GOVERNING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY

Experiences of Being a Refugee in Turkey as a
Country for Temporary Asylum

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Abstract: This article addresses the question of how to theorize the
relation between uncertainty and governmentality with regard to dis-
placement and its consequences. It explores the experiences of asylum
seekers in Turkey and the bureaucratic processes of refugee status deter-
mination, local dispersal, and third country resettlement, illustrating
two main points throughout. First, 'protracted uncertainty', character-
ized by indefinite waiting, limited knowledge, and unpredictable legal
status, is a central element of the experience of being an asylum seeker
in Turkey. Second, this uncertainty serves to demobilize, contain, and
criminalize asylum seekers through the production of protracted uncer-
tainty, which in turn is normalized as a necessity of bureaucracy and/or
security. The article invites readers to question the governmentalities of
asylum and border regimes that not only discipline refugees' everyday
movements but also determine the uncertainty of 'refugeeness'.

Keywords: asylum regime, asylum seeker, governmentality, refugeeness,
securitization approach, Turkey, uncertainty, waiting

Located at the heart of a troubled region, Turkey has received thousands of asy-
lum seekers fleeing from several major wars in recent decades, both from neigh-
boring countries in the Middle East and Eastern Europe and increasingly from
more distant countries in Asia and Africa. Turkey presents a peculiar case because
even though it was one of the original signatories to the UN's 1951 Convention
Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter, the 1951 Convention), it remains
today one among the very few states in the world to maintain the geographi-
cal limitation clause of the 1951 Convention.[1] What this implies is that Turkish
authorities only accept international legal responsibility to protect refugees com-
ing from Europe, the borders of which are defined by the European Council. As a
result, so-called non-European refugees are permitted to stay in the country only

temporarily until the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has finished processing their asylum application and found a durable solution, which in the Turkish case is mostly limited to third country resettlement in the absence of the possibility of local integration or voluntary return.[2] In other words, 'protracted uncertainty', in both a temporal and spatial sense (see the introduction to this issue), is a de facto aspect of the asylum regime in Turkey.

Despite ongoing pressure from the European Union (EU) and the international community to remove the geographical limitation, the Turkish state points to several factors that justify holding on to it. These include domestic security considerations, Turkey's proximity to countries marked by instability on its southern and eastern borders, and fears over becoming the EU's 'dumping ground' (Kirişçi 2004; Tokuzlu 2010). However, this measure has in no way prevented the steadily increasing numbers of non-European refugees from entering the country to seek asylum. According to the figures of the UNHCR office in Turkey,[3] at the end of 2011, close to 11,000 persons, primarily from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia, were recorded to have an asylum application in Turkey, while the total number of recognized refugees to have an active case with the UNHCR was over 14,000. In September 2014, these figures have reached close to 17,000 and 33,000, respectively, with the total number of active caseloads (asylum seekers and recognized refugees) doubling in a little less than three years.

For non-European refugees entering the asylum procedure in Turkey (hereafter referred to as 'asylum seekers'),[4] the procedures for seeking asylum create many uncertainties and anxieties. The application process both for refugee status determination and for third country resettlement can take up to several years, and asylum seekers often find themselves in situations of indefinite and unpredictable waiting between each step of these procedures. Throughout this time, the numerous actors involved in the Turkish asylum regime continually put to test the eligibility and credibility of an asylum seeker as a person with a 'true' refugee story. Furthermore, during their stay in Turkey, asylum seekers are required to abide by the strict Turkish regulations on asylum, such as moving to a 'satellite city' appointed by the Ministry of Interior (MOI), where they have minimal access to basic housing, employment, and health assistance and few, if any, supportive networks.

The basic objective of this article is to reflect on some of the experiences of asylum seekers in Turkey in relation to this procedural set-up, focusing primarily on the place of 'uncertainty' as a defining aspect. The article opens with three vignettes under the headings 'waiting', 'narrating', and 'containing', which describe different aspects of the asylum-seeking process in Turkey. These examples are cited in an effort to highlight two main points throughout. First, protracted uncertainty, associated in particular with indefinite waiting, imperfect knowledge, and the volatility of legal status, is a defining element of the experience of being an asylum seeker in Turkey. The detailed legal and institutional mechanisms set in place to classify refugee status, combined with the restrictive asylum policies of the Turkish state justified by security concerns, situate asylum seekers in a highly ambiguous predicament. Second,

the uncertainty that invades asylum seekers' everyday lives in Turkey has a powerful governing effect, serving to contain, demobilize, and criminalize them through the production and normalization of uncertainty. In view of these two points, the analysis aims to engage with the conceptual question of how to theorize the relation between uncertainty and governmentality in studies on displacement and its aftermath.

This article is the product of numerous independent and commissioned research projects examining the situation of migrants and refugees in Turkey.[5] It is also based on experiences of working with two different refugee-related civil society organizations located in Istanbul: the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (HCA), which has a refugee advocacy and support program that provides free legal aid and psychosocial support to asylum seekers in Turkey, and the International Migration Catholic Commission (ICMC), which operates as the overseas processing entity for the US government by assisting in the organization of resettling refugees from Turkey to the United States. Accordingly, the information presented in this article derives from the use of mixed methods over an extended period, including primarily expert interviews, in-depth interviews and survey studies with refugees, and participant observation within institutional settings. These activities were all realized in the period from April 2006 to January 2010.

Waiting

In order to start an asylum application with the UNHCR in Turkey, all asylum seekers must undergo a procedure called 'refugee status determination' (RSD). This system entails various steps, usually beginning with pre-registration. This is followed by a registration appointment when the applicant is questioned about basic background information and is informed about the Turkish government's requirements on temporary asylum that must be fulfilled in order to process the application with the UNHCR. In the meantime, the applicant is also given a date for the asylum interview, during which a UNHCR eligibility officer questions the individual in great detail about the subjective reasons for fleeing his or her country of origin. If, after a review, the person is recognized as a refugee, the case is transferred to the durable solutions unit where the third country resettlement procedures are initiated. If the case is rejected, the applicant can make an appeal and request a second interview. But if it is rejected after the second interview, the case is closed. Once it has been closed, reopening the case depends on the availability of new evidence or new developments pertaining to the application.

One of the main aspects of this multi-leveled application procedure that creates the deepest uncertainties for asylum seekers in Turkey is the indefinite and unpredictable process of waiting (cf. Brun, this issue), which is aggravated by minimal provision of information. With RSD, the waiting period between each procedural step is extremely variable, ranging from several months up to a year or more, depending especially on the claimant's national background,

the amount of active caseloads at the UNHCR, and the availability of resources, staff, and interpreters in different languages. In most cases, asylum seekers do not know how long it will take for decisions to be made and have few means to inquire about detailed reasons for delays, often being told that this is how it is and that they simply have to be patient. Hence, the temporal uncertainty that asylum seekers experience as a result of a procedural set-up—emerging in the form of imperfect knowledge about *facta* and a sense of highly unpredictable *futura* (see the introduction to this issue)—is presented to them as a 'normal' aspect of displacement that they must cope with and get used to.

Ali is a refugee from Mauritania, where he was persecuted for his political activism against the state. He arrived in Turkey in 2005 and immediately applied for asylum, although three years later he was still waiting for a decision on his case. His comments about this process of waiting are reflective of the disbelief that many refugees express when discovering that anyone arriving in Turkey, a refugee in particular, is expected to cope with such uncertainty pertaining to one's status for so long, especially in a context of minimal access to information.

> I can understand those who give up and decide to leave, because you make your application and start waiting, you call once in a while to check if there are any decisions. There isn't, and they tell you nothing. You don't even know what you are waiting for, and they don't tell you either what it is about. I know people who made their applications in 2000 here in Istanbul. We are in 2008, and they are still waiting, there is still no answer. When I was going back and forth to the UNHCR in Ankara for my application, there were people waiting there, yelling, "We have been waiting here for five years, you had better forget about it!" But I would reply, "Everyone has their special case, it must be different from case to case." Yet here I am, after so many years.

Not knowing when to expect a decision can create tremendous emotional and psychological distress in asylum seekers (cf. El-Shaarawi, this issue). For Karim and Leila, a refugee couple from Iran who were persecuted for their artwork, the psychology of having to wait in Turkey indefinitely for a decision on their case was becoming comparable to their experiences of persecution in Iran. Leila explained that "spiritually it is worse than Iran. We have no rights here; we are useless, not human. We have forgotten our humanity here. I don't know myself here anymore. If they told us, 'You must wait one year or two years,' we would be OK. But the uncertainty, the fear of being rejected is tormenting. Every Monday my husband tries calling the UNHCR. But there is only one phone line, and it is open only between two and five o'clock. We thought our applications would be processed quickly."

For Maryam, who had fled Iran with her mother and younger brother for fear of persecution after their conversion to Christianity, life could have been different in Turkey if she and her family had known how long they would end up waiting: "The temporariness, the uncertainty, these are what cause problems. I would have learned the language. I would have worked, made a life here. We thought it was temporary." They also felt tormented by the sight of

other asylum seekers leaving for resettlement as it made them worry whether more waiting might imply a problem in their case. Maryam commented that "all our friends have left, now it is just us. My mother had a nervous break-down, and her whole body is paralyzed," starkly pointing to the embodied consequences that protracted uncertainty can generate.

Even after one succeeds in getting recognized as a refugee, neither the wait-ing nor the temporal and spatial uncertainties end, as the resettlement process entails an independent application. When an asylum seeker is recognized as a refugee following the RSD interview, the person's file is sent to the durable solutions unit of the UNHCR, where he or she undergoes yet another interview to determine eligibility for resettlement. If the person is found eligible, the UNHCR transfers the file to the embassy of the countries that accept resettled refugees from Turkey, mainly, the US, Canada, Australia, and Finland. How-ever, accepting refugees for resettlement is not a legal obligation for these countries, and the conditions that determine an asylum seeker's likelihood of resettlement from Turkey are generally related to factors that are beyond the person's individual case, such as foreign policy concerns.

This matter surfaced vividly in the case of all Iraqi asylum seekers in Tur-key whose files had to be suspended by the UNHCR from 2003 onward, as it was working under the pressure of the US government's suggestion that there would be peace and democracy in Iraq soon after Saddam Hussein was toppled (Danış 2010). It was only in 2007 that the severity of the Iraqi refugee situa-tion came to be recognized, after which the US started a special resettlement program for Iraqi cases. Before coming to Turkey in March 2003, Yussuf and his family, who are Chaldean Christians, lived in Baghdad where he worked as a journalist and advocated for the rights of Christians in Iraq. They left Iraq immediately after the US occupation, as Yussuf started receiving threats regard-ing his alleged collaboration with the Americans because of his English transla-tion services. After fleeing to Turkey and approaching the UNHCR, he received an interview appointment promptly, but it took several years before a definite decision could be made on his case. Despite this long and indefinite waiting, rooted in shifting geopolitical realities, Yussuf's comments highlight what Brun (this issue) describes as 'active waiting', wherein hope that an answer and solution will eventually occur emerges as a form of agency, enabling refugees to carry on with their everyday lives amid protracted uncertainty.

> I had my interview four years and seven months ago. After my interview, I continually called the UNHCR to get an answer, and they would say, "The Iraqi cases are still not decided because we have no permissions, it is a politi-cal issue." They just told us to wait. In this time, I applied to Australia six times for a humanitarian visa, and every time I said maybe I will be approved, maybe I will leave. There was hope. But during this time the quota for Iraqi immigration to Australia was very low, because they thought the conditions in Iraq will improve and that refugees must go back. So they didn't give us the chance to immigrate. But in 2007 they have finally opened the doors and now we have hope again.

Over the past decade, refugees' resettlement prospects have also been impacted by a heightened security climate following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. For example, for the US, which is the country with the largest resettlement quota for refugees in Turkey, counter-terrorism laws and policies have led to the advancement of stringent security checks, such as fingerprinting, name checks, and the 'material support' to terrorists provision,[6] which have become leading criteria in evaluating resettlement cases.

Reza is a refugee from Iran where he was persecuted for being a follower of the Baha'i faith. Like most Iranian Baha'i cases in Turkey, the status determination of Reza and his family was processed quite rapidly, and he had been accepted to resettle in the US under what is called the 'fast-track system'. When I met Reza in January 2007, he had already completed his medical tests and was a student of mine in a three-day cultural orientation class I taught at ICMC, both of which are requirements of the US government during the final stages before resettlement. Reza was a very lively participant in the class, excited about the prospect of the new life awaiting him and his family in the US. But in April 2007, I unexpectedly came across Reza when I attended a training session organized for NGOs on refugee issues in the satellite city of Nevsehir. When Reza approached me, I did not recognize him; it was only later in our conversation that he reminded me that he had taken my class three months earlier. I was somewhat shocked at not having recognized him, as I remembered him being much younger. He said to me that everyone else in the class had already left for America: only he and his family were left behind because something had gone wrong with his security check. I tried inquiring into his situation at the ICMC back in Istanbul, but the staff said that they could not find out why his security check had not cleared as it was classified information. They said he would simply have to wait for clearance.

With no further explanation and, like Maryam, being left behind and seeing many others depart for their resettlement countries, Reza felt practically paralyzed: "We don't know our life. I don't know what to do. Every morning I wake up, I don't know what to do … The UNHCR says the ICMC, the ICMC says the FBI. Will it take a year, a week? At least tell me so I know … My hair got white here." While pointing again to the embodied outcomes of uncertainty as both *facta* and *futura*, Reza's comment also highlights the confusion caused by the great multiplicity of actors that are involved in the asylum procedure in Turkey (including also state authorities, as described in further detail below), which makes it difficult for asylum seekers to understand who is really accountable for their suffering when seeking protection.

Narrating

As described above, not knowing when to expect a decision, combined with limited knowledge over what actually goes into decision-making processes, is nerve-racking for many asylum seekers in Turkey. But in addition to the long process of indefinite waiting, the very nature of the asylum interviews that

determine the fate of an asylum seeker can also breed new uncertainties and anxieties. It is well-accepted that refugees who flee their homes rarely have the opportunity to bring with them documents proving who they are or any other factual proof regarding their persecution. The RSD procedure therefore relies primarily on an applicant's narrative account about reasons for fleeing one's country. This information is, in turn, used to establish whether or not the events described are 'credible' in light of available objective evidence pertaining to the case, and whether or not the person's reasons for fleeing his or her country match the grounds stated in the 1951 Convention.

Undoubtedly, sitting in a room with a stranger—or two, if there is an interpreter—and having to recount traumatic and personal events over several hours can be highly stressful, especially knowing that this will determine your future. Moreover, the institutional settings in which these accounts must be narrated can be problematic. As Turner (1995: 61) notes: "For a person who has faced persecution, violence, and even torture at the hands of officials [in his or her own country], it is inevitably the case that an official request to reveal hitherto deeply guarded secrets will be met with some hesitation." Cultural divides are also known to impact the asylum interview. In their ethnographic study of appeal cases for asylum in the United States, Shuman and Bohmer (2004) argue that proving one has suffered persecution can be a complicated task because narrative representations of trauma and persecution can be variously structured both by local/cultural discourses for talking about trauma, struggle, and displacement and by demands of the legal and bureaucratic cultures of the local offices handling asylum applications. Thus, the applicant and the assessor can have different expectations over what experiences are relevant and how they should be recounted. As Shuman and Bohmer note: "Driven by a desire to present themselves as credible, some claimants emphasize loyalty to their homelands rather than fear of return, and others draw upon memories of a time when life itself was more coherent. For some applicants, describing oneself as a victim of persecution is incompatible with recovering a sense of dignity or personal integrity following a trauma" (ibid.: 406).

Yet the asylum system is increasingly being shaped by an agenda of establishing the certainty and authenticity of asylum claims. As a consequence, these nuanced differences in representing persecution and trauma often result in labeling the claimant as 'non-credible', the foremost reason for rejecting asylum cases in many different countries (Kagan 2002). In other words, during asylum interviews there is little room for recognizing that migration biographies and 'true' stories of a lifetime are uneven, multi-directional, full of conflicts and contradictions, and hence difficult to sort out and make credible (Hess 2012; Norman 2006).

Moreover, the testimony recorded during the RSD interview involves a component of judgment on the part of the eligibility officer who, for fear of deception, repeatedly asks many questions about dates and minor details in order to establish the coherence and consistency of the applicant's story, both within itself and in relation to common knowledge or generally known facts about the situation in the country of origin. To some applicants, the nature of the

questioning in the interviews therefore feels more like a criminal investigation. In Ali's account of the reception conditions of the UNHCR office in Ankara where the RSD interviews take place, his emphasis on coldness seems to apply not only to the weather but also to the strict bureaucratic atmosphere of the institution: "When you arrive in Ankara you have already traveled a whole night on the bus. Regardless of whether it is summer or winter, snow or rain, you arrive there at five in the morning and wait until the doors are opened. People pass in front of you, the UNHCR people, and not one person comes to you and says, 'Come, sit inside.' We sleep, wait for hours in that cold, and they just walk by."

Ali further explains his negative experience of being interviewed by a UNHCR officer (cf. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly 2007), who rejected Ali's case after the first interview on the grounds that he was non-credible:

> He had a very aggressive style. He did not respect my rights. He did not even give me permission to go to the toilet or take a break when I requested it. He did not believe the things I told him. This really upset me. He was answering me always in a critical way. I am the one sitting there, telling him about my problems, but he did not believe me and kept questioning whether I was being truthful. It took me about two to three days after the interview to get over it. I kept thinking of him. I was really mad at him.

This example is not meant to suggest that asylum interviews are by nature insensitive or hostile, as there are several technical matters that can complicate the RSD interviews. For example, eligibility officers are often overworked with heavy caseloads, and they are required to conduct the interview and write up detailed transcripts at the same time, which can hamper the overall quality of the interview. Having to work with translators can also lead to miscommunications. For instance, there might be a difference of dialect, or the claimant might feel insecure about sharing personal information with a fellow compatriot.

Nevertheless, when an authority, such as the UNHCR, doubts a claimant's description of his or her experiences, categorizing it as 'inconsistent', 'incoherent', or 'not plausible', this disbelief may generate further emotional and psychological distress in the asylum seeker. And in many cases it is at this point that applicants are made aware of the contradiction between considering themselves to be refugees and having to prove it. This is reflected in the words of Amer, a Darfurian refugee who has been living in Istanbul since 2004 and was found non-credible after his first interview: "Really, sometimes I feel like those people don't have minds. Why would I lie to them? If I had a possibility to live in Sudan, I would not come here to lie. But I don't know. There is something wrong. From my side, I swear every word I told them is true. I can guarantee that. And I can tell them that if they want and if they can guarantee my life, I will take them to Sudan and show them all the places I have been … I was really surprised when I learned about the decision."

As expressed through Amer's words, the uncertainty of being an asylum seeker in Turkey is aggravated by a bureaucratic system that continually puts to test one's narrative expression of displacement experiences in an attempt to uncover the 'true' story. In the Turkish case, this is not limited to the RSD

interview with the UNHCR, because a claimant is required to recount his or her story several times and under very different institutional settings. One peculiar facet of Turkish asylum policy is the so-called parallel track procedure (Zieck 2010). According to the Turkish regulations on asylum passed in 1994, all non-European refugees who arrive in Turkey and apply to the UNHCR with a view toward being resettled in a third country are also required to file a separate 'temporary asylum' application with the Turkish authorities, that is, with the Department of Foreigners, Borders and Asylum under the MOI.[7] Thus, an asylum seeker in Turkey is required to undergo an RSD interview twice, once with the UNHCR and once with the MOI. This procedure is essentially a means to double-check an asylum seeker's claim, as the MOI's examination criteria are exactly the same as those of the UNHCR, being based on the 1951 Convention. Generally, the vast majority of the MOI's decisions mirror those made by the UNHCR. However, since 2000 more cases have been disputed—a fact that is associated with the government's concerns over growing numbers of asylum seekers entering the country. This has resulted in the involvement of a new actor, the European Court of Human Rights, in overseeing some of the disputed decisions on refugee cases in Turkey (ibid.; see also Amnesty International 2009).

As discussed earlier, given that third country resettlement remains one of the main durable solutions for asylum seekers in Turkey due to the geographical limitation clause of the 1951 Convention, resettlement country authorities are yet another key actor to whom asylum seekers are required to provide credible accounts about their 'true refugeeness'. These authorities might also have different and/or additional criteria for evaluating cases that the claimants must take into consideration in order to enhance the likelihood that their application will succeed. Therefore, as Biner (2009: 31) rightly points out, "the applicant once again finds him or herself in the position of an in/eligible subject and often tries to rearrange his or her personal and professional profile to suit those of the proposed resettlement countries." And it is not just when dealing with decision-making authorities that asylum seekers face the continuous task of remolding their narratives of forced displacement. Even well-intended community services such as legal aid and mental health counseling are generally shaped by the underlying purpose of assisting asylum seekers in transforming their experiential accounts about their displacement and suffering into a language that is legible to dominant Western legal and medical discourses, for instance, by recounting life events as a chronologically coherent whole or describing anxieties about protracted uncertainty as post-traumatic stress disorder (Biehl 2008: 59–62; cf. Norman 2006).

Containing

Over the last two decades, migration and asylum are increasingly being shaped by a security paradigm (Collyer 2006; Huysmans 2006; Nadig 2002), as opposed to the framework of human rights, which formed the basis of the 1951 Convention. In other words, in the advanced economies of the world in particular,

immigration and refugee flows are progressively being viewed as a security threat to national welfare systems, cultural and national identities, and domestic peace and stability, which in turn has been used to justify fortified border policing measures, restrictive immigration legislation, and the narrowing of state obligations toward refugees. This 'securitization approach' can clearly be traced in the development of immigration and asylum policies in Turkey from the 1990s onward, wherein new strategies are continually being deployed to sort out and control the movement of refugees in the country (Biehl 2009). Since the mid-2000s in particular, Turkey has also been cooperating extensively with the EU on issues of migration management, setting into motion the gradual 'Europeanization' of national immigration and asylum policies and border regime practices, which goes in tandem with securitization (Düvell 2012; Faist and Ette 2007; Hess 2012; Özçürümez and Şenses 2011).

One of the main facets of this securitization approach that creates uncertainty for asylum seekers in Turkey is the system of dispersal and the accompanying administrative prescripts imposed on everyday life that heavily condition patterns of settlement and mobility (cf. Biner 2012). A primary legal obligation of all asylum seekers, and the condition on which they can have access to other rights, is that for the entire duration of their stay they must reside in places designated by the MOI. These places are officially referred to as satellite cities, and there are currently over 50 of them, most of which are provincial cities located in the interior regions of the country.[8] The number of satellite cities and their particular locations (preferably far from the Mediterranean coast and European borders) reflect a clear attempt on the part of Turkish authorities to ensure that the asylum seeker population is manageable and can be controlled. As a result of this policy, asylum seekers in Turkey are barred from living in major metropolitan cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, which offer asylum seekers a better chance to survive through the not-so-temporary process of refugee recognition and resettlement due to widespread informal employment opportunities, as well as access to established migrant communities and other social support networks.

Besides the location and scale of satellite cities, the practices developed by authorities to regulate the everyday lives of asylum seekers in these cities are also reflective of the state's securitization approach (Biehl 2009). In a satellite city, asylum seekers must regularly register their signature at the local police office and must apply to the police for permission each time they wish to leave the city, even if only briefly. But there are great variations in practices between the different cities. For instance, with regard to the signature, the requirement can range from every day to once a week or twice a month, depending on the discretion of the police. While in their satellite cities, asylum seekers are permitted to request a residence permit. Yet in reality very few succeed in obtaining one, primarily because of permit costs, which are charged at the same rate as for any other foreigner. In most cases, the satellite city police do not force asylum seekers to acquire a residence permit, but this does not mean that they are excused for failing to obtain the proper documentation. If an asylum seeker finds the means to obtain a residence permit, on top of the expected costs, he

or she must pay an additional fine that corresponds to the length of time spent in Turkey without a permit, which can reach exorbitant amounts. And for those who succeed in gaining refugee recognition and resettlement, the failure to pay accumulated residency fees can result in Turkish authorities not granting them an exit permit to leave the country (USCRI 2009).

I witnessed how this issue became of particular concern when the US resettlement program for Iraqi refugees was initiated in 2007. As explained above, all Iraqi applications to the UNHCR were stalled between 2003 and 2007. Without any prospect of resettling, most Iraqi refugees in Turkey did not go to their satellite cities, where they are required by law to register and reside; instead, they continued to live undocumented in Istanbul (Danış 2010: 28–29). But when the door for resettlement was finally opened, large families in particular were confronted with immense fines reaching several thousands of dollars. Despite the diplomatic efforts of international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UNHCR to convince the government to waive the fees, Turkish authorities were unrelenting, seeing this as an opportunity to reinforce the state's sovereign power to contain the movement of refugees in the country. Under these circumstances, many Iraqi refugees had to turn to their friends and relatives abroad for sizable money loans, which created a new burden of uncertainty even on the hopeful eve of their departure to their resettlement country. The issue of the exit permit continues to impact asylum seekers of all nationalities (Amnesty International 2009), and in many ways it has come to represent the way in which Turkish authorities measure the degree to which asylum seekers adhere to their demands (Biner 2009: 32).

Mohammed is a young Somali refugee who arrived in Turkey in 2004. His case was recognized in about a year, but it took nearly two years before he was accepted for resettlement, as he was first rejected by Finland, the US, and Australia before Canada accepted him. During this time, he was assigned to Mersin as his satellite city, where he endured great difficulty in finding housing and food to survive. In fact, he was initially held in detention for 20 days when he approached the police to register and said that he had no money for a place to stay, let alone for a residence permit. When he received his resettlement acceptance in 2007, his relief was short-lived. Rather, he was shocked when, on top of the hardship he had already endured, the Mersin police told him that he had to pay a $2,750 fine to get an exit permit to go to Canada. In an interview, Mohammed expressed his disappointment: "To get this kind of money to leave the country seems like punishment—like the kind of punishment I suffered in my own country … The amount of money they are asking from me is very difficult. I feel sleepless at night. I sometimes lose control of myself. I can't count on myself. I talk to myself all the time, when I didn't use to do that."

With or without a residence permit, asylum seekers' chances for daily survival in satellite cities are severely hampered by the general expectation of the Turkish state that they must cover their own accommodations, health care, and other costs. There is a prevailing sense among the higher-ranking state authorities in Ankara that, given Turkey's reservation on the geographical clause, they have no obligation to provide assistance to non-European refugees and that the

UNHCR, the EU, and NGOs should 'share the burden' (Kirişçi 2004; Tokuzlu 2010). At the local level, both the authorities and the general population are rarely informed, let alone consulted, about being designated a satellite city. Hence, there is little awareness about who refugees are, why they have been made to live in their city, and why they require assistance, which in some cases can cause local resentment. Moreover, at the time this research was carried out, which was prior to the adoption of Turkey's first comprehensive immigration and asylum law in April 2013, the rights of asylum seekers and foreigners more generally were being addressed through a range of secondary legislation filled with vague provisions giving authorities extensive discretion (Amnesty International 2009; Tokuzlu 2007).[9] Overall, there appears to be significant—and perhaps purposefully created—confusion over who is responsible for the well-being of asylum seekers in Turkey. As a result, asylum seekers are often seriously misguided about where to turn for help.

Two refugees succinctly summarized this situation. Nebayat is a refugee from Eritrea and was living in the satellite city of Isparta when I spoke with her in June 2007: "The day of registration they asked me for money for my residence permit. I told them I couldn't pay, they said, 'Ok, you don't have to have the permit.' But now because of this I cannot go to the hospital. When I got very sick, I asked the police to give me a letter for the hospital; they sent me to the governor. I went to the governor, they gave me a form to fill, then I went to the neighborhood official, but he said 'I can't sign it. You need a letter from the police.' But the police then said, 'We can't give you a letter as you don't have a permit.'" Kevan, who is a refugee from Iran and was living in the provincial town of Bilecik at the time of our interview in June 2007, shared a very similar experience: "When you have a health problem, you call the UNHCR, which tells you to go to the police for getting a letter for the Social Assistance Fund. But when you go to police, they say, 'Why should we give you a letter, that is not our responsibility?' And when we go to the Social Assistance Fund they say, 'Someone should send us a letter.' You tell me, what am I supposed to do?"

In this sense, the multiplicity of actors and of regulations, which are often implemented in different satellite cities in an atmosphere of minimum information and highly discretionary practice, serves to create an additional web of structural ambiguities and uncertainties that asylum seekers in Turkey are forced to cope with during their not-so-temporary stay in the country. From another angle, this legal quandary in the space of satellite cities also supports conceptualizations of asylum seekers as inhabiting 'zones of exception', where the state creates a sense of living on the border even within places located at great distance from the actual physical boundaries of the nation-state (Darling 2011; Dikeç 2009; Yıldız 2012).

Concluding Remarks

Research on refugee protection regimes and refugee subjectivities has been conceptualized as a highly productive space for analyzing the workings of

Foucault's accounts on governmentality and biopolitics (Darling 2011; Dikeç 2009; Gill 2010; Lippert 1999; Muller 2004; Nadig 2002; Sıcakkan 2004; Soğuk 1999). This article follows a similar approach by examining the notion of uncertainty from this theoretical standpoint. As reflected in the three vignettes, protracted uncertainty, in both its temporal and spatial dimensions, surfaces as a defining aspect of the asylum regime in Turkey, playing a central role in governing the everyday lives and future orientations of refugees entering this system. It can be likened to what Darling (2011: 264) describes as a "politics of discomfort" that deliberately rules out feelings of security by effectively positioning asylum seekers "as those forever at the border." In the Turkish case, the disciplinary mechanisms of these politics take variable forms, such as indefinite waiting, continuous and judgmental inquisitions, unpredictability of status, restriction of movement, illegibility of accountable actors, and the ambiguity of laws.

The subjective consequences of this mode of governing through uncertainty and discomfort are also variable. For some asylum seekers living in Turkey, and more particularly in satellite cities, it produces an experience of continuous waiting and living life as temporarily paused or frozen, which is often compared to a sense of paralysis. As Brun (this issue) rightly argues, even when living in such limbo, there is 'agency in waiting', wherein, despite boredom and anxiety, feelings of hope and anticipation surface, allowing one to carry on with the present without giving up on the future. Most asylum claimants in Turkey wait actively, pursuing every possible channel, including legal aid, to obtain more information and improve their chances of success. Some even turn to political mobilization when the extent of waiting and uncertainty is seen to have become unacceptable.[10] However, it is also important to acknowledge the fine-grained governmentality of hope that is created and re-created at every step of the asylum procedure, with resettlement being ever so close, like the carrot on a stick. This not only limits views toward other options and certainties in life, but disciplines the individuals to uphold and live by the subjectivity of proper 'refugeeness' (Biehl 2008).

In other cases when the protracted uncertainty of the asylum procedure becomes unbearable, some asylum seekers find themselves in the position of having to 'choose' between politically defined categorical existences, that is, whether to live as a 'genuine refugee' or as an 'illegal economic migrant' (cf. De Genova 2002; Lynn and Lea 2003). Making such a choice can also be seen as a form of agency, whereby people who feel stuck and passive in the present moment decide to pursue an alternative future, possibly in both a temporal and spatial sense. But it can also be seen as a form of choice between differing governmentalities of uncertainty. For example, given the heavy costs associated with being an asylum seeker in Turkey, in terms of both time and finance, many become impelled to invest their money in smuggling as a means to cross into Europe. This strategy, however, is fraught with many dangers, as reported by numerous human rights organizations (Amnesty International 2009; Human Rights Watch 2008; Jesuit Refugee Service 2011). Even living and working outside one's designated satellite city can jeopardize the asylum application of a claimant in the eyes of the Turkish authorities. In either case, asylum seekers face the risk

of being identified as an illegal migrant in Turkey, which can lead to police brutality, arrest, detention, denial of access to Turkish asylum procedures, and deportation (Helsinki Citizens' Assembly 2008). In this sense, uncertainty can be seen as a force that governs individual behavior, mobility, and/or settlement practices in asylum contexts through fear and discourses of criminality (Story 2005).

This article does not suggest that the experience of uncertainty is universal for all asylum seekers in Turkey or around the world more generally. Experiences of and responses to uncertainty are impacted by variable factors, such as ethnicity, class, religion, gender, generation, sexuality, the nature of forced displacement, conditions of settlement, prior experiences of uncertainty in another society, previous knowledge about and shared cultural/social capital with host society, and variations in asylum policies by particular group, as well as the current stage of the asylum application process (Biner 2009; Grabska and Fanjoy, this issue). One could also add to this the importance of transnationalism and migration cultures to escape despair and enable survival during processes of indefinite waiting for refugee resettlement (Horst 2006). Yet despite such nuanced differences, the increasing focus on uncertainty as a constitutive element of refugee experiences in general, as evidenced by the publication of this special issue, calls for a more critical engagement with the power effects subsumed within such an emphasis. This article aims to serve as such a cautionary reminder of the governmentalities that not only discipline everyday movement and activity but also determine how the uncertainty of being a refugee is framed and made sense of.

Scholars have rightly criticized the institutional and discursive mechanisms that produce a universalized refugeeness associated with trauma, loss, rootlessness, homelessness, and statelessness, which in turn can serve to depoliticize and decontextualize the processes that lead to forced displacement in the first place (Malkki 1992, 1996; Soğuk 1999). Uncertainty must also be seen through the same lens. Whether looking at RSD and resettlement application procedures or national policies pertaining to the reception of asylum seekers, each exposes how the fluidity of social reality is denied in policies of classification that create and maintain refugees (Malkki 1992, 1996; Norman 2006). Moreover, such mechanisms lead to the production of further uncertainty, which is then normalized by authorities as a necessary outcome of bureaucratic procedures and/or security concerns. And in such contexts, not just for decision makers but for asylum seekers too, the uncertainty of events and relations that led to displacement and migration in the first place becomes increasingly reduced to an 'apt illustration' (Norman 2006) of an asylum seeker's flight, while certainty becomes molded into tangible results, such as achieving refugee status, obtaining residence permits, reaching a resettlement country, and the like. In this sense, it can be concluded that order-making mechanisms, including the asylum and border regimes discussed in this article, not only produce uncertainties but also serve the role of determining which uncertainties are allowed to have experiential and practical relevance.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. The other states are Monaco, Madagascar, and Congo (Hathaway 2005: 97).
2. It should be noted that this category does not include Syrian refugees who began to seek protection in Turkey in ever-increasing numbers after March 2011. It is estimated that today there are over 1.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey. See http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php (accessed 27 October 2014). Different from the other non-European refugees in Turkey who receive the status of 'temporary asylum seekers' for the duration of their stay and whose cases are handled and decided primarily by the UNHCR, Syrian refugees are being received under a separate, temporary protection regime instigated by the Turkish government in response to the Syrian crisis. In these cases, the role of the UNHCR is limited to technical and material assistance. The 'temporary protection' status, preceded by the even more dubious 'guest' status, is equally problematic in terms of the uncertain existence it implies for Syrian refugees trapped indefinitely in Turkey (Özden 2013), but it is not the subject of this article.
3. Nationality, age, and gender aggregated figures for Turkey can be found at the UNHCR's website: http://www.unhcr.org.tr/?lang = en&page = 12 (accessed 27 October 2014).
4. Theoretically, persons of European origin seeking refugee status in Turkey are also asylum seekers. But as suggested by available figures, the de facto reality is that almost

all asylum seekers in Turkey are of non-European origin. Therefore, in this article the term 'asylum seeker' is used as an abbreviation for 'non-European asylum seeker'.

5. This article is primarily based on research at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul for my Masters thesis, titled "Governing through Uncertainty: 'Refugeeness' in Turkey" (2008). Other research activities that I carried out with some relevance to this article include the following projects: "Migrant Cities Research: Istanbul," 2008, and "Managing International Urban Migration: Turkey, Italy and Spain," 2008–2009, both directed by the Migration Research Center at Koç University, and "Mixed Migration Flows: Somali and Ethiopian Migration to Yemen and Turkey," 2009, run by the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo. In my work for the Refugee Advocacy and Support Program in Istanbul, I was also involved in different research projects examining conditions of foreigner detention centers, satellite cities, and unaccompanied minor refugees across Turkey.

6. Material support to terrorists is defined under Title 18 of the U.S. Code as providing "any property, tangible or intangible, or service, including currency or monetary instruments or financial securities, financial services, lodging, training, expert advice or assistance, safe houses, false documentation or identification, communications equipment, facilities, weapons, lethal substances, explosives, personnel … and transportation, except medicine or religious materials" to terrorist organizations (see http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2339A). There have been many critiques about the very broad application of this clause and its consequences for refugee resettlement to the US. See, for example, http://www.rcusa.org/index.php?page = material-support-issue (accessed 27 October 2014).

7. As of 2014, the newly founded Directorate General of Migration Management has taken on this role. See also note 9.

8. For an overview of the practice of satellite cities in Turkey as described by the UNHCR, see http://www.unhcr.org/50a607639.pdf (accessed 27 October 2014).

9. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Law No. 6458), adopted on 4 April 2013 by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, sets a comprehensive framework for protecting the rights of all asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey in line with international standards. It is to be overseen by the newly established Directorate General of Migration Management under the MOI, which became fully operational in April 2014. While this signifies an important foundational step toward the improvement of rights and conditions for asylum seekers in Turkey in a coherent and consistent fashion, it is still too early to assess its actual impact. However, spatial and temporal uncertainty as described in this article is likely to remain a prevailing feature in the lives of asylum seekers in Turkey since the geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention is still maintained in the new law. For an overview and discussion of this law, see Açıkgöz and Arıner (2014) and Soykan (2012).

10. During the spring of 2014, Afghan refugees in Turkey undertook 53 days of protest in front of the UNHCR headquarters in Ankara to demand equal and fair treatment in their asylum application procedures: a number of protesters engaged in hunger strikes by sewing their mouths shut (Özçer 2014). See also "Afghan Refugees Suspend Ankara Sit-In after 53 Days, Urge UNHCR to Meet Demands," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 8 June, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/afghan-refugees-suspend-ankara-sit-in-after-53-days-urge-unhcr-to-meet-demands.aspx?pageID = 238&nID = 67541&NewsCatID = 339 (accessed 27 October 2014).

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