trainings, or at times for women who work full time elsewhere (Interviews N; V). A grassroots organisation attempting to help working mothers in this way reports that Syrian women with informal jobs often work much longer hours than NGO-provided child care services are available for. This interviewee states that “we can’t do it for 14 hours, but we can do it for a lot of the time” and that this makes a difference too, particularly to older children who are otherwise full time caregivers to their younger siblings. In this case, the service is provided as a way to help children whose mothers are already working, rather than as a way to get more women into paid employment (Interview E, female international organisation founder, November 2017), but having this kind of service available could still potentially be important to Syrian women who wish to start working.
There is also one organisation whose activities for women stand out in contrast to the type of livelihoods support described above. This organisation provides business start-up training and grants, and an interviewee explains that they deliberately ignore businesses in sectors that many women work in, such as hairdressing, because there is no labour demand there. They have made the judgement that businesses that do not set out to meet a pre-existing demand will always struggle to succeed. This is consistent with how most organisations refugee self-reliance is approached in policy, but in practice it is unusual to apply this to livelihoods support designed for women. Instead of funding businesses within traditionally female sectors to reach women, this organisation encourages innovation and alternative approaches, which can be done in the same sectors as long as there is something new within the business idea. For example, starting a hairdressing salon would likely not be accepted as a business idea because of the low demand for this type of labour, but coming up with a new product or tool for hairdressing is perfectly fine. The NGO sees this as a way of guaranteeing that women (and men) can actually support themselves off their businesses, which is otherwise quite an uncommon outcome of livelihoods support. The drawback with that approach is that this organisation reaches much fewer women with their livelihoods support. The interviewee highlights that the more specialised the trainings they provide become, the fewer women will attend (Interview O, Turkish female NGO staff member, January 2018).

Displaced Syrian women in both Izmir and Turkey very rarely find paid employment as a result of the livelihoods support they receive. As described in Chapter four, this is a broader problem since most displaced Syrians do not find employment as a result of livelihoods support, but for women there is also a difference in what the support is aiming to achieve. Within general livelihoods support that is presented and perceived as gender neutral, sustainability is a prioritised goal and employment is perceived as the best way to achieve it. Within livelihoods support targeting women, however, sustainability is no longer a priority in the same way, as women’s economic empowerment has taken its place as the dominant reason for providing livelihoods support.

In refugee self-reliance policy, the goal of women’s economic empowerment appears very similar to sustainability, as both are implemented through attempts to create employment and income earning opportunities (see Chapter two). In this sense, the only difference is that one is general and one is specific to women. Women’s economic empowerment programming can then be understood as a way to ensure that the
livelihoods approach reaches everyone regardless of gender, and that the self-reliance approach at large remains sustainable. However, my data demonstrates that the goal actually is very different, since livelihoods support aimed at women is based on a different analysis. Keeping women’s economic empowerment a separate goal thereby motivates keeping livelihoods interventions for women separate, which in turn disguises the fact that women are not included within sustainability. The next section outlines how staff and volunteers themselves understand women’s economic empowerment in relation to self-reliance and livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir.

**Empowerment at the individual level**

There is a particular understanding of empowerment among my informants, which is rooted in promoting free will at the individual level. Creating support that is perceived as empowering is then about allowing beneficiaries to choose what they want for themselves. This reasoning is evident in the way that some informants justify the way in which their organisations provide livelihoods support for women. As described in the previous section, livelihoods support aimed at women who are currently outside of the paid labour market very rarely changes this situation, but instead creates small scale income generating opportunities that women can benefit from without changing their current unpaid labour. This allows women to earn some money without creating a situation where they have to double work in both paid and unpaid employment (Momsen 2010), but it also means that this support does not create incomes that women can support themselves with. It is common for inter-governmental organisations and larger NGOs to have some mechanism for beneficiaries to feed into the support they receive, for example through focus groups (Cornwall 2002; Malkin 2015). One interviewee highlights that Syrian women prefer the type of livelihoods support that is not connected to the labour market because of their roles as unpaid workers in the home. In this way, the programme design is pointed back towards Syrian women themselves and their behaviours.

When we have discussed this with refugees, an issue that comes up is that not all of them actually want to work. Some women prefer to be at home and often have responsibilities there, especially if there are children or elderly people in the family to look after.

Interview T, female Turkish IGO staff, March 2018
This interviewee describes how her organisation has chosen not to target livelihoods support at women, but continue with general livelihoods support aimed at the whole Syrian population through for example vocational trainings or job placements targeted at sectors with labour market demand. She perceives a distinction between this kind of livelihoods support, and the support for women that generates some income on the side. As an example of the latter she brings up community centres targeting women, where for example cooking classes are provided to encourage women to develop their existing skills and consider paid labour opportunities in these fields. She describes this as social cohesion support that also has an income element, rather than livelihoods support. She then goes on to justify this priority (see quote above) based on discussions with Syrian refugees, where it came up that women often prefer not to work (Interview T).

This demonstrates a view of Syrian women’s needs that is centred around an individual perspective. This is a common part of participatory approaches to addressing basic needs, by giving beneficiaries the chance to input into the projects supporting them (Cornwall 2002). It aims to ensure that development support is not designed from the top down in order to avoid imposing solutions that beneficiaries do not see as beneficial or necessary for them (Mohan 2008). In this particular case, the organisation has created focus groups where Syrian women were asked about their needs for livelihoods support, and the majority of respondents stated that they do not want to be in paid employment. The organisation then went on to design support based on the women’s preference for communal spaces, and income generating opportunities that they could combine with unpaid care work (Interview T). While it is by no means bad practice to take the personal views of beneficiaries into account in project design, it can also be helpful to take a broader view of women’s needs that go beyond their individual viewpoints.

Taking a broader collective view rooted in social exclusion, these individual preferences are better understood within structures that displaced Syrian women are living within. Since there are gendered structures that disadvantage them as women, and xenophobic structures that disadvantage them as Syrians and migrant workers, their individual choices will be influenced by this doubly disadvantaged position (Duran 2018). When individual Syrian women state a preference for not engaging in paid labour, it is important to consider the lack of social support networks and care systems for children and elderly people that will likely influence that choice. A majority of Syrian women in Turkey
are responsible for care of children and elderly family members in their families (AFAD 2014; Çevik et al. 2018; Hilton 2017). Further, as outlined above, care services are very expensive in Turkey and therefore not an option for most women, regardless of their nationality (İnan and Aşık 2014).

In this context, choosing not to engage in paid labour should not necessarily be understood as a choice that women are free to make based on their own desires. There is therefore a danger in overestimating the role of free will and individual choices within understandings of empowerment. While it is a very legitimate choice to listen and adhere to the preferences of beneficiaries in project design, viewing this in itself as an empowering practice shifts the meaning of empowerment from collective action against discriminatory structures, towards improving the position of the individual within the existing structures. Within economic empowerment in particular, this places an emphasis on providing individual women with benefits within existing labour market structures (Sardenberg 2008). Since existing structures place women in a position where they are likely to prioritise unpaid care labour, these are also the preferences they are most likely to express in participatory assessments.

Within this perspective, practices that are discriminatory towards women can still be perceived and expressed as individual choices, and thereby understood as empowering by the people providing support for the Syrian population. A grassroots volunteer working for an organisation that provides income generation work for Syrian women described how a woman working within this initiative and earning her own money for the first time was “empowered” to pay for her daughter’s dowry (Interview C, female international grassroots volunteer, November 2017). This is a good example of an individual viewpoint of livelihoods support that is a very real and positive experience expressed by an individual Syrian woman, but at the same time pointing towards discriminating structures that women live within. The UN has defined bride dowries as a cultural practice that is harmful to women (OHCHR 1995). The requirement on girls’ families to pay dowries in order to get their girls married have a number of problematic issues attached to it. For example, it is cheaper to marry off a daughter early, which can encourage child marriage. Dowry prices will also go up with the girl’s level of education, which reduces girls’ access to school. There are also examples of married women being abused and even killed if their families fail to pay their dowry debt after they get married (McCarthy 2017).
fact that she is now able to pay for her daughter’s dowry, and not risk the social stigma that being too poor to offer a dowry can entail. While these feelings are very real and valid, they should not be confused for empowerment at the collective level, since dowry payments in themselves are arguably harmful towards women as a group.

When I/NGO workers base their assessments of livelihoods and their understandings of economic empowerment at the individual level, they also risk overlooking structural issues affecting women. Mohan and Stokke (2000) has described this as the “dangers of localism” where development support that focus heavily on local understandings of needs and problems end up overlooking political and structural problems. Based on the examples above, I/NGO workers’ understanding of women’s economic empowerment are influenced by such local and individual perspectives within livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir, but it should also be recognised that this is a difficult situation to be in. Particularly for international staff and volunteer, there is a strong criticism of humanitarian and development practice for being paternalistic and top-down (Barnett 2016), and not taking culturally influenced preferences into account can therefore be equally problematic in a different way. In this case, my data points towards I/NGO workers providing livelihoods support in Izmir erring on the side of being culturally sensitive, which also has broader consequences for how Syrian women are perceived and constructed.

Perceptions of Syrian women and their needs

When Syrian women state a preference for not engaging in paid labour, this often leads to assumptions within inter- and non-governmental organisations that Syrian women are culturally different, both from the Turkish population and from the I/NGO workers themselves (Interviews A, B, N, P, Q). This is then presumed to be the way of life within Syrian culture, which is often perceived by locals in Izmir as conservative and religious (Saraçoğlu and Bélanger 2019; see Chapter one). As an example of this, some interviewees refer to instances they have come across where Syrian women are prevented from working by male family members. They present this as an illustration of the cultural factors at play in relation to Syrian women’s paid labour force participation, assuming that this is how things have always been for women in Syria (Interviews B, Q).

When I/NGO workers makes such assumptions, they risk reinforcing pre-conceived ideas of how Syrians as a collective group behave, even though there are other potential
explanations for why this happens to Syrian women in Turkey. For example, Syrian women in Istanbul interviewed in a recent report state that it is difficult for them to engage in paid labour outside the home because it is frowned upon by their Turkish neighbours. This is because they live in conservative neighbourhoods in the city, as rent and food prices are lower there (Bellamy et al. 2017). A Syrian NGO worker in Izmir states that in such cases, Syrian men sometimes prefer that female family members do not work outside, not because this is their culture back home, but because they fear that female family members will be mistreated in Turkish society (Interview L [translated from Arabic], male Syrian NGO founder, November 2017). This demonstrates that a personal preference for a particular behaviour, in this case not being employed outside of the home, does not always reflect how that group generally behaves or want to behave. Rather than demonstrating that Syrian culture is generally discriminatory towards women, such behaviours within the Syrian community is a good example of the intersectional discrimination that Syrian women face (Duran 2018; Pittaway and Pittaway 2004). Their identity as Syrians makes them vulnerable to discrimination in Turkish society, which in turn creates new layers of gendered discrimination that serve to reinforce their perceived “otherness” in the new society, as well as their subordinate position as women. By viewing these behaviours as individual illustrations of Syrian culture, staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations treat cultural difference as something fixed, and thereby risk reinforcing excluding structures that affect Syrian women in Izmir.

Livelihoods support that is designed around such assumptions risk being built on stereotypes. Starting with women’s individual preferences, and drawing general conclusions around cultural practices based on these preferences will then reinforce the structural problems that created those individual preferences in the first place. For example, this is visible in livelihoods support that cater to Syrian women in their roles as mothers. A number of grassroots organisations in Izmir target children because they perceive this as the most urgently needed support to ensure a better future for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey (Interviews A, C, D, E, G). As one volunteer put it, “perhaps it is too late for the adults in the refugee community, but certainly we have a chance with the children” (Interview D, international male volunteer, November 2017). This demonstrates a preference for working with children that prioritises their needs over those of adults, including women. As many Syrian women in Izmir are unpaid care givers to their children and see this as their primary job, it is likely that Syrian women at the individual
level are in favour of participating in this kind of support. This is in line with reports around Syrian women’s livelihoods activities in other neighbouring countries, where women perceive their own incomes primarily as a way to provide support for their families, rather than a way to improve their own positions (Kaya and Luchtenberg 2018; Hunt et al. 2017; UNHCR 2014). Livelihoods support is then designed for Syrian women where they are engaged as an extension of their children rather than in their own right. For example, two organisations within this study have started income generation support for women as a step towards securing children’s education. Since many Syrian children in Izmir work to support their families, an NGO cannot come along and put a child into school without also compensating for the family’s loss of income. As most women are not working, creating income generation support for their mothers then becomes a way to replace a child’s income in a way that the organisation can afford to do, and thereby allow more children to go to school (Interviews D, E, G). As such, this livelihoods support for Syrian women is a by-product of addressing children’s needs rather than a conscious effort to create paid labour opportunities, or economic empowerment for women.

Within intergovernmental organisations and larger NGOs, Syrian women are similarly treated as vehicles for the broader goal of promoting social cohesion between local and displaced communities. A number of reports have described rising tensions between Syrians and locals in Turkey, as Syrians are at times perceived by locals to cause economic hardship through declining salaries and rising prices, particularly in poor neighbourhoods (Erdoğan 2014; ICG 2017). UN-supported social cohesion projects involve “working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by Syrian and host community” which is measured by the number of “persons participating in common events organised for both Syrians and host communities to improve peaceful co-existence” (3RP Livelihoods Sector Indicator Guidance 2018-19: 4). A number of NGOs treat multi-purpose community centres as an entry point for countering this problem. These centres are attended predominantly by women, and livelihoods activities such as vocational training and crafts production are then seen as a way to create social connections between Syrian and Turkish women that will improve social cohesion in the wider community (Interviews P, U).

This illustrates a broader trend in development, where women are not prioritised because they have certain rights or needs themselves, but rather as instrumental tools for the greater good of society (Momsen 2010). It is often mentioned that getting more women
to participate in paid labour will benefit the economies of developing countries, and that giving women incomes will increase spend on health care and education (İlkkaracan 2016; Karaalp-Orhan 2017; Karacayir and Yapor Sacik 2016; World Bank 2012). This is a problem because women’s own rights are not considered, even within interventions that specifically target them as beneficiaries, and benefits to other groups or broader development goals cannot automatically be assumed to benefit women.

In the case of Syrian women, when they express a preference for support that benefits their children, this has to be understood within the context of their roles as being primary responsible for caregiving in their families (Çevik et al. 2018). Women’s priorities in displacement are often based on what they consider best for their families, rather than for themselves (Kaya and Luchtenberg 2018). As such, it cannot be assumed that the support that is requested by individual Syrian women will automatically benefit them as a group.

It is therefore problematic to treat the livelihoods support that is offered as empowering for women more broadly, as treating Syrian women’s roles as mothers as their primary identity will reinforce cultural and gendered stereotypes. However, as above, it should also be recognised that this is a difficult situation, as not taking their roles as mothers into consideration can be equally problematic, and risk alienating women from engaging with inter- and non-governmental organisations. However, since the I/NGO workers in my study have chosen this particular position within this dilemma, there is a risk that their own perceptions of what gender roles are accepted within Syrian culture are further reinforced.

**Gender equality and vulnerability**

As demonstrated above, there is a pattern within the organisations in my study, where livelihoods support aimed at women are created to address needs at the individual level, or needs of groups other than women, but not necessarily structural issues that affect Syrian women in Turkey. This does not necessarily mean that I/NGO workers are unaware of broader gender equality problems, but that it is something they choose not address within their livelihoods support. This is consistent with the UN-level gender classification of the Syrian livelihoods response in Turkey, which states that gender equality is not a goal in and of itself within livelihoods support, but that the support should be delivered in a gender sensitive manner, ensuring that displaced Syrian women receive the same level of support as men. One interviewee working on livelihoods support within an intergovernmental
organisation frames this as a problem with government partner organisations, as they choose not to prioritise gender equality.

As you know our partners are always the government, and from the government’s perspective, especially for the staff in the provincial directories of government institutions, the women’s equality is not something urgent from their viewpoint. They think that we need to ensure they are fed well enough and have enough adequate shelter, and after that we can discuss this kind of thing. They tend to consider these matters, when we try to pursue them to change their minds, they say that this is not the main problem. They are hungry, they don’t have water, they don’t have shelter and you are talking about gender equality. This is not something realistic. Most of the time we have to comply, and women’s inequality in the southeast Anatolia is something structural. This cannot be changed in one or two years of projects.

Interview P, male Turkish IGO staff, January 2018

This quote contains a number of statements. It begins by framing gender equality as a separate issue to basic needs, such as food and shelter. The interviewee highlights that this distinction is made by government partners, and implies that his organisation does not share their prioritising by pointing out that they try to pressure partners to change their minds. This portrays the organisation’s project partners as deniers of gender equality problems that the IGO sees and acknowledges. At the same time, it implies that the IGO has very limited room for manoeuvre, and have to comply with the partners’ priorities even if they do not agree with them.

At a deeper level, the interviewee does present a similar view to partner organisations on gender equality in itself, even though he does not agree that it should not be a priority. He accepts the view of gender equality as a separate issue to for example basic needs, food and shelter, rather than something that can and should be integrated into the other issues. However, taking an integrated view of gender, there are issues of equality within all basic needs, including access to shelter and food distribution (UNHCR 2018b). By not acknowledging these issues as issues of gender equality, women’s equality is made into a different concern from ensuring that women have equal access to food and shelter. The interviewee goes on to say that he does not see it as realistic to address gender equality within a project of only two years, which implies that he thinks it is better for his organisation to work on things that can be changed in the short term. Again, this separates out gender equality and prevents it from having a place within the activities that the
organisation does provide. Since projects are always relatively short term, this essentially means that no development organisations can work towards gender equality. Finally, he attributes inequality affecting women to a particular region in eastern Turkey, where most of his organisation’s work takes place. He speaks of south-eastern Anatolia as the least developed region in Turkey, which is poor and very traditional and not necessarily in line with the rest of the country when it comes to women’s rights\(^{49}\). This, in turn, implies that Izmir would not have the same kinds of issues, as a western and very industrialised city. This portrays equality as something that is impossible to provide within the conditions of the south-eastern region, and more overlooked within other parts of the country, as it would not be a concern there to the same extent. The same interviewee goes on to say that in his opinion, “women’s status” has deteriorated across the whole country in the last decade, under the current government (Interview P), which is in line with academic studies of the AKP government’s policy, highlighting that they consistently frame women as mothers and home-makers (Ayata and Tütüncü 2008; Coşar and Yeğenoğlu 2011). However, this again frames women’s role in society as a separate issue that has to do with politics, and does not necessarily relate directly to support to the Syrian population within livelihoods or basic needs or any other area.

This separation of gendered issues illustrates a broader problem of mixing up gender and women. An interviewee (Interview R) who works at an intergovernmental organisation and specialises in gender highlights that she comes across this issue a lot among her colleagues. As demonstrated by the previous sections, structural inequalities on the labour market prevent equal access to livelihoods support, and designing a programme that pays “significant attention to gender” without addressing structural inequalities is thereby unlikely to actually deliver equal livelihoods support access to men and women. Instead, reaching this goal becomes about delivering livelihoods support that women can access at all, and making sure that at least half of the provided livelihoods support reaches women. In the words of this interviewee, talking about gender sensitivity has then become equated to “go and find women in need and do something for them” (Interview R, Turkish female IGO staff, February 2018). In line with the quote above (Interview P), women’s issues are then considered separate from gender equality within the other areas I/NGOs work

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\(^{49}\) Even though the area is disadvantaged compared to the rest of the country (see for example OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2018), this statement is debatable given the role of Kurdish women’s movements in the region.
within. Rather than looking at gender equality within an area like livelihoods, the priority becomes to deliver something to women within that specific area.

This view is very common within the organisations in my study, and has consequences for how Syrian women are perceived. When women are perceived as being in need of separate interventions, rather than viewing gender concerns as a part of existing interventions, this can also contribute to a perception of women as particularly vulnerable. A grassroots interviewee says that he sees such a trend among NGOs in Izmir wanting to help refugee women (often in combination with supporting their children) that he believes Syrian women have a lot more support available to them than Syrian men. When it comes to building networks through NGOs, women are in a much better position to do this, both because most men work full time and because so many organisations target women with their support (Interview G, international male organisation founder, December 2017). While it is well established that women face different and gendered difficulties in displacement (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014a; Hammar 2014), these difficulties do not always correspond to what I/NGO workers have in mind when they target vulnerable Syrian women. One volunteer from a grassroots NGO that offers support targeted at women discussed how her organisation had a particular view of what they would find in Izmir, which they then had to adapt when they found that it did not quite match reality.

We target mainly single women and mums, but sometimes it’s like finding a sheep with five legs. You have to be flexible and change your criteria and think: ok, this lady is maybe not the most sad case, but can do with a bit of help as well so let’s give her a job or offer her schooling. So we change targets all the time and try to respond to the need at that time.

Interview A, female international volunteer, November 2017

This interviewee describes how her NGO had a very bleak vision of the state of things in Izmir before they started operating there. They imagined finding desperate Syrian women excluded from the labour market, who would enter prostitution because they have no other way of earning money. While women in this situation no doubt exist within the displaced population in Turkey, they are nowhere near as common in Izmir as this particular NGO had imagined. As the quote reveals, the organisation actually struggled to find women in this situation to help. They did find single women and mothers, and thereby had to adapt their view of vulnerability and decide that these women are, in her words, “sad enough” to
support (Interview A). But even in these cases, they were surprised to find that most single women have some relatives, or other support networks already there to help them. The NGO did not become the rescuer of vulnerable and desperate women, but rather a piece in a puzzle of support that these women were already very capable of managing for themselves (Interviews A; C; E).

Perceptions of vulnerability among humanitarian organisations have a major impact on who receives support, and who is perceived as deserving or in need of it (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014a; Harrell-Bond 1986). This notion of finding women who are “sad enough” is thereby problematic, as it runs the risk of actually altering behaviours among refugee women to render them more worthy of support. If single women are perceived as more vulnerable, women may separate from their husbands or, as was the case in the example brought up in the previous chapter (Interview F: see Chapter four), tell NGO workers that their husbands are dead or missing even though they are not. This can then create additional hardships. As such, if staff and volunteers within inter- and non-governmental organisations hold pre-conceived ideas around what vulnerability looks like for Syrian women, and assumptions that women are vulnerable in certain ways, they will run the risk of creating a reality that confirms that picture, and missing out on others who are in need of support in different ways.

Within livelihoods support, perceptions around women’s vulnerability also serve to reinforce gendered divisions of labour that render women less likely to enter paid employment. As labour market conditions are perceived by many I/NGO workers as so bad that women only enter paid labour if they are really desperate, there is also an element of organisations wanting to rescue women from paid labour, particularly at the grassroots level. One interviewee describes recycling as one of the worst possible jobs in Izmir, as it involves picking plastic and glass out of regular rubbish bins to sell. The NGO where she volunteers has set up a cash-for-work programme where women produce handicrafts for the organisation, and the interviewee describes how the volunteers tried to gauge which families from the Syrian community to include in the programme based on who was most in need. She states that they deliberately chose families where women were working in recycling for this support because “if women are doing recycling that means the family is really in a bad situation” (Interview F, female Syrian volunteer, November 2017).

While this may very well be an accurate measure of poverty levels within the Syrian community, it also portrays a different side of women’s vulnerability, where some NGO
workers consider women’s participation in paid labour in itself a sign of poverty and desperation. This does not only happen with recycling, but also with the more common factory jobs, as NGOs try to offer women an alternative to industrial jobs within the Turkish economy because of the poor labour conditions there (Interviews E; G). This creates a potentially contradictory view of women’s economic empowerment, where participation in livelihoods support is seen as empowering both because it (theoretically) enables women to enter into paid labour, and because it enables them to escape it. This raises further questions around the gendered aspects of decent work and labour conditions, which I discuss in Chapter six.

In conclusion, this section has painted a picture of women’s economic empowerment within inter- and non-governmental organisations supporting Syrians in Izmir that is based on the individual preferences of Syrian women. While there may be good reasons for operating in this way, it also means that interventions that individual women experience as empowering can still be damaging to women as a collective group. Further, this connects women’s needs to issues that I/NGO workers perceive to be a part of Syrian culture, even when there might be other explanations for these behaviours. This, in turn, frames gender equality as something large and intangible that cannot be addressed by inter- and non-governmental organisations within small scale interventions, which in turn results in considering gender is equated to providing something for women. What is left of economic empowerment is then any kind of income generation, whether it is intended to get women into paid labour or take them out of it.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed women’s economic empowerment as a component of self-reliance within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir. Women’s economic empowerment as a concept is understood by most I/NGO workers in Izmir to be closely tied to individual choice, and granting women opportunities to make choices based on the positions they are in. The existing barriers to women’s employment in Turkey (outlined in the first section of this chapter), particularly for Syrian women, have created a situation where most displaced women do not engage in paid employment. Those who are in paid employment find labour opportunities without the involvement of I/NGOs, and this is one of the reasons why livelihoods support is designed around women’s roles as unpaid workers within their homes. This has made livelihoods
support far removed from labour market opportunities. Instead it provides irregular and informal incomes that are very unlikely to enable women to support themselves.

Livelihoods support for displaced Syrian women is often developed using participatory methods to design interventions by asking Syrian women what kind of support they are in need of. While this is by no means a bad practice in itself, it leads to I/NGO workers considering needs from an individual rather than a structural perspective, which creates an understanding of empowerment as the ability of individual women to choose what kind of support they want, rather than creating an increasingly influential and empowering position for Syrian women more broadly. The choices Syrian women make, often shaped by their existing positions as unpaid care workers, are then interpreted by I/NGO workers as a given part of their culture, which creates a rigid understanding of gender and gendered roles. Organisations then perceive gender equality as a separate issue that cannot be addressed within their interventions, which leads to a focus on delivering support for women rather than addressing their collective positions as women, while perceiving this as empowering. This has created a situation where economic empowerment in theory is something that changes and improves women’s social positions, whereas the practice in Izmir is rather something that reinforces them.

With some exceptions, for example inter- and non-governmental organisations that provide childcare to working Syrian women, most livelihoods support in Izmir does not aim to address barriers preventing women from accessing paid employment, but instead attempt to create income generating opportunities for women outside of existing labour markets. Self-sufficiency and self-reliance are thereby not goals for displaced women in the same way that they are for displaced men. Sustainability, which is presented as a cornerstone of refugee self-reliance policy and livelihoods support, and understood to be connected to employment opportunities within the Turkish economy (see chapter four), is not taken into account by organisations to the same extent within livelihoods support targeted at women. Sustainability has thereby become a gendered concept in practice, even though it is perceived and presented by informants as a neutral value within self-reliance policy and livelihoods support. This is further demonstrated by the way in which inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir implement livelihoods support where women’s economic empowerment is the primary aim.

Based on the common understanding of empowerment described above, where individual preferences are at the forefront, livelihoods support aimed at displaced women
in Izmir also attempts to “rescue” Syrian women from poor labour conditions and exploitative jobs. This implies that I/NGO workers perceive the potential impact of poor labour conditions differently for displaced men and women respectively, which points towards further gendered aspects of self-reliance. The next chapter will address this by analysing decent work within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir, which is an agenda that has been surprisingly absent from livelihoods support implementation given its place as a goal within refugee self-reliance policy. Similar to sustainability (Chapter four) and women’s economic empowerment (Chapter five), there are gaps between how the concept is theoretically presented within policy and how it is implemented in practice. Analysing how these gaps are understood and navigated by I/NGO workers that deliver livelihoods support, and placing this in relation to this chapter’s analysis on women’s economic empowerment, will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how self-reliance is gendered.
Chapter Six
Decent work

This chapter is the last of my three analytical chapters, each of which addresses one of the three concepts I use to understand self-reliance and its gendered aspects: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. The first chapters of this thesis have established how the global trend of attempting to facilitate self-reliance and integrate refugees into existing economies clashes with the Turkish policy (Chapter one); how the particular challenges found in Izmir relate to the additional challenges found within the concepts sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work (Chapter two); and how I approach the questions that arise from this within my thesis (Chapter three). Further, my thesis has established that sustainability (Chapter four) becomes gendered through its implementation as staff and volunteers implementing livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir only consider sustainability in relation to formal jobs, which are dominated by men. Women’s economic empowerment (Chapter five) then becomes a separate goal within self-reliance that is aimed at including women who are not reached within sustainability-based livelihoods interventions. Both of these practices contribute to the gendered construction of ideal refugees within the organisations supporting displaced populations.

This chapter focuses on my findings in relation to decent work. My thesis takes a broad approach to decent work, which includes aspects of labour that make work meaningful for the individuals who engage in it. This broad understanding of decent work makes this chapter slightly different from the previous two, as much of the focus will be on the neglect of these ideas within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir, rather than how they are implemented and understood. Methodologically, this means that I will analyse what I/NGO workers in Izmir do not say about decent work, as well as providing examples of how they do reason around it in relation to their own livelihoods support (see Chapter three).

As outlined in Chapter two, the international community recognises that paid labour is not a way out of poverty in and of itself, unless it comes with a guarantee of workers’ rights, and a salary that can ensure decent living conditions (ILC 1999). Similarly,
the UN-supported refugee response in Turkey is concerned with labour conditions, as it aims to provide “improved livelihoods and living conditions, including better and decent work conditions for Syrians under temporary protection” (Turkey Livelihoods Sector Highlights, Jan-Sept 2018). Labour conditions are thereby recognised as important within refugee self-reliance and livelihoods support. However, discussions around what makes work meaningful and rewarding, for example by targeting existing skills and professions within the Syrian population, are completely absent from policy documents. It is implied that livelihoods access has a broader positive impact on refugees, for example by stating that it “enables refugees to live active, productive and dignified lives” (UNHCR 2016: 3). This raises questions around why paid labour is assumed to be dignifying, and why there is so little discussion around what makes it so. Considering the gendered elements of paid labour in relation to refugee livelihoods discussed so far (see Chapters four and five), it is also worth asking whether the assumption that paid labour is dignifying also contains gendered elements related to unpaid labour.

When it comes to ensuring labour conditions and workers’ rights, there are a number of barriers that prevent inter- and non-governmental organisations from doing this for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. The Turkish labour market has been made flexible and insecure in order to benefit the economy over the individual, and conditions like sub-contracted and temporary employment without regular hours, severance or overtime payments have been legalised to meet labour market needs that are often seasonal and unpredictable (Canefe 2016). The risk of temporariness is then placed on the worker instead of the employer. This creates a specific type of labour demand that cannot be met by any worker, as there is a need for workers who will accept such conditions (Standing 2011). In many countries migrant workers are typically the ones to meet this type of labour demand, and Turkey is no exception. When Syrians began to arrive in large numbers, there were gaps to fill in the very lowest segments of the Turkish labour market; the most insecure, most unstable, most precarious positions. For Turkish workers, this has created a higher demand for formal jobs, allowing more locals to move out of the most precarious positions, which benefits Turkish men more than women. For locals who remain at the bottom of the labour market, cheaper migrant labour brings a risk of devalued labour, and this affects Turkish women more than men (Ceritoğlu et al. 2017). For Syrians, on the other hand, it is very difficult to move out of precarious positions due to their limited access to formal employment. As such, most Syrians have precarious jobs, and the high turnover of
workers maintains a high demand for insecure and informal labour. When livelihoods support aims to create jobs within existing labour market structures, they often channel Syrian workers into these precarious sectors.

There is thereby both a significant gap between theory (policy) and practice (implementation) (Mosse 2004: see chapter three) in the area of labour conditions and workers’ rights, as well as a significant neglect of other elements that might make work decent and meaningful to displaced Syrians in Izmir. In this chapter I discuss both the visible gap surrounding labour rights, working on the assumption that precarious labour conditions can make work feel significantly less decent and meaningful to the individual worker, as well as how that gap relates to the broader lack of concern for what makes work decent and meaningful within livelihoods support. Firstly, I outline the context of the Turkish labour market and its history of devaluing workers’ rights, and then discuss how this has influenced conditions for Syrian workers today. I then describe how some of the informants within my study address decent work within their livelihoods support, but also ways in which it is neglected by most inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir (RQ1). Finally, I discuss how dilemmas surrounding decent work are navigated, but also ignored by most I/NGO workers implementing livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir (RQ2).

**Migrant labour and displaced Syrians in Turkey**

This section outlines the context of Syrian labour in Turkey, looking at labour market dynamics in both Syria and Turkey. The situation for Syrians under temporary protection who work in Turkey is precarious. In a study from 2017, almost 95% of Syrians stated that they have to worry about money in their daily lives (Taş et al. 2017: 269). The high prevalence of informality and otherwise insecure forms of labour is a contributing factor to the precarity of Syrians today, but this was already common on the Turkish labour market before the influx of Syrian labour (Batalla and Tolay 2018) as well as in Syria before the war (Aita 2009). It is therefore important to consider that background in relation to the labour situation for Syrians in Turkey today.

Labour conditions for migrant workers is a well debated topic in the global north, but this is also relevant to emerging economies like Turkey that cannot as easily be classified as north or south (Canefe 2016; Şenses 2016). Situated between the Middle East, Central Asia and Europe, Turkey has a long history of immigration that is often overshadowed by the
common view of Turkey as a country of emigration because of the many Turkish labour migrants going to Europe in the 1960s and 70s. In fact, both happened at the same time (İçduygu 2003). During the Cold War, many people migrated to Turkey from the Soviet Union and Balkan countries, in the 1980s joined by people from Iran and Iraq. There were also a number of mass migration influxes in the late 1980s and early 1990s from both Iraq and the Balkans as a result of conflicts there (Kirişci 2003). In 1980 Turkey adopted an economic programme supported by the World Bank and IMF, which was then implemented in an authoritarian fashion by the 1980-83 military regime. Reforms were built on market liberalisation that were typical for structural adjustment programmes of that time, in combination with totalitarian methods like criminalisation of trade union activities which weakened workers’ rights far beyond the period of that particular regime (Şenses 2016). Canefe (2016) argues that this made Turkey dependent on precarious labour for its economic development, and that migrant labour has deliberately been encouraged by the Turkish government for that reason. Today the legal environment still fosters this dependency, making Syrians the latest addition to a long line of migrant workers (ibid).

Syria went through a similar process of economic liberalisation in the decade leading up to the conflict outbreak in 2011. Neo-liberal reforms were implemented following international pressure on the Syrian government, but bans on protests and workers’ unions made these reforms happen without any kind of social protection for the Syrian population (Aita 2009). After the global financial crisis in 2008, the wider region suffered from weakened economic growth and reduced oil prices (Fortune and Al Husseini 2010). The Syrian economy was affected even further by sanctions from the US since 2004, which caused electricity shortages across the country. The important agriculture industry was also made more unstable as the government withdrew subsidies for the sector (Aita 2009). Internationally, Syria was considered unfavourable by businesses and investors due to high levels of corruption and the poor electricity coverage (Gobat and Kostial 2016). Unemployment was rising, especially among young people. In 2006-07 the unemployment rate was as high as 22 per cent in the age group 15-24 (ibid: 4-5), and by 2009 it was estimated between 22 and 30 per cent for the whole population (Aita 2009: 4). The highest wages could be found in the public sector, with much lower pay rates in private and especially informal sectors, particularly for women (ibid). While economic difficulties are commonly seen as a contributing cause to the conflict, it should be noted that the Syrian economy was stable and growing in early 2011, and that the anti-government protests that
sparked civil war were led by the middle class population, which was not immediately affected by for example the droughts that exacerbated economic hardship elsewhere in the country (SCISA 2016).

By 2018, after seven years of conflict, the Syrian economy was estimated to have shrunk by more than half. In 2015 the Syrian government cut spending significantly, including on public sector wages, in response to the reduced revenue from both taxes and oil (SIM 2018). By 2016, 60 per cent of the labour force in Syria was estimated to be unemployed, with more than two thirds of the population living in such extreme poverty that they were unable to meet their most basic needs. While wages have declined, food prices have risen disproportionately due to supply shortages as well as cuts in service provision and access, resulting in households spending more than 50 per cent of their total consumption on food (Gobat and Kostial 2016). Annual inflation peaked at 120 per cent in 2013, and the cumulative consumer price index increased with 300 per cent between 2011 and 2015 (Butter 2015). In 2017 government forces started to gain oil field territories, but infrastructure destruction continues to prevent oil production from producing revenues (SIM 2018). With a growing informal economy, the conflict-affected Syrian labour market is increasingly shifting towards unskilled labour and micro-enterprise. However, especially among young people, participating in the conflict economy can seem like the only way to secure a livelihood (SCPR 2014; SCPR 2015). Demographics have shifted enough to distort local markets and create a significant loss of human capital, including half a million people killed in the war, and some 12 million displaced (SIM 2018). Out of those displaced, 5.5 million are displaced abroad as refugees, and 3.6 million to Turkey (UNHCR 2019).

A foreigner of any nationality who wants to work in Turkey has to apply for a work permit through a consulate in their country of residence, and then apply for a residence permit once in the country50 (Kaya 2008). A residence permit that allows for legal residence without the right to work can also be obtained either from a Turkish consulate or from an authority in Turkey within 90 days51 of entering the country (Dirik 2017). This makes it relatively easy for migrants to enter and legally reside in the country without necessarily having the legal right to work, and then engage in informal labour. It is the same for Syrians, as they can legally cross the land border without visas, and residence permits are granted

50 Syrians are eligible to go through this process in the same way as any foreigner, but since most displaced Syrians do not have passports, the majority go through the temporary protection process instead, as outlined in Chapter four.
51 This was extended from 30 days under the new migration law adopted in 2013.
prima facie through the temporary protection framework (AIDA 2019; see Chapter four). It is thereby easy to enter and reside in Turkey legally, and then engage in informal employment without legal permission to work. Before the work permit regulation of 2016, Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey had to apply and pay for work permits through the same process as other foreigners, which prevented most Syrians from accessing work legally since the process requires a valid passport (Kızıl 2016; Şenses 2016).

As of January 2016 there is a route towards legal employment for registered Syrians in possession of a temporary protection ID card, but the number of Syrians accessing legal employment remains low. A total of 31,385 Syrians have been granted work permits between January 2016 and March 2019 (Mülteciler Derneği 2019). It is also important to note that even where formal permits are in place, migrant labour can remain precarious (Canefe 2016). Turkey’s labour law (4857) adopted in 2003 aimed to meet EU standards on job security, but has retained a level of flexibility that is further reinforced by the relatively large proportion of informal labour in Turkey (Tuncay 2013). Since the law was adopted amendments have made labour conditions even more flexible and unstable. For example, an amendment making small businesses of fewer than 30 workers (or fewer than 50 in agriculture and forestry) exempt from the law has excluded almost half of the Turkish work force from any inspection based on ILO standards, including sectors where child labour is common (Canefe 2016; Faundez 2008). This practice affects labour conditions on both formal and informal markets, and creates a high demand for precarious labour. As the economy grows and local people are increasingly able to choose more stable forms of labour, more migrant workers are needed to meet that demand (Canefe 2016).

This pattern is very much visible within the working lives of Syrians in Turkey, as they tend to occupy the most insecure jobs in the most informal sectors. Syrian workers are willing to work longer hours for as little as a third of a normal wage in some places (Aygül 2017; Kaygısız 2017; Kocadaş 2018; Taş et al. 2017). As many of the sectors they work in, such as textile, construction and agriculture, are highly informal to begin with, it is not necessarily just their status as migrants that channels Syrians into informal labour. They are also affected by language barriers, and a lack of recognition of existing skills and qualifications, and thereby restricted to the most precarious jobs (Göksel 2018). Some Syrians report working with an official work permit, but without social security and insurance (Taş et al. 2017: 270). Legally this should not be possible, but the fact that it does occur demonstrates that formality is no guarantee for avoiding precarious conditions. Even
with a work permit, minimum wage is only guaranteed for a year, and in places where legal minimum standards for labour conditions do not apply even to Turkish workers, there is no reason to believe that this would be any better for migrant workers. In effect, Syrians have replaced many local workers on the informal labour market, creating economic growth that allows more local workers to move up, while their own upward mobility is very limited (Eder and Özkul 2016; Göksel 2018).

On paper, working conditions are regulated for Syrians under temporary protection who are employed with formal contracts and work permits. They can only work up to 11 hours per day with regular breaks, and are to be paid 50 per cent more for overtime beyond 45 hours per week. Any overtime should be agreed in advance, and every week the worker should be granted at least 24 hours of consecutive rest (ÇSGB 2018). In addition to minimum wage, workers also get premiums paid on their behalf for social security insurance and unemployment insurance, as well as a small wage increase for any non-working spouse and underage children within their care⁵² (ÇSGB 2019). These working conditions are legally regulated, but at least one study has demonstrated that they are not always adhered to. Of the Syrians interviewed 20 per cent had formal work permits, but only 5 per cent stated that they had social security insurance paid on their behalf (Taş et al. 2017). While this is just one small scale study based on interviews with 35 Syrian families in Bursa and Şanlıurfa, it demonstrates that a work permit does not necessarily guarantee fair working conditions. There are also a number of other problems with these regulations that put labour conditions of Syrians into question.

When workers are treated unfairly, complaints have to be documented and submitted in writing (ÇSGB 2018), which will disadvantage Syrian workers who are less likely to be able to go through such procedures if they are not fully proficient in the Turkish language, and potentially less aware of their rights. Further, workers are only protected from arbitrary redundancies if they have a permanent contract and have been employed for more than six months. Annual leave (starting at 14 days per year) is only given to workers who have completed one year of employment at the same workplace (ibid). As Syrian workers depend on work permits to be renewed, they are temporary by definition. Since some labour regulations like the annual leave provision can also be avoided by keeping workers on for less than a year (or less than six months in some cases), this kind of

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⁵² This is done through a government funded tax break for all workers (asgari geçim indirimi or minimum subsistence discount) that is adjusted depending on the worker’s family situation - see Haber Türk (2019) for a full list of the 2019 allowances.
temporary formal employment is no guarantee for having conditions on minimum labour standards met. If an employer terminates the contract of a Syrian worker, which they can legally do without a specific reason (ibid), their work permit will also cease to be valid as this is specific to the employer who paid for it (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017). Overall, this puts Syrian workers in a situation of dependency that can easily be abused by employers, who have the power to renew or deny work permits and contracts as they see fit, and the ability to easily replace one worker with another without being in breach of the labour law.

A recent study of Syrian labour in Istanbul (Bellamy et al. 2017) has divided working Syrians into three categories depending on their financial situation: surviving, struggling and integrated. Syrians within the surviving group mainly work in day labour earning around 50-60 Turkish Lira per day. People within this group spend significant amounts of time waiting for work, unable to invest that time elsewhere since day labour opportunities are unpredictable and irregular. They have no access to capital, and struggle to meet basic needs with their earnings. Some are recent arrivals without established networks; others are disabled or otherwise vulnerable people who were supported by the state in Syria, but receive no such help in Turkey. Most are not supported by NGOs as availability is scarce and often located too far away. Some have returned to living in refugee camps as a last resort of survival, and receive basic needs support that way. The vast majority of Syrians are in the struggling group; also in insecure jobs, but with some degree of choice available to them, and long-term goals of investing in for example education or a better place to live. Qualified people within this group often struggle to work within their own profession, but are at times hired short-term by Syrian companies or informally by Turkish companies. Most people find jobs in factories or restaurants for wages around 500-1800 Turkish Lira per month. Most people change jobs often due the lack of security and decent conditions, and harassment of Syrian workers is also common. If more than one person per family is working, it is possible to avoid the most insecure positions by combining wages. For that reason, it is common for children to work. Most of them are aged 15 and up working full time in factories, but there are also examples of younger children who sell things in the streets. Similar to the surviving group, it is more common to rely on family and friends than support from NGOs. It is also important to note that many people within this group experience a very drastic change in life style compared to their pre-displacement lives, as

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53 At the time of this report, minimum wage was 1400 Turkish Lira per month (Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı 2019).
most were living comfortable middle-class lives in Syria before the war. Finally, people in the integrated group are able to earn a comfortable living and focus on moving up, securing education and opportunities for their children. Most of them have built their lives in Turkey on pre-existing networks, through for example Kurdish or Turkmen ethnicity; political or religious affiliations. Through these connections they are more likely to find jobs and ensure legal protection through work and residence permits, as they receive help from people who are already established in Turkey. The ability to open a business makes a big difference to livelihood opportunities within this group, but considerable financial resources are needed for this, both start-up capital and funds to pay for the relevant permits. Most integrated Syrians speak Turkish and have significant connections with Turkish society and citizens to help them. However, it is important to note that even within this group the labour situation is not secure, as work permits expire and policies can change, but the most central difference is the reach and reliability of their support networks, which puts them in an advantageous position compared to most Syrians in Turkey.

As these examples demonstrate, livelihoods strategies among Syrians in Turkish cities can vary, but are concentrated to sectors where informal and precarious labour is common. This is a result of both the broader labour market structure in Turkey, and the situation for Syrians in particular, as the economic situation and labour conditions in their home country are even worse. Because of this reality, it becomes very difficult for inter- and non-governmental organisations to create good labour conditions for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. As there are so many concerns about precarious labour in sectors that livelihoods support work with, this raises questions around how decent work is (or is not) considered as a component within livelihoods support, and to what extent it attempts to create meaningful work for the Syrian population. The next section describes how labour conditions are considered within livelihoods for displaced Syrians in Turkey, particularly in relation to formal work permits. It also demonstrates that other concerns surrounding decent work are less present within livelihoods support.

**Decent work in practice**

This section outlines how decent work is operationalised within livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir. It demonstrates that there is a strong focus on formal employment and the labour conditions that are perceived to follow from it, particularly within intergovernmental organisations and larger and internationally funded NGOs.
However, as described in the previous section, the labour rights that are guaranteed within legal work for Syrians in Turkey are at a level of bare minimum that still fails to meet some of the basic requirements within the global decent work concept (Nizami and Prasad 2017). For example, Syrians under temporary protection that are formally hired by Turkish employers are not protected from arbitrary redundancies, and thereby risk being dismissed if they raise complaints about other labour conditions (ÇSGB 2018). Despite this, there appears to be limited consideration of labour conditions beyond formality within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support in Izmir, as well as the extent to which work is meaningful and fulfilling for Syrians in Turkey. This section outlines how decent work is being taken into consideration in relation to jobs provided by livelihoods support for the Syrian population in Izmir, and highlight what support creates formal and informal jobs respectively. The next section then goes on to focus on meaningful and fulfilling work, and the extent to which these concerns are neglected in Izmir.

As discussed in Chapters four and five, there is a dominant view of labour market dynamics within the global refugee regime, where a pre-existing labour demand is seen as crucial to job creation for the Syrian population (CRRF 2019; see Chapter one). This is also visible within the Livelihoods Cluster\(^{54}\) in Turkey and reflected in my interviews (Interviews K; N; T; P; U). It is common for migrant workers all over the world to end up with jobs that locals have rejected, precisely because there is more labour demand in these sectors, whether that is working in construction or looking after children (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003). This usually happens without the involvement of development actors, but there are also examples of where livelihoods support attempts to create (or improve) income generating opportunities for the poor through market analysis and structural changes aiming to make income opportunities available to the poor (Elliot et al. 2008; See Chapter one). This approach was recently used to create jobs for displaced Syrians in Jordan, by allowing Syrians to work legally within special economic zones (SEZs) where there is huge demand for industrial workers (Bets and Collier 2015). In exchange for this concession towards displaced Syrians, the European Union opened up for trade with Jordan (IRC 2017). However, while the global refugee regime saw space for employing up to 200,000 Syrians in this way, the interest from Syrians themselves has been very limited (Lenner and Turner 2018). A significant reason for this is that the jobs offered in the SEZs are industrial, low-

\(^{54}\) See for example [cluster meeting minutes](#) for more information about labour market analyses.
skilled and repetitive, with long working hours and poor conditions\textsuperscript{55} (Crawley 2017; Staton 2016).

In Turkey, the situation is very similar. When livelihoods support aims to create employment opportunities in sectors where the Turkish economy sees a demand for labour, these are sectors that are famous for poor labour conditions and informality, such as textile production and construction work. They are also the same sectors where displaced Syrians already work informally (Aygül 2017; Kaygısız 2017; Kocadaş 2018). As such, when I/NGOs create employment opportunities for Syrians based on existing market structures, they risk channelling the Syrian population into the most precarious sectors, since that is where the demand is. Similar to Jordan, there has also been limited success within such initiatives because the interest from Syrian workers themselves is just not there.

As discussed in Chapter four, there has been a very low uptake of formal work permits in Turkey (Mülteciler Derneği 2019), as many Syrians prefer to continue to work informally since the formal jobs they are offered are more or less the same as the ones they already have, and they risk losing other benefits as a result of formality (Interviews P; U). Further, the vast majority of work permits have been issued to men (ibid), which points towards gendered aspect of existing labour demand and market structures (see Chapter five). One organisation in Izmir was running a support programme to help Syrians obtain work permit, and even though their target was much higher, they only reached 82 people during the course of the programme. Considering there are around 150,000 registered Syrians in Izmir, and likely many more who are not registered, this number is very low. In the words of an interviewee: “in the ocean it’s like one glass of water” (Interview B, Turkish female NGO staff, November 2017).

Part of the problem with work permits for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey is that they do not actually guarantee labour conditions that meet basic requirements within decent work (Nizami and Prasad 2017). For example, they do not protect Syrian workers from arbitrary redundancy. Employers can make Syrian workers redundant at any point and for any reason, regardless of whether or not they have a formal work permit (ÇSGB 2018). What a formal work permit does is guarantee minimum wage and social security insurance, which guarantees social security benefits in case of inability to work (Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı). However, since it is legal for

\textsuperscript{55} In fact, labour conditions have been so poor within SEZs elsewhere in the world that they have been nicknamed “special exploitative zones” in India.
employers to simply make workers redundant if they cannot work due to illness, it seems more likely that they will replace a worker who is unable to work instead of keeping them on benefits. As soon as a Syrian worker is made redundant, both their work permit and social security benefits will cease to be valid (Refugee Rights Turkey 2017). There is therefore a risk that labour conditions do not actually improve significantly for Syrian workers if they are formally hired, since they still risk being made redundant at any point. If the legally guaranteed minimum wage and social security payments are not made by employers (see for example Taş et al. 2017), Syrian workers may risk redundancy if they make a complaint.

In Izmir, the most common form of support is vocational training in sectors where labour demand has been deemed to exist, which is often in the textile industry (Sivis and Yıldız 2019). Training course are then provided to Syrians (and locals) in agreement with potential employers who sign up to formally hire a certain number of people from each course. Referrals can also be made to the Turkish employment agency İŞKUR, which has been extended to provide its services to Syrians under temporary protection (Interviews J; N; P; Q). There are attempts to formalise jobs for Syrians who work in the informal economy, by supporting employers with social security payments and work permit fees, and providing information for both employers and Syrians under temporary protection about the work permit regulation and rights and duties granted within it. This type of support is also granted to Syrians who own informal businesses to enable them to obtain the permits to legalise their enterprises (Interviews B; H; U).

As formal work permits do not guarantee good labour conditions for Syrian workers, it is potentially problematic that inter- and non-governmental organisations who strive to provide decent work opportunities for the Syrian population do not follow up what happens to beneficiaries within the jobs they have been provided with. Within livelihoods support that provides employment opportunities through vocational training, one interviewee describes a problem with following up what happens to individual Syrians after the project has finished. Organisations will record how many people find employment as a direct result of a livelihoods project, but impact evaluations go no further in assessing whether the employed Syrians continue to be employed, and what the working conditions are like for them. Once a project is finished “[t]here is no way to observe what’s going on later on for that particular refugee in their life” (Interview P, Turkish male IGO staff, January 2018). It is understandably difficult for organisations to devote staff and resources to follow
up with all trained Syrians on their post-training working lives, but this creates a focus on finding any kind of employment for Syrians, regardless of what that employment looks like.

Aside from the livelihoods support building on existing market demand within the Turkish economy, there are also examples of expanding economic opportunities based on the new demand from the Syrian population. An example of this is intergovernmental support that involves seconding displaced Syrians to public institutions, usually in roles supporting the refugee response itself. This can also involve certifying Syrian doctors and nurses to be exempt from the prohibitions on foreigners working within the Turkish health system in order to serve the Syrian population, or paying incentives to Syrian teachers who volunteer for other Syrians (ILO; UNDP; WFP 2017). It is also more common in eastern Turkey, where the Syrian population is proportionally much bigger than it is in Izmir (3RP Livelihoods and employment data 2018). According to one informant, there are around 200 Syrian teachers in Izmir who receive grants to teach Arabic. This group is not formally employed with legal work permits, but allowed to work as voluntary teachers with financial compensation from NGOs (Interview L [translated from Arabic] male Syrian organisation founder, November 2017).

Grassroots organisations in Izmir tend not to base their job placements on the same kinds of labour market analyses as the larger organisations do. Further, they do not have the same ability to cooperate with government agencies and existing employers, and the job placements they provide are thereby usually within their own organisations (Interviews C; E; G). This can be done both formally and informally depending on the status of the organisation, but the number of available positions are always very small. A more common form of livelihoods support within grassroots organisations is the cash-for-work-initiatives described in Chapter five, targeting women to set up crafts productions and sales to give them an additional income. There are also examples of grassroots organisations providing start-up grants and micro loans for Syrians to start their own businesses, but all examples of that within this study have led to informal businesses that lack the permits to operate legally in Turkey (Interviews A; C; D). All grassroots organisations also provide some form of information services to the Syrian population, for example by facilitating contact between prospective employers and workers through Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups. These jobs are very rarely formal with work permits, but the type of informal opportunities that already exist within the Turkish economy (Interviews L; P).
Jobs provided to Syrians under temporary protection within the Turkish economy are thereby precarious in one way or another; either because they are in already precarious parts of the Turkish economy without guaranteed minimum labour standards; or because they are informal and thereby completely unregulated. Starting with jobs within the Turkish economy, several interviewees point to the fact that Syrian workers are seen and treated by Turkish employers as "cheap labour" (Interviews C; L; N). Several informants at larger organisations report that the industry representatives they work with often express gratitude towards the labour influx Syrians have created. In their view, Syrians have saved Turkish industries, as they were previously struggling to find enough workers to go around (Interviews H; V). This suggests that before the Syrians came along there were not enough locals who were willing to do industrial jobs in for example textile, and that improving conditions enough to attract more workers was not considered cost-effective or worthwhile for employers to do. This points towards a demand for migrant labour that is increasingly common in the Global North (Lewis et al. 2014). Since the working conditions and salaries are so poor, only workers with no other options take these jobs, and at the earliest opportunity they will move on to something better. In other words, it is only with the recent influx of Syrian labour that the number of workers who are desperate enough to accept these conditions has become large enough to keep the industries sustained. This also means that conditions are highly unlikely to change while there is still a surplus labour supply, as Syrians are channelled into sectors where their vulnerabilities can be exploited (Kavak 2016).

Informal jobs, on the other hand, are even less regulated than other types of work. While the organisations creating their own jobs for displaced Syrians have more control over labour conditions such as working hours and salaries, they are also placing Syrian workers (and mostly women; see Chapter five) in a position of dependency towards donors and charities. This is because the organisations depend on sales and donations to keep paying their workers, making this a form of cash-for-work rather than a job. A volunteer from a grassroots organisation in Izmir describes the crafts workshop set up within her organisation, where Syrian women were hired temporarily to produce orders for European companies. She states that “it was a little bit difficult for everyone because we knew that once they would finish we would have to let some people go because we couldn’t afford to pay them anymore.” (Interview C, international female volunteer, November 2017). Having to work based on unpredictable demand in this way places displaced Syrians in a very
insecure position, as there is never a guarantee that the income they are offered is going to last, or that it will be enough to support them and their families. While no organisations within my study are directly involved in supporting volunteer teachers and doctors, it is likely that this kind of livelihoods support sees similar problems, where their work is not recognised as official and legal employment, and thereby potentially more blurry in terms of labour conditions and contracts.

Further, as such projects are often set up without the required legal permits, there is an additional vulnerability to being closed down by Turkish authorities, and risk leaving beneficiaries without incomes from one day to the next. There are examples of income generation initiatives being closed down by authorities in Izmir (Public programme documents; social media). At times entire organisations are closed down, which inter-governmental informants describe as increasingly common across Turkey (Interviews P; T). During 2017 the Turkish government stepped up its crackdown on civil society. Between January and June 2017 over 1600 associations, foundations, and trade unions were closed down, including large international NGOs like Mercy Corps and International Medical Corps (Longton 2017). While this has mainly been targeted at organisations operating along the Syrian border accused of working with or supporting groups the Turkish government consider terrorists (Mellen and Lynch 2017), there are examples of Izmir-based offices of the same organisations also being affected, as was the case with Mercy Corps. There is also a more general reinforcement of laws and permits felt by NGOs everywhere. Government representatives describe this as an attempt to ensure that all organisations in Turkey follow its laws, while aid workers describe the increased regulations as impossible to follow, with locals and Syrians being the ones at most risk. A Syrian aid worker quoted by Foreign Policy states that any Syrian caught working without a work permit will be deported from Turkey to Malaysia or Sudan, as these are the two countries in the world where Syrians can travel without a visa (ibid). As such, grassroots organisations that operate without permits and pay Syrians to work without permits risk putting their futures in Turkey at risk.

The gender divide that is visible within jobs following livelihoods support is also important, particularly since there is such a clear pattern of different conditions and precarities affecting displaced Syrian men and women in Izmir respectively. While women are more likely to stay out of the poor labour conditions within industrial factory jobs, they are also more likely to be kept out of the labour market as a result. Men, on the other hand, are less likely to find reliable options to exploitative labour, but are more likely to retain
their dominant position on the labour market. This was discussed in more detail in Chapter five, but is also relevant to the following section on how decent work is understood and navigated by staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations operating in Izmir, since it is likely that decent work in practice has come to mean different things to Syrian men and women respectively. As this section has demonstrated, livelihoods support creates work for displaced Syrians in Izmir that is precarious in a number of ways. The gender difference is significant when focusing on the difference between formal and informal work, as men are more likely to be formally hired while women are more likely to work informally in temporary settings. The next section goes on to discuss decent work in a broader sense, pointing to reasons why providing formal work permits is not enough to qualify work as decent.

Paid labour is presumed to be meaningful

Despite frequent mentions within global refugee self-reliance policy, discussions around decent work are remarkably absent from the implementation of livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir. As demonstrated in the previous section, there is a focus on labour conditions surrounding formality, as well as a problematic lack of follow-up within most job placements. As such, there is a focus on getting Syrian workers into formal jobs, without considering conditions beyond formality within those jobs, or whether I/NGOs are providing jobs that the Syrian population are actually interested in doing. There is a similar lack of concern for labour conditions and meaningfulness within smaller grassroots organisations, where the jobs created are often informal and temporary, and precarious due to the lack of regulations of contracts and working hours. These issues point towards a broader neglect of decent work as a concept within livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir, where labour conditions beyond formality, as well as how rewarding and fulfilling the jobs provided might be, are often overlooked. The previous section described problems with poor labour conditions in relation to livelihoods support, and this section focuses on the idea of meaningful work and the ways in which such concerns are neglected.

As outlined in Chapter two, there is no clear consensus among researchers on what makes work meaningful, but for the purposes of my thesis I focus on the subjective experiences of workers themselves, since refugee self-reliance policy refers to benefits of work that is perceived to be fulfilling by the individual who performs it (UNHCR 2006; UNHCR 2014; UNHCR 2018). As such, I focus on meaningful work that is experienced by the
individual as fulfilling in some way, regardless of whether it is also considered objectively meaningful to the world or the broader community (such as, for example, the work of medical professionals which could be considered objectively meaningful because it saves lives) (Veltman 2016). Even though labour conditions are important to this sense of self-fulfilment, as jobs that are exploitative in some way are likely to derive workers of their sense of value (Devivere 2018), it is important to note that this definition leaves scope for a lot of variation in the kinds of jobs that are considered meaningful. For example, a refugee worker could hypothetically consider an exploitative job meaningful if it protects their family, or gives them a chance to invest in a better future.

A main problem with how staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations view decent work is that they often presume paid labour to be meaningful in and of itself, simply because it provides displaced Syrians with the opportunity to earn money. This is closely related to the assumptions that earning money will enable Syrians to support themselves long term (see Chapter four), and that Syrian women who have previously not engaged in paid labour are empowered by the opportunity to contribute to household incomes (see Chapter five). This assumption manifests itself in the way that I/NGO workers talk about paid labour as something that Syrians want for themselves, which further reinforces the view that all displaced people should strive for self-reliance. For example, an interviewee from a grassroots organisation that provides both job support aiming to help Syrians start their own businesses as well as direct aid describes how he views the difference between the two.

[I]t seems like people [Syrians] are trying to live as normal lives as they can and they have kind of accepted the fact that this [displacement] may take longer than they imagined. And for the people that I work with, they want to start businesses because they know they will be here for a long time, so they want to create a sustainable living. They don’t just want, you know “please come and bring us some food this week” or “please come and bring us some clothes.” They want that independence. They want to become respectable human beings again.

Interview D, male international volunteer, November 2017

The interviewee quoted here is international (neither Turkish nor Syrian) and used to speaking to audiences outside of Turkey about his work. He emphasises that the displaced Syrians in Izmir are like anybody else, in that they try to find a way to make a living and work their way up. He says that the Syrians want job support because they have realised
that displacement is going to last longer than they had originally planned for, and that they are now planning to create lives in Turkey in the long term, instead of for example staying for a few months and then continuing to Greece, which was often the case prior to 2016. With this long term perspective on Syrian displacement to Turkey (discussed in Chapter four), he implies that the Syrians he meets see it as less respectable to continue to rely on aid and charity. He emphasises that they do not want this, because engaging in paid labour to earn money makes them feel independent, and thereby more human.

As such, this volunteer assigns a very particular type of meaning and fulfilment to the act of earning money. It is, then, not just the money itself that is valuable within livelihoods support, but the act of earning it that makes it valuable through social meaning attached to paid labour (Zelizer 1989). This is a contested view, as some would argue that valuing money and labour in this way equals a subordination of people and their human value, as well as their experience as a worker (Dinerstein 2018). It is therefore potentially problematic to assume on behalf of a larger group (like all displaced Syrians in Izmir, in this case) that they share this very specific view of money and labour. It is also problematic from a gender perspective, since assigning value to income earning in this way makes paid labour more meaningful than unpaid labour. Since most of the unpaid labour in the world is done by women, this renders women’s contributions to society and economies invisible, and implies that they have to also earn money in order to have meaningful lives (Peterson 2015: see Chapter five).

Even though my study does not include the views of displaced Syrians themselves, it is worth contemplating what their opinions might be. In this particular case, the organisation supports around 50 Syrian families in Izmir and regularly provide direct aid, most commonly in the form of food supplies, but also other things according to the family’s need, for example diapers, mattresses, a refrigerator or a cooking stove. The volunteer quoted above works specifically with business start-up support, which at the time of the interview had reached six families in Izmir. It is therefore possible that his view that Syrians do not want direct aid is influenced by this much smaller sample of people who have expressed an interest in starting a business instead of receiving aid, rather than the larger group of Syrians that his organisation works with. It seems unlikely that a grassroots organisation that has close and personal contact with its beneficiaries would continue to provide direct aid if beneficiaries had expressed to them that it feels de-humanising. It appears more likely that this view rather reflects the volunteer’s own reasoning, potentially
influenced by the select few Syrians who have already expressed an interest in the business-oriented approach. This, then, suggests that they do not necessarily share the view that money makes work meaningful.

It is also possible that beneficiaries say what they perceive to be the expectation from people who support them. Another volunteer from the same organisation describes a situation where a Syrian woman was living with her children in a flat without water or electricity, and the volunteer tried to help her by finding her a better place to live. The woman had assured her that she was planning to stay in Izmir long term, and that she did not know where her husband was, but after some months the volunteer discovered that the woman had gone to Germany for reunification with her husband who had been there the whole time (Interview F, female Syrian volunteer, November 2017). In this situation, it seems likely that the Syrian woman said what she needed to say to get help with finding a better home for herself and her children, which in this case was that she was a single mother, and that she was staying permanently in Izmir. She might have been concerned that the NGO would not take on her case if they knew that she was leaving for Germany, or that she was supported by her husband.

While I cannot say that the particular beneficiaries described in the quote above claim that they want to earn money only because they know that is what the NGO workers wants them to say, a testimony from another grassroots organisation working in the same area of Izmir implies that this does happen. This informant describes how lots of Syrian women in Izmir approach her organisation looking for jobs to pay their rent, but the respondent then corrects herself to say that the women actually approach the NGO asking them to pay their rent, and that the NGO then offers them employment (in this case income generation through crafts production and sales) instead, because they do not have enough money to provide cash support without finding a way to eventually earn that cash back (Interview E, female international organisation founder, November 2017). The fact that the interviewee initially described this situation as Syrian people asking for jobs that her organisation could then offer them suggests both that the perception of jobs being a good solution actually comes from the organisation rather than the Syrians, and that the NGO workers involved can still perceive jobs as something the Syrians themselves want, regardless of whether or not this is true. In this case, the Syrians asked the NGO for money and not for jobs. While it is likely that they were still happy to be given the opportunity to
earn money, this also suggests that the Syrian women in this case did not place additional meaning in paid labour in the way that these NGO workers do.

It is of course entirely possible that some Syrian individuals do experience a personal desire to engage in paid labour, but based on the shared accounts of informants in my study, this worldview is a much clearer pattern within organisations providing livelihoods support than it appears to be among displaced Syrians. Describing displaced people who work to support themselves as “respectable human beings” like the NGO worker does in the quote above implies that people who accept money or food from without working are less respectable. When NGO workers use this kind of language, it sends a clear message that Syrians who show an interest in paid labour and employment opportunities are perceived as better than those who do not (Turner 2019). It is therefore likely a contributing factor that Syrian beneficiaries are encouraged to express an interest in earning money because of that expectation, which leads to the perception among I/NGO workers that this is something that Syrians really want for themselves, and that it is thereby meaningful to them.

What makes work meaningful?

While it should be recognised that earning money likely is a factor that can make work meaningful to displaced Syrians in Izmir, who are often in need of paid employment to survive, there are many other factors that can also make work meaningful. As such, the question I pose here is not whether Syrians who are placed in paid employment through livelihoods support really do perceive their work as meaningful or not. I am rather asking to what extent discussions around what makes work (or, in this case, paid labour) meaningful to beneficiaries are taking place within inter- and non-governmental organisations in relation to their livelihoods support. As I have found that some I/NGO workers assume that income generation in itself is the main factor that makes paid labour meaningful, I want to also point towards other areas that I think should be relevant to consider in relation to subjective perceptions of meaningful work (Frankl 1985). This also includes highlighting why I see it as an important finding that these things are not being discussed within inter- and non-governmental organisations providing livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir.

Firstly, I consider the self-fulfilment that individuals might find by doing work they feel personally committed to (Deivere 2018). The best example of this in Izmir is
livelihoods support that focuses on the individual’s previous work. It seems likely that individual Syrians would find it meaningful to work within a profession they have chosen for themselves, particularly if it also helps to provide services for the Syrian community in Turkey. For example, one informant made reference to Syrian teachers who volunteer and receive benefits from NGOs for their services (Interview L: see previous section). Another example is the grassroots organisation working with Syrians to set up their own businesses (see Interview D quoted above), as these enterprises are based on the individual’s previous professional experience. For example, the NGO has helped a Syrian baker to set up a bakery; and a Syrian hairdresser to set up a salon. Another grassroots organisation has informally hired a Syrian physiotherapist to support children who have been injured and disabled in the war, which is similarly an extension to his existing career (Interviews A; C).

Assuming that Syrian professionals who have previously struggled to work within their chosen profession in Turkey will find it meaningful and rewarding to be given an opportunity to return to that work, this could be a relevant starting point for organisations that wish to provide decent work through their livelihoods support. Rather than starting from the existing labour demand, as most organisations do, there might be benefits with starting from the individual and their desires. Business start-up support is more likely to work in this way due to its focus on individual business ideas, compared to for example large scale industrial work placements and training. However, all of the examples above provide employment opportunities that are informal and thereby also insecure. The Syrian teachers who are compensated by inter- or non-governmental organisations to teach Syrian children are not doing so within the Turkish school system, and as such they are not formally hired as teachers. Instead they are volunteers getting temporary bursaries to teach, without employment contracts or social security (ILO; UNDP; WFP 2017). Similarly, the grassroots organisations that hire Syrians or help them start businesses do so without formal work permits (Interviews A; C; D; E).

Since many professions are off limits for Syrians and other foreigners in Turkey (AIDA 2019), there can be a trade-off for Syrians between working in their profession of choice and being formally employed in Turkey, which is important for I/NGOs to consider. As previous research has demonstrated that most Syrians in Turkey are unlikely to be able to find work within their own professions (Bellamy et al. 2017) it cannot be taken for granted that Syrians have the luxury of choosing work they find meaningful. However, staff

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Note that no organisations providing this type of support are involved in my study.
within organisations focusing on providing formality appear unaware of the fact that it is not always an option for Syrians to choose a professions they actually want to work within. By prioritising formal jobs in precarious sectors with a high labour demand, they continue to place more value in creating income earning for as many people as possible, rather than creating a meaningful form of income generation for individuals. This is equally important from the point of view of the organisations, as it could be part of the explanation for why livelihoods support focusing on formality has very limited success. If it is the case that Syrian professionals choose to prioritise work that is meaningful to them over work that may provide them with a formal work permit, I/NGOs will not be able to address this until they consider other aspects of paid labour that might make it meaningful.

Secondly, I consider integration and interaction with the local community another factor that might make work meaningful to displaced Syrians in Izmir (Hess et al. 2018). Several informants have mentioned the social aspect of livelihoods support as an additional benefit, by creating ways for Syrian and Turkish communities to meet and interact (Interviews B; E; G; H; J; N; O; P; S; T). For example, one interviewee said in relation to vocational training that it has other benefits than just providing Syrians with a job.

Some projects guarantee a job at the end of the training, so İŞKUR can do that because they are the employment agency. Our project didn’t have that. But the refugees are happy about this once they find out. Certificates still help them, because if you are a hairdresser then you need to prove it. If you are a shoe maker you need to prove it. It gives them a way of understanding the Turkish system and how things work here, understanding the roles of companies. But it’s a psychosocial support too, it gets them out of their homes to meet other people. It’s not just about the job.

Interview Q, Turkish male NGO staff, January 2018

This informant works at a larger Turkish organisation that receives international funding to support the Syrian population in Izmir. They offer vocational training that provides attendees with certificates that are recognised in Turkey, which he sees as beneficial for people who are already qualified in the same areas, since it gives them a chance to get their skills recognised and learn about Turkish systems and companies in these sectors. When speaking about the potential psychological benefits of this support, he detaches this completely from paid employment by referring to it as a separate benefit that is not necessarily related to the job itself. The training course will give Syrians something to do, and a chance to meet people, and the informant sees this as a value in itself.
This description of the potential for psychosocial benefits of livelihoods support is typical of how informants in my study have discussed this issue. Nobody mentions potential psychological benefits in relation to the actual jobs they provide; it is rather something that is brought up to justify why livelihoods support is a good thing even in cases where it does not necessarily lead to paid employment. Psychosocial benefits are then contrasted with earning money, rather than integrated into the idea of meaningful work, which gives the illusion that livelihoods support can only ever provide one or the other. I/NGOs thereby aim to provide income generating opportunities as the first priority, but consider social benefits of livelihoods support in instances where income generation cannot be guaranteed.

The fact that psychological benefits are considered secondary to income earning is particularly relevant in relation to livelihoods support targeted at women, as women are most often the recipients of support that lacks a clear connection to employment opportunities (see discussion on social cohesion targets in Chapter five). This can be interpreted both as an expansion of the decent work concept that makes it more multifaceted when it is applied to women, or as an exclusion of women from the meaning that I/NGOs treat as the primary one. Taking the former perspective, I/NGO workers are less locked into the idea of earning money when it comes to livelihoods support for women, which can create space for other aspects of meaningful work. Compared to Syrian men, who are more sternly steered towards income generation, women may have a better chance of shaping livelihoods support into a meaningful occupation for themselves. Taking the latter perspective, women are denied access to the livelihoods support that is viewed by I/NGO workers as the most meaningful, and thereby have to conform to a different type of meaning that is less individualistic, and more centred around their social positions as mothers and unpaid care workers. From my point of view, these are both equally true, since what is meaningful in each case depends on individual preference. However, I do see it as problematic to assign a certain type of meaning to labour purely based on gender. In this case, it is assumed that money makes work meaningful for men and social relationships make work meaningful for women, which leaves no room for individuals to differ from that stereotyped norm.

When considerations around what makes work meaningful are not discussed within inter- and non-governmental organisations, I/NGO workers run the risk of simply not noticing when different aspects of meaningfulness clash in this way.
Decent work as a potential source of conflict

Most organisations in my study prioritise income generation in the first hand, and social benefits (for women) through their livelihoods support, as a consequence of how they see the labour market. If labour opportunities are fixed to pre-existing demand (see previous section) Syrians are limited to existing opportunities in sectors that are both male-dominated and precarious. There is, however, one exception to this: a Turkish organisation\(^\text{57}\) that worked with livelihoods support for disadvantaged people in Turkey long before the Syrian population was there, and are thereby new to the humanitarian support system. An interviewee highlights that her organisation tries to see possibilities for Syrians to change the Turkish labour market, by creating new demand through the skills they have. She brings up language as an example, as speaking Arabic brings the potential of opening Turkish businesses to an additional market of 1.5 billion people. With this in mind, her organisation supported a business idea where a Syrian created Arabic language packaging for a Turkish product, thereby enabling the expansion of that business (Interview O, female Turkish NGO staff, January 2018).

This approach has the potential of combining meaningful and rewarding work within income generation in a way that is unusual within livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir. Even though this organisation does not discuss what might make work meaningful to Syrians any more than the others do, their approach to the labour market does not create a division between income and fulfilment, as livelihoods support does when it assumes that money is only available within the most precarious sectors. The difference is that the number of jobs available are not perceived to be finite. Instead this NGO portrays the economy as a flexible and expanding space, where the input of the Syrian population can create new opportunities that will benefit the Turkish population too. However, this also creates potential for conflict, as this expansive approach to the labour market can also be perceived as more threatening to the local population. As described in the literature review, there is for example strong resistance towards Arabic-speaking businesses in Turkey and particularly in Izmir (Saraçoğlu and Bélanger 2019). The fact that the Turkish government has placed restrictions on certain sectors also make this more difficult, as most Syrians are not able to work in their own professions (Bellamy et al.

\(^{57}\) This is also the same organisation that prioritises differently within its livelihoods support for women by overlooking traditionally female sectors: see Chapter five.
Importantly, the Turkish public also perceives the Syrian labour force as a threat to their own employment (ICG 2018).

As the dominant view within both organisations providing livelihoods support and the Turkish public is that paid labour opportunities are limited, the endeavour of finding jobs for the Syrian population is framed as a competition for existing jobs, rather than a potential for creating new jobs that would not be possible in Turkey without the Syrians. This creates a concern for social tensions, where it becomes potentially dangerous to be seen as giving special treatment to the Syrian population that is not afforded to Turkish people. One interviewee highlights that this is something that her organisation takes into consideration when they create job placements for the Syrian population. While this organisation is not active in Izmir, the same kind of tensions do exist there (Sivis and Yıldız 2019).

In the service sector they [Syrians] can still find a place, but they will compete with the Turkish women and men. Sometimes it causes tension at the local level between the social groups. Actually, we do not have any big problems in general, we should say that. But if the sector already is in need of new people, this is a good opportunity for them. It doesn't create a problem. But if Turkish people are already looking for jobs in certain sectors, and if firms recruit Syrian women and men with lower salaries informally, this causes problems both for Syrians and Turkish people. It decreases the salaries and decreases the benefit of workers.

Interview V, Turkish female IGO staff, March 2018

The relationship between local and Syrian workers is described in very competitive terms here. Interestingly, the informant highlights that she has not actually experienced very big problems in this area, but she is still anticipating that it could become an issue. As such, she is adapting her organisation's approach to livelihoods support for the Syrian population in anticipation of risk for conflict between Syrian and Turkish workers. She assumes that if Syrians get jobs that Turkish people want, this will eventually create a problem for the Syrians. This is likely a significant reason for all the organisations within my study to work on providing employment opportunities within sectors where demand already exists, because they, as organisations supporting migrants, do not want to be perceived to overlook the Turkish population. All internationally funded livelihoods programmes contain a proportion of local beneficiaries (3RP 2019) for exactly this reason. The organisation that works differently in this regard (see Interview O quoted above) is different because they
worked with the local population first, and then added the Syrians, which makes them less likely to be perceived as favouring Syrians.

The reasoning around the risk of creating grievances for Turkish workers through livelihoods support for Syrians is particularly relevant to meaningful work. If Syrians were to be offered jobs that are fulfilling and meaningful as well as income generating, this would not be appreciated by the Turkish public, since precarious labour is common for so many of them (Erdoğan 2017). This creates another layer of meaningful work, where it becomes a matter of class; a luxury that can only be afforded to those who are not desperate to earn money. When organisations providing livelihoods support adhere to these presumptions, likely for fear of losing the support of the Turkish government and public, it reinforces the view that work cannot be meaningful and income generating at the same time. Livelihoods support will then continue to focus on precarious sectors where labour demand exists, with limited success. Further, displaced Syrians are then presumed to be desperate enough for money that they should not be concerned with meaningful and fulfilling work, particularly not if this is considered a luxury to much of their host population.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed decent work as a component of self-reliance within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir. Decent work as a concept is not brought up by any of the informants within my study in relation to their livelihoods support, which points towards a general lack of awareness surrounding this. As outlined in the background section of this chapter, there are a number of barriers facing migrant workers, and particularly Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, which restricts many Syrians to informal and precarious labour. The organisations in my study deal with this situation differently, with most larger organisations focusing on formality as a guarantee for good labour conditions, whereas at least one grassroots organisation restrict their involvement in job placements for Syrians because they see all jobs as potentially exploitative.

There are, however, some patterns that emerge in relation to decent work. When staff and volunteers discuss labour conditions, it is either in relation to jobs Syrians already do irrespective of livelihoods support, or in relation to formality. Most staff at intergovernmental organisations and larger NGOs perceive formality as a way of guaranteeing minimum labour standards within jobs provided to the Syrian population,
even though there are questions surrounding the extent to which this actually does guarantee ILO-stipulated standards (ILO 2019). Discussions around what makes work meaningful, on the other hand, are completely absent in relation to paid employment opportunities, but present within livelihoods support for women that does not guarantee a stable income. However, despite the lack of discussion surrounding this within paid labour, meaning is implicitly assigned to income earning as this is presumed to be something that Syrians in Izmir both want and prioritise.

This practice within livelihoods support points towards a construction of decent work that steers displaced Syrian (primarily) men towards jobs in precarious sectors with existing labour demand, framing labour conditions around formality and meaningfulness around earning money. For women, on the other hand, labour conditions are considered so bad in existing sectors that I/NGOs are concerned with keeping women out of paid labour, and provide them with different alternatives, as discussed in Chapter five. When it comes to meaningful work, in support reaching Syrian women more emphasis is placed on social relationships that livelihoods support can provide, for example by giving women classes to attend in order to socialise with others.

Finally, decent work is also implicitly framed as a matter of potential conflict between displaced Syrians and local people, who often suffer from poor labour conditions and precarious work themselves. When inter- and non-governmental organisations hesitate to provide decent work on account of potential conflicts, this implies that decent and meaningful work is a luxury that cannot be afforded to displaced Syrians. This reiterates that the primary concern within livelihoods support for displaced people is earning money, even though the lack of concern for what makes work meaningful likely explains part of the limited success within livelihoods support targeting formality so far.

In the next and final chapter of my thesis, I discuss the implications of these findings in relation to findings from the previous two chapters on sustainability and women’s economic empowerment. By making connections to refugee self-reliance policy and literature, I then conclude that self-reliance is best understood as a gendered concept.
Chapter Seven

Self-reliance and the gendered construction of ideal refugees

My thesis has presented findings through three chapters focusing on the concepts I use to unpack and understand self-reliance: sustainability (Chapter four), women’s economic empowerment (Chapter five), and decent work (Chapter six). Each chapter has described a gap between theory and practice within these areas, and demonstrated how this is visible within the Izmir context.

Sustainability is operationalised as support that might lead to jobs at some point in the future, which creates a flexible timeframe for self-reliance, and constructs it around paid labour in a way that excludes women. Women’s economic empowerment is operationalised as support Syrian women can access without giving up existing unpaid labour, which constructs empowerment around individual preferences for part-time work and overlooks structural exclusion surrounding labour. This construction of women’s economic empowerment also points towards self-reliance being gendered in that it applies to men at the individual level, as livelihoods support aims to provide men with paid employment in the local economy, and at the household level for women, as livelihoods support aims to provide women with small-scale informal income generation that will contribute to household incomes without making them economically self-sufficient as individuals. Finally, decent work is operationalised with a focus on formality as a guarantor for good labour conditions within livelihoods support that primarily reaches men, while women are again steered towards informal and small-scale income generation, with reference to a desire to protect them from the poor labour conditions in industrial jobs. The way that paid labour in the local industry is understood as something meaningful and dignifying for men, while it is at the same time presented as something that women needs protection from, adds another gendered layer to self-reliance. Women are expected to find meaning in the social aspects of livelihoods support regardless of income, while men are expected to find paid labour meaningful in and of itself, regardless of how poor the labour conditions are.
Further, each chapter has pointed towards ways in which I/NGO workers contribute to a construction of the ideal refugee man and woman, and how these are deeply rooted in gendered constructions. Firstly, viewing paid employment within the local economy as the most sustainable option for displaced Syrians constructs this as the ideal way for refugees to behave. Despite the many problems with the available jobs, Syrian men are expected to prefer them over other income generating activities. Secondly, viewing income generation for women as empowering based on women's personal preferences for part-time and informal work constructs a different ideal for refugee women, where they are equally expected to earn money, but without the prospect of individual self-sufficiency. Finally, viewing decent work as formality in paid labour for Syrian men creates an ideal refugee man who is not supposed to be concerned with work being personally rewarding, as long as he can earn money to support himself and his family. The ideal refugee woman, on the other hand, should not be concerned with earning money for her own individual self-sufficiency, but be happy to work on behalf of the greater good of her family and community.

Based on these findings, my thesis argues that self-reliance is best understood as a gendered concept. In this chapter I provide an overview of the findings presented in the previous three chapters, focusing both on how livelihoods support is implemented in Izmir (RQ1), and on how sustainability, women's economic empowerment, and decent work are constructed and understood by those implementing it (RQ2). I then point towards ways in which staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir re-define these concepts through their implementation, and thereby manifest the gaps between theory and practice that are visible in the literature. I then discuss how their conceptual understandings of these concepts create a gendered understanding of self-reliance, as well as a gendered ideal refugee, which has important implications for self-reliance that are also relevant to other refugee contexts as well as that of Turkey and Izmir.

**Sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work re-defined**

My thesis presents an understanding of self-reliance based on the three concepts sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. I use evidence of how these concepts are implemented and understood within livelihoods support for displaced
Syrians and Turkey to illustrate how self-reliance is gendered, and point towards wider implications of this. I formed my research questions around the significant gaps between theory (policy) and practice (implementation) that existing literature has displayed in these areas, aiming to uncover both what these gaps look like in the Izmir context (RQ1) and how staff and volunteers go about navigating dilemmas within them in their livelihoods support (RQ2).

Even though most livelihoods support in Izmir and Turkey is delivered through short term interventions like vocational training programmes, sustainability is considered an important aspect of this support, as it intends to create long term opportunities for displaced Syrians in the future. The timeframe of sustainability has thereby been made flexible within implementation, and livelihoods support is perceived as sustainable even though the long term effect are not visible within or immediately after the support programme. Women’s economic empowerment, by contrast, is operationalised with a very different set of goals in mind, as the priority is not necessarily jobs within the local economy (as it is within sustainability) but rather to provide Syrian women with part-time income generating opportunities. As most women receiving support from I/NGOs are not in paid labour, these initiatives are small in scale and often informal, to enable women to earn some extra money while retaining unpaid care duties. Providing displaced Syrians with decent work through livelihoods support is operationalised through creating formal employment for men, but formality is not taken into consideration within income generation opportunities for women. Likewise, there is a concern for the psychosocial support livelihoods support can provide for women, which is overlooked within initiatives reaching men.

The way that staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations in Izmir implement their livelihoods support, they are also creating new versions of these three concepts. They re-define them into narrower and more implementable versions of sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. In doing so, they are not only changing the goals of their livelihoods support, but creating a new and highly gendered version of self-reliance. Since my informants (in most cases; exceptions are discussed in the previous chapters) do this without being aware of it — for example by arguing that livelihoods support is sustainable without reflecting on why (Interviews D; P; Q; S) — they appear to perceive their own livelihoods support as working towards the
Theoretical (and gender neutral) version of self-reliance found within refugee self-reliance policy.

The first concept I consider is sustainability. As we saw in Chapter four, sustainability is in effect re-defined as job provision. Livelihoods support that aims to help Syrians find employment within the Turkish economy is perceived as sustainable, regardless of whether it actually results in jobs. While my informants are all aware of the difficulties Syrians under temporary protection face on the Turkish labour market, many of them perceive vocational training as a contribution towards jobs as a sustainable solution. This creates a version of self-reliance that is gendered in two ways: firstly in its implementation, as this type of livelihoods support reaches more men than women; and secondly, in its conceptualisation of paid labour as a sustainable solution for individual Syrians that is perceived as better than other types of income generation, such as cash-for-work. In combination with the barriers faced by Syrian women on the Turkish labour market (Duran 2018), this understanding of sustainability makes self-reliance more accessible to displaced men.

The second concept is women’s economic empowerment. Chapter five demonstrated that women’s economic empowerment is in practice re-defined as the meeting of individual women’s needs. Livelihoods support that aims to create irregular and small-scale income generation for women is perceived as empowering by many informants, on the basis of women’s own preferences for livelihoods support that they can combine with unpaid care work. In combination with the view that paid employment opportunities are a more sustainable solution for displaced Syrians, this creates another gendered facet of self-reliance, where women are expected to work towards a different version of it. Whereas arguments around sustainability frame self-reliance as an individual concept where the goal is economic self-sufficiency, women’s economic empowerment as it is implemented here instead focuses on women being able to make contributions to household-level self-reliance. Again, this makes self-reliance at the individual level more accessible to men.

Finally, decent work is re-defined as formal and paid employment, where formality is perceived as a guarantor for good labour conditions, and the earning of income as the main factor making work meaningful to displaced Syrians. Since the livelihoods support that actually leads to formal and paid jobs predominantly reaches men, this understanding creates a distinct and separate version of decent work for Syrian women, closely related to I/NGOs’ understandings of women’s economic empowerment. In relation to women, I/NGO workers do not bring up labour conditions (pay, working hours and so on; ILO 2019) as a
concern within the income generation activities they create. Instead, they talk about the potential for psychological benefits of livelihoods support within such programmes (Interviews H; Q). For men, on the other hand, formality is understood to provide good enough labour conditions, but factors that might make paid labour meaningful and rewarding are not discussed. This division within decent work adds another layer of gendered aspects to self-reliance, as self-sufficiency is considered meaningful and dignifying for men in a way that it is not for women. Again, this excludes women from accessing self-reliance in the way it is being implemented here, but importantly it also restricts men in their pursuit of decent work, as earning money is always treated as the first priority.

Together, my findings in these three areas point towards a version of self-reliance that is highly gendered. This self-reliance is perceived to be gender neutral even though it is built on providing refugees with formal jobs within the local economy and thereby enable individuals to become self-sufficient, which is much more difficult for women to achieve. Therefore, livelihoods support also aims to create ways for refugee women to support the self-reliance of men, by participating in irregular income generation that can be contributed to the household while women continue to perform the majority of unpaid care work. As such, self-reliance is inherently a male-coded concept, even though it is presented in policy as a gender-neutral goal that both men and women can and should reach. While my findings are informed by specific details surrounding the particular position of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, as well as gendered structures within Turkish and Syrian labour markets and communities, this gendered version of self-reliance is still likely to be relevant in other places, as many displacement situations share defining features. For example, most countries restrict refugee labour in some way (Long 2014; Zetter and Ruaudel 2016), which creates conflicting timeframes within sustainability as well as potentially precarious labour situations. Further, many displaced women in the world are expected to take on income generation in addition to unpaid care work duties, which makes it more difficult to access paid labour and economic self-sufficiency at the individual level (Boucher and Aniyamuzala 2016; Kaya and Luchtenberg 2018; Hunt et al. 2017; UNHCR 2014c).

The next section points towards wider implications of this gendered self-reliance, and how it contributes to constructions of ideal refugee men and women. The following section then discusses the position of inter- and non-governmental organisations in relation to the
operational reality they work within, demonstrating that clashes in this area makes the ideal they have constructed very difficult for refugees to achieve.

**Constructing the ideal refugee wo/man**

The gendered version of self-reliance that my thesis has presented has implications that go beyond practical livelihoods support access in Izmir and Turkey. When staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations providing livelihoods support construct self-reliance in this way, by presenting paid employment in the local economy as the ultimate goal, this also creates a vision of the ultimate refugee who strives to reach that goal.

The good or ideal refugee in self-reliance policy is portrayed as a thrifty and hard-working person, often with entrepreneurial skills and ambitions that they can turn into income generating initiatives (Betts et al. 2014; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014b). The promotion of this ideal through self-reliance policy and livelihoods support has been criticised, both for shaping refugee support around the needs of market economies (Ilcan 2017), and for racialising refugees by shaping their behaviours based on entrepreneurial ideals of the western (white) world (Turner 2019). My thesis contributes to these debates by arguing that this version of the ideal refugee is also, most likely, imagined as a man. As such, the ideals constructed by self-reliance are not only problematic in relation to market economies and race, but also in relation to gender.

Based on the gendered version of self-reliance presented in my thesis and the previous sections of this chapter, the ideal refugee man in the Izmir context is someone who has secured a formal contract with a Turkish employer, or has alternatively established himself as a legally registered self-employed business owner. Once he has secured a job, he is expected to remain employed in the long term, and ensure that his salary can support his entire family without relying on any kind of aid (see Chapter four). He is also expected to enjoy earning money, and see it as fulfilling to work hard in order to be independent from refugee support (see Chapter six). This ideal is very much consistent with that presented in previous work: an individual who is competent, ambitious and able to earn money, and expected to welcome and embrace the opportunity to do so (Betts et al. 2014).

The ideal refugee woman, on the other hand, is someone who is equally hard working and expected to add income generation activities to any existing unpaid work. However, she does not have any individual aspirations when it comes to self-sufficiency, but instead engages in paid labour to earn money for her household, and create social benefits
for her community (see Chapter five). She is expected to find meaning in these social aspects of paid labour, as a contributor towards male self-reliance (see Chapter six).

Compared to the male version that persists within existing self-reliance policy, the ideal refugee woman is portrayed as less capable of creating opportunities for herself. If she has a job within the local economy, she is perceived by some as being in need of rescue from the exploitative conditions that she faces there (see Chapter five). As such, she retains some of the old stereotype that paint refugees as passive aid recipients who need to be saved from the circumstances they are victims within (Crisp 2003). Since so much of the self-reliance rhetoric builds on emphasising the capability of refugees to support themselves (Betts et al. 2017), it is extremely problematic that this vision in practice excludes women.

These ideals are likely to be relevant to refugee situations beyond Turkey. Even though UNHCR defines self-reliance as something that can apply to households and communities as well as individuals (UNHCR 2014a), it is consistently implemented and measured in ways that focus on individuals. Organisations delivering livelihoods support measure results by counting the number of people who have received training, or the number of people who have been supported with income generation or employment opportunities (ibid). As many displaced women in the world are in similar positions to Syrian women in Turkey when it comes to labour (Bircher 2016; UNHCR 2014c), it is likely that they will also face some of the same struggles and exclusions in relation to self-reliance. I therefore see a greater risk with promoting the male version of self-reliance as the global standard for refugees, as this will likely create new and unintended gendered exclusions for women in other displaced contexts.

Further, the ideal refugee men and women created by this understanding of self-reliance are based on gendered stereotypes, grounded at least partly on the perceptions of I/NGO workers. The best example of this is when small-scale income generation initiatives for women are built around traditionally female occupations, such as handicrafts or hairdressing (see Chapter five). As it is a common assumption within livelihoods support that women’s paid labour is secondary to men’s within all refugee households where a man is present (Buscher 2009) there are likely examples of this in other contexts. The goal of self-reliance thereby encourages refugee men and women to behave in gender stereotypical ways, which serves to entrench gendered divisions of labour as well as social hierarchies, regardless of whether they were present to begin with. An example of this from Izmir is
livelihoods support targeting women in order to help children (see Chapter five), as this assumes that Syrian women have no aspirations of their own when it comes to labour and employment, but are happy to work within support structures designed to benefit their children. Displaced Syrian women are then encouraged to behave in the way I/NGO workers expect them to behave, along the lines of gendered stereotypes that assign them the role of mother ahead of being an individual worker, in order to receive support. This is problematic because it excludes people who do not conform to these expected behaviours, and also because it reinforces unequal gender structures surrounding labour.

These ideals that inter- and non-governmental organisations promote through their understandings of self-reliance are potentially damaging in multiple ways. As outlined above, they encourage behaviours that fit within gendered stereotypes in a way that risks creating exclusion of people who do not behave in the expected ways. They also serve to entrench unequal structures surrounding gender and labour. It is therefore problematic in itself that inter- and non-governmental organisations promote such behaviours as ideals, but I argue that this particular ideal is also impossible for refugees to live up to, which creates additional problems. In the case of Syrians in Turkey, very few displaced Syrian men have a formal job that can support their families independently of other aid or coping mechanisms like child labour (Erdoğan 2017; Erol et al. 2017; Mutlu et al. 2018). As such, self-reliance promotes an ideal that is not particularly realistic. In addition to the struggles they already face, refugees run the risk of being viewed as bad or lazy people who do not strive towards self-reliance as it is imagined by the organisations that support them. In the next section I explain the position of I/NGOs within this, and the remit they have created for self-reliance. Again, while these details are specific to Turkey, there are common features shared with other displacement situations that suggest this is also relevant elsewhere.

The role of inter- and non-governmental organisations

So far, this chapter has explored what gendered self-reliance looks like in the Izmir context, and the construction of ideal refugee men and women that follow from this. Aside from the problems related to conditioning refugee support on a certain expected behaviour, I argue that the ideal that is promoted through this view of self-reliance can never realistically be reached by the majority of displaced Syrians in Turkey. This section discusses the position of inter- and non-governmental organisations within implementation of livelihoods support,
and how their own remit create difficulties in achieving the type of refugee self-reliance that they envision.

The process of re-defining self-reliance through the implementation of livelihoods support demonstrates that the power to decide what self-reliance looks like lies with individual staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations. Through their own (sometimes pre-conceived) ideas of what is sustainable, empowering, and decent for refugees within livelihoods support, I/NGOs place themselves in a position of power. However, I do not see this as something they do purposefully as individuals, but rather as a result of their organisational remit. As such, it should be acknowledged that individual I/NGO workers are likely in very difficult situations that are not necessarily perceived as a position of power by them or their superiors.

Refugee support in any context is constrained by state actors and state regulations (Milner 2014). As a result, inter- and non-governmental organisations shape their remits around these constraints, by setting their own priorities and agendas. In the case of Turkey, the self-reliance agenda clashes drastically with Turkey’s own policy towards the displaced Syrian population, as one is built on long term integration and the other one on temporary protection and guest status (see Chapter one). This clash creates a situation where individual I/NGO workers have to re-define self-reliance to be able to implement it, because of the operational reality they are in. Creating new meanings for sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work, based on their personal positions and understandings, is therefore likely perceived as a pragmatic necessity in a difficult situation, rather than a position of power that shapes the lives of refugees. I argue that both can be equally true.

In the case of grassroots organisations in Izmir, they often shape their priorities within livelihoods support in ways that actively goes against the Turkish state. They do this by creating income generation opportunities that are not legal in Turkey, and working towards more permanent integration of Syrians in Turkey that is not in line with the Turkish government’s policy on temporary guest status (Interviews D; E; G). Larger NGOs that are officially registered and receive international funding are in a very different position in relation to the Turkish government, as they depend on their approval to be able to deliver livelihoods support. As such, they have to endorse the Turkish government even when they do not agree with them. For example, all my informants pointed to problems with the work permit regulation and difficulties with its implementation. However, the regulation was in
itself a result of international lobbying from UNHCR and other actors within the global refugee support regime, as this legal change was made in advance of the EU-Turkey deal in exchange for international donor funding to Turkey (Ulusoy and Battjes 2017). As such, the larger I/NGOs that my informants work for all endorse the regulation, and present Turkey as a positive example\textsuperscript{58} of how to promote refugee self-reliance. As individual informants want to expand labour access for Syrian in ways that are not necessarily possible within the current legal framework (Interviews B; N; P), they are in a similar position to grassroots volunteers in that they strive to set their own agendas even though it does not necessarily work within the operational remit they have.

The position this creates for refugee support organisations is potentially problematic. When organisations work on global priorities that are not in line with national ones, it places individual I/NGO workers in a difficult position of authority over the state they are working within, where it is implied that the organisations know what is best for the country and its displaced populations. This imperial side of development has been widely debated when it comes to developing countries, where international institutions and donor governments make decisions on behalf of poorer and often post-colonial states (Escobar 1995). Non-governmental organisations then become an extension of imperialism, as they are most likely held accountable to international donors on their priorities, rather than the populations they claim to serve (Acar et al. 2017; Hielscher et al. 2017). When development organisations or approaches are not accepted, local resistance towards them is more likely to follow, which in this case would lead to less support for refugees in places like Turkey.

Self-reliance is a good example of this kind of clash, as it is a global priority that western and European states promote as an alternative to resettlement, while states hosting refugee populations see it as an interim solution (Long 2014). Implementing the western vision of self-reliance in a state that does not fully accept or support it will therefore be extremely difficult. In the case of Turkey, I/NGOs have created a version of self-reliance that is centred around paid formal employment for Syrians even though this is not an accessible solution. So far, only 31,185 people out of the 1.8 million registered Syrians of working age in Turkey have been provided with formal employment, and that number is increasing very slowly (Mülteciler Derneği 2019). When I/NGOs in Turkey attempt to

\textsuperscript{58} See for example the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, where the Turkish work permit regulation is upheld as good practice.
implement their vision of self-reliance in spite of these difficulties, they risk creating significant backlashes against refugee support regime in Turkey.

There are recent examples of this kind of backlash. Even though it is less than twenty years since Turkey went through significant legal and economic changes in order to satisfy the European Union’s membership requirements, there has been a significant shift in rhetoric since then. The government is now very resistant towards any form of foreign influence, and more concerned with its Middle Eastern neighbours than it is with Europe. This has been described as an attempted return to the Ottoman Empire, when Turkey was a regional power in the Middle East (Çağaptay 2009; Colborne and Edwards 2018). Today, the Turkish government appears unconcerned with criticism from Europe. The increased level of state authority that is often subject to European criticism has also spread towards the non-governmental sector and the global refugee response. Since 2017 a number of international aid organisations have been banned from working in Turkey, and have had their international staff deported. This has also resulted in increased scrutiny on the remaining organisations and their activities, in order to ensure that they are within legal regulations and working in ways that align with Turkish priorities (Cupolo 2017). As such, it is even more difficult for I/NGOs to create formal and paid employment opportunities for Syrians, since they are now even more regulated.

As a result of this structure, inter- and non-governmental organisations have created a remit for themselves where their understanding of self-reliance is based on their own priorities rather than the operational reality they face in Turkey. As most host governments in the world restrict economic integration and labour market access for refugees and migrants, this is likely to also be relevant elsewhere (Long 2014; Zetter and Ruaudel 2016). Without the support and acceptance of local populations and authorities, this creates a separation of refugee self-reliance from local agendas and economies, even though it is a part of the refugee self-reliance goal itself to work within them (Betts et al. 2017). As such, individual I/NGO workers are both in a position of power to shape implementation based on their own beliefs, and at the same time severely constrained by their working environments.

This clash between global policy priorities and local operational environments also creates a difficult situation for the refugees these organisations want to support. The ideal refugee that is constructed by the re-defined version of self-reliance is also one that cannot realistically be achieved within environment they are in. Since I/NGO workers go through
the process of re-defining self-reliance in order to make it implementable, it follows that the ideal they actually strive for is not implementable, and therefore not a realistic expectation to have on refugees.

There are many implications of this practice that are potentially damaging. For refugee men, treating formal jobs as the goal when they are not available likely prompts them to accept the bad jobs that are available but do not give them the self-sufficiency and fulfilment that those providing livelihoods support imagine. The goal can then be presumed to have been reached even though the reality is very different. For all refugees, this understanding of self-reliance reinforces existing gendered divisions of labour that create inequality. Finally, for broader society, self-reliance in this form promotes a very particular view of the economy and labour market, which encourages exploitation and precarious work.

**Conclusion**

My thesis has presented evidence of how refugee self-reliance policy is implemented through livelihoods support for the displaced Syrian population in Izmir, western Turkey. Based on the data presented, I argue that self-reliance is gendered both in its implementation, as women and men are reached by different types of livelihoods support, and in its conceptualisation, as self-reliance is understood to mean different things for men and women respectively.

Chapter one described the context my thesis approached refugee self-reliance within, in order to analyse its conceptualisation within inter- and non-governmental organisations, as well as its gendered aspects. It showed how the global trend of attempting to facilitate self-reliance and integrate refugees into existing systems and economies clashes with the Turkish policy towards displaced Syrians, which is built on temporariness and guest status. For inter- and non-governmental actors who implement international refugee support in Turkey, this creates a restricted remit and difficult working situation with multiple levels of accountability that do not always align. When the global regime aims to keep Syrians in Turkey by creating self-reliance, and the Turkish government works to prevent this by keeping all policies temporary, I/NGOs have to balance a very thin line in between the two, while attempting to do what they perceive to be best for the displaced Syrians. This chapter demonstrated that all of these dynamics are visible and relevant in Izmir.
Chapter two outlined the relevant literature and policy debates surrounding the three concepts I use to unpack self-reliance: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work. It established the relevance of these concepts to understanding how self-reliance is gendered, and how each of them relates to the particular context of displaced Syrians in Izmir, described in the Chapter one. It then outlined the relationship between academic scholarship, development agendas, and refugee self-reliance policy within each concept, and pointed to significant gaps between theory and implementation practice, which my thesis aims to examine.

Chapter three explained the methodological choices I have made within this study, in relation to the specific challenges facing inter- and non-governmental organisation supporting the displaced Syrian population in Turkey (see Chapter one), and the conceptual challenges within the three concepts I use to analyse self-reliance and its gendered aspects: sustainability, women’s economic empowerment, and decent work (see Chapter two). My methodological approach focuses on how staff and volunteers within inter- and non-governmental organisations providing livelihoods support understand their own work, and how they navigate difficulties within it. As such, using qualitative interviews and document analysis enabled me to collect data that makes an empirical contribution on how self-reliance is being implemented in the context of displaced Syrians in Izmir, and the gendered aspects of this (RQ1). Further, it enabled me to also make a conceptual contribution towards understanding self-reliance as a gendered concept, and how its construction within organisations supporting displaced populations contributes to the construction of an ideal refugee (RQ2).

Chapter four discussed sustainability as a component of self-reliance within inter- and non-governmental livelihoods support for displaced Syrians in Izmir. It demonstrated that sustainability as a concept is understood by most I/NGO workers in Izmir to be tied to employment opportunities within the Turkish economy, and providing opportunities that are perceived to improve the chances of displaced Syrians to be hired. Among most informants, this understanding of jobs as sustainable is built more on very particular ideas and perceptions around paid labour as positive, rather than the specific situation for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. This demonstrates a gendered side of sustainability, as these types of interventions are much less accessible to Syrian women, which also raises questions around how sustainability relates to women’s economic empowerment within self-reliance.
Chapter five discussed women’s economic empowerment as a component of self-reliance within livelihoods support. Women’s economic empowerment as a concept is understood by most I/NGO workers in Izmir to be closely tied to individual choice, and granting women opportunities to make choices based on the positions they are in. The existing barriers to women’s employment in Turkey, particularly for Syrian women, have created a situation where most displaced women do not engage in paid employment. Those who are in paid employment find labour opportunities without the involvement of I/NGOs, and this is one of the reasons why livelihoods support is designed around women’s roles as unpaid workers within their homes. This has made livelihoods support far removed from labour market opportunities. Instead it provides irregular and informal incomes that are very unlikely to enable women to support themselves. This suggests that women are expected to work towards a different version of self-reliance, where sustainability is not a concern in the same way that it is for men.

Chapter six discussed decent work as the final component within self-reliance. Decent work as a concept is not brought up by any of the informants within my study in relation to their livelihoods support, which points towards a general lack of awareness surrounding this. Decent work is operationalised with a focus on formality as a guarantor for good labour conditions, in support that primarily reaches men, while women are steered towards informal and small-scale income generation, with reference to the poor labour conditions that might affect them in industrial jobs. The way that paid labour is understood as something meaningful and dignifying adds another gendered layer to self-reliance, as women are expected to find meaning in the social aspects of livelihoods support, while men are expected to find paid labour meaningful in and of itself, regardless of how rewarding the work actually is for them personally.

Chapter seven ties these findings together and points towards a version of self-reliance that is built on providing refugees with formal jobs within the local economy, which will enable individuals to become self-sufficient, even though this is much more difficult for women to achieve. Therefore, it also aims to create ways for refugee women to support the self-reliance of men, by participating in irregular income generation that can be contributed to the household, while women continue to perform the majority of unpaid care work. As such, this self-reliance is inherently a male-coded concept, even though it is presented in policy as a gender-neutral goal that both men and women can and should reach.
This, in turn, means that the ideal refugee that organisations construct in their self-reliance support (Ilcan 2018; Turner 2019) is most likely imagined as a man. The economic self-sufficiency of individuals that is promoted through self-reliance is based on the male version of the concept, based on paid labour as both sustainable and meaningful for refugees. This is problematic in several ways. Firstly, it is an ideal that is impossible to achieve for both men and women, since jobs that will render them self-sufficient are very rarely available to them. If support is conditioned on behaving like jobs are still a good solution, this will encourage refugees to take jobs that are exploitative and precarious. Secondly, this ideal is built on gender stereotypes that encourage refugees to behave in ways that reinforce their perceived social positions and gendered divisions of labour, for example by encouraging men to be breadwinners and women to be responsible for unpaid care work. This creates exclusion for those who do not conform to the expected roles, and will reinforce gendered structures that cause inequality. Finally, this ideal promotes paid labour in a way that puts market benefits above the welfare of people, which risks contributing to exploitation and precarious labour. It also contributes to de-valuing unpaid labour as an equally valuable and meaningful occupation, which also contributes to inequality.

My study has focused on self-reliance as it is perceived and experienced by staff and volunteers at inter- and non-governmental organisations implementing livelihoods support. In doing so, I have pointed towards a number of areas where refugees do not necessarily behave in the ways that I/NGOs expect them to, for example by choosing not to formalise their labour or enter a certain profession. As such, future studies of gendered self-reliance should focus on how it is experienced by displaced men and women themselves, and explore where these world views might clash. Do refugee women agree with the statement that inter- and non-governmental organisations expect them to support male self-reliance rather than achieve it for themselves? To what extent do refugee men find it meaningful and rewarding to provide for their families? Is self-reliance something they envision for themselves, and if so does it look different for men and women respectively?
Appendix 1: Interview guide

The refugee community

- What’s the situation for refugees in Izmir?
- Why do refugees come to Izmir specifically?
- What is the situation like for non-Syrian refugees?
- What is the situation like for refugee women?
- What do you think can be done to help these people?

Your organisation

- Tell me about your organisation
- What do you (personally) do within the organisation?
- Who is your organisation trying to reach?
- What was the reasoning behind doing the activities that you do?
- What impacts can you see from the work you do?

Jobs and job creating support

- What does the job situation look like for refugee men and women respectively?
- What kind of job support is on offer and who is this aimed at?
- Are there gendered differences in support access?
- Tell me about your job support and the reasoning behind this
- Any gendered targets within this?

Connections

- Other organisations working with job support
- Others within your organisation
- Supporting documents
- Questions for me
Appendix 2: Consent form

This research project aims to investigate gendered aspects of self-reliance within income generation support for displaced persons in Izmir, Turkey. Findings will contribute to a doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

You are participating in this research anonymously, and will not be named or otherwise made identifiable within this project.

The organisation you work for will not be named, and the researcher will under no circumstances attempt to contact or interview beneficiaries or sponsors of your organisation.

The interview you provide will only be recorded with your consent. Transcripts or notes from your interview, as well as any outputs where this data is used, will be made accessible to you in advance of publishing.

Recordings and transcripts will be kept securely and will not be accessible to anyone apart from the researcher (and translators where relevant) and securely destroyed once this research project is finished. Recordings and transcripts will at no time be brought to Turkey.

Any non-public documents that you share for the purpose of this project will be kept securely and only accessed by the researcher. Data from such documents used within the thesis will omit all information identifying individuals and organisations.

You are under no obligation to take part in this research, and you are free to withdraw or limit your participation at any time without stating a specific reason for doing so.

You will not receive monetary compensation for participating in this research.

You are free to contact the researcher at any time with questions or concerns.
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