
The Syrian Refugees and Temporary Protection Regime in Turkey: A Spatial Fix for Turkish Capital

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Résumé

Considering their long-term stay in Turkey without a refugee or citizenship status and their incorporation into the Turkish informal labor market extensively, the Syrian refugees need to be examined not only as refugees but also as displaced temporary migrant workers. Such a shift in the discussions would help us to investigate how the Syrian refugees functioned for the Turkish capital as the tools of a "spatial fix" necessary for overcoming the domestic limits to profit maximization and capital accumulation. David Harvey's concept of spatial fix is utilized by a few migration scholars such as Adam Hanieh who treated the temporary foreign migrant workers as a means to overcome potential "domestic" barriers to capital accumulation. In the case of Syrian refugees, spatial fix operates through valuing the labor of the Syrians not according to the socially necessary labor time to reproduce the labor power of a Turkish national but to an image of a war exile that needs and be content with mere survival in a foreign country. This helps the Turkish capital to utilize the war conditions in the Syrian soil as a means of going beyond the spatial boundaries of Turkey, i.e., as a means of circumventing the "conventional, historically negotiated minimum" (Bryan, 1997: 440) conditions of the reproduction of labor power in Turkey and of minimizing the value of labor and wages. This spatial fix also helps the Turkish capital to further entrench its control and discipline over the labor force in general.

Such a spatial shift could be possible by the Turkish state's temporary protection regime. The temporary protection law requires Syrian refugees to register with Turkish authorities, a procedure that gives access to free state-funded social services (including education, medical, and social assistance) in their place of registration only. Prior to January 2016, the temporary protection status of Syrians did not include a work permit. Only Syrians who had resident permits were granted the right to work, which represented a handful of early arrivals belonging to the wealthy upper classes. The 2016 regulation requires employers to apply for the work permit of the individual Syrians that they want to employ, to prove that there is no Turkish citizen to fill the job, and to ensure that no more than 10 per cent of their employees in any given workplace are Syrian. The terms and conditions of temporary protection regime deprive the Syrians of citizenship status and curb their power to use the legal and political channels to raise and organize their demands as per their idiosyncratically drastic conditions in the labor processes.. The temporary protection regime also contributes to this spatial fix by designating strict and unpractical rules for the formal employment of the Syrians with social insurance. Under such circumstances, the rights granted by temporary protection becomes also functional in the reproduction of a non-national labor force, by means of which Turkish capital transcends the spatial limits to accumulation. Based on

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our interviews with both Turkish employers, Turkish and Syrian workers as a part of an ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Izmir between 2016 and 2018 we will show in this paper the temporary protection regime in Turkey constitutes as yet another example of "spatial fix" through the employment of displaced temporary migrant workers.

Mots-Clés: Syrian refugees, Turkey, reproduction, labour, capital, state