

Explaining Variation in Local Immigrant Policies in Turkey: Actions, Actors and Transformation

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Abstract

This dissertation investigated the factors shaping municipal responses to immigration in Turkey, revealing the interplay of political, structural, and relational dynamics. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative methods, it analyzes how municipalities have navigated their roles in an evolving and often ambiguous policy landscape. By mapping municipal actions over an eleven-year period, this research identifies variations in policy approaches – ranging from integrationist and rights-based strategies to isolationist and humanitarian measures – and explores the determinants of these divergences. Key drivers include political conditions such as partisanship, incumbency, and electoral competition, as well as socioeconomic development, cooperation with third parties, and the role of municipal mayors as policy entrepreneurs. The findings challenge the prevailing perception of local governments as mere implementers of national directives, demonstrating their agency in shaping immigration policies despite administrative and financial constraints. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by developing a typology of municipal immigration policies and constructing a unique dataset on municipal actions, filling a critical gap in migration and local governance research. The dissertation also underscores the significance of temporal dynamics, showing that municipal approaches evolve over time, increasingly converging toward pragmatic policy adaptations. In addition to its theoretical contributions, this research offers practical insights for policymakers, emphasizing the need for enhanced municipal capacity, collaboration, and integration strategies. While recognizing its limitations, including data constraints and the underexplored role of immigrant agency, the study paves the way for future research on local immigration governance in Turkey and beyond.

I, the undersigned Mustafa Utku Güngör hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

Date: January 31, 2025

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DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) was used in this work. I, the author, have reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content, claims, and references.

An overview of the use of GenAI is provided below.

- I used [Gemini](#) to edit language mistakes in the dissertation. The tool was used to provide language edit suggestions. The AI tool was instructed not to change the text, add any extra text or generate a grammatically correct version of the text. I asked only to provide grammatical and language suggestions in the chat for the grammatical and language mistakes to be corrected manually by me. The AI tool was not used for any other content related task.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
Municipalities in Turkey and Immigration.....	5
The Problem, the Argument	8
Outline of the Dissertation	11
Chapter 2 - Literature Review	13
Challenging Methodological Nationalism	14
Local Turn in Immigration Studies	16
Local Immigrant Policy	19
Local Immigrant Policy Variation.....	25
Developing an Immigrant Policy Typology	42
Conclusion.....	46
Chapter 3 - Decentralization-Centralization Pendulum: Who runs migration in Turkey?	48
Introduction	48
Transformation of the local-central relations in the Ottoman Empire	51
Modernization of Local Administration in Turkey	55
Local Administration under the Republic	58
Decentralization – Centralization under AKP Governments (2003 -)	62
Migration management during the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey	67
The Immigration Flows during the Republican Period	72
Chapter 4 - Methodology.....	77
Introduction	77
Research Design.....	78
Applying the Mixed Method Case Study Research Design	83
Data Collection	85
1- Collecting Municipal Actions and Formation of the Dataset	85
2- Collecting External Data Sources	94
Intermezzo – Case Selection Procedure	95
3- Qualitative Data Collection about Two Selected Cases	101
Limitations	104
Chapter 5 - The Dataset.....	108
Chapter 6 - Municipal Focus in Immigration: Problem Areas in Local Immigration Response	122
Problem Areas	127
Chapter 7: Variation in Municipal Actions: Drivers of Variation	137
Introduction	137
Data Collection	140

Data Collection.....	141
Search Protocol.....	142
Recording and Coding Raw Data	143
Towards a Typology of Local Immigrant Policy in Turkey	145
Four Types of Actions	147
Impact of Local Factors	154
Variables & Hypotheses	156
DVs	157
IVs	158
Hypotheses.....	166
Two-Part Model Test Results	169
Conclusion & Discussion	197
<i>Chapter 8: Municipal Responses to Syrian Immigration in Istanbul and Izmir</i>	<i>204</i>
Introduction	204
Case Selection Procedure	205
District Level.....	215
Caveats of the Case Selection Procedure	217
Fieldwork.....	219
Contextual Background	220
Municipal Responses to Syrian Immigration	222
Istanbul.....	222
Izmir.....	230
Findings from the Fieldwork	237
1- Mayors as Policy Entrepreneurs	237
2- Information as a policy change trigger	249
Municipal Capacity's Role in Action Preference	252
Conclusion.....	258
<i>Chapter 9 - Conclusion</i>	<i>261</i>
Key Findings	261
Patterns of Municipal Activity.....	262
Factors Driving Variation.....	262
Theoretical Contributions	264
Policy Implications	267

List of Tables

Table 1: Sampled Cities with Immigrant Ratio (PMM, 2021).....	88
Table 2: Factor Loadings based on Exploratory Factor Analysis	124
Table 3: Problem areas and assigned actions based on EFA.....	126
Table 4: Actions Typology	146
Table 5: Allocation of Municipal Actions across Three Periods.....	153
Table 6: Distribution of Political Party Affiliation by Municipalities in the Sample	163
Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables	165
Table 8: Integrationist Actions Test Results.....	171
Table 9: Isolationist Actions Test Results	173
Table 10: Right-Based Actions Test Results	175
Table 11: Humanitarian Actions Test Results	177
Table 12: Panel Regression Results – Municipal Immigration Policy Actions (All Periods Combined).....	181
Table 13: Number of Immigrants in Istanbul, Izmir and Turkey (PMM, 2024).....	221

List of Figures

Figure 1: Creswell and Creswell’s Model for Mixed Method Case Study Design (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 312)	82
Figure 2: Overview of Research Design and Steps	84
Figure 3: Map of Sampled Cities (based on PMM, 2021)	87
Figure 4: Distribution of Municipalities by Legal Status	108
Figure 5 Active and Inactive Municipalities	109
Figure 6: Total number of integrationist and isolationist actions across years	111
Figure 7: Total number of humanitarian and right-based actions across years	112
Figure 8: Part distribution of municipalities in 2011-2014	112
Figure 9: Party distribution of municipalities in 2014-2019	113
Figure 10: Party Distribution of municipalities in 2019-2021	114
Figure 11: Population by City (TUIK, 2023)	115
Figure 12: Average Margin of Winning by City in 2014 and 2019 local elections	116
Figure 13: Focused problem areas across years	117
Figure 14: Model for Types of Actions with Examples	152
Figure 15: Socioeconomic Development Scores of Sampled Localities (STB, 2024)	160
Figure 16: Host-immigrant ratio in sampled cities in 2021	209
Figure 17: Socioeconomic development scores in Istanbul	223
Figure 18: Problem areas that municipalities focus by year in Istanbul	225
Figure 19: Municipal actions in Istanbul between 2011 and 2014 (Period 1)	226
Figure 20: Municipal Actions in Istanbul between 2014 and 2019 (Period 2)	228
Figure 21: Directions of Municipal Actions in Istanbul between 2019 and 2021 (Period 3)	229

Figure 22: Distribution of Mayors' Party Affiliation in Istanbul	230
Figure 23: Winning Political Parties in Izmir and its Districts	231
Figure 24: Socioeconomic Development Score of Districts in Izmir	232
Figure 25: Municipal Actions in Izmir between 2011-2014	233
Figure 26: Municipal Actions in Izmir between 2014-2019	234
Figure 27: Municipal Actions in Izmir between 2019-2021	235
Figure 28: Problem Areas that the municipalities focus across years in Izmir	236

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Immigration goes beyond the mere movement of people across borders. It triggers the transfer of knowledge and culture, transforms economic and social relations, and, at times, alters the course of history. While political and economic systems evolve over time, immigration has consistently remained a politically and socially significant issue. The international refugee movements of the past decade are no exception. Although global attention primarily focused on the mobility of large refugee populations across national borders, most of these refugees, for the first time on such a scale, became urban dwellers. Countries like Turkey found themselves unprepared to host such a substantial population.

Due to developments in its southern and eastern neighbors, Turkey has emerged, as of 2024, as one of the countries hosting the largest population in need of international protection. According to UNHCR (2024), 3.1 million people are under protection in Turkey. Following the protracted civil war in Syria between 2011 and 2024, waves of Syrian asylum seekers fled to neighboring countries. Given the impracticality of establishing traditional refugee camps to accommodate such vast numbers, most asylum seekers settled in urban areas across Turkey.

As Syrians dispersed throughout the country and began integrating into urban life, local authorities adopted varied approaches to managing this new population. Although immigration has long been a reality for cities in Turkey, the rapid influx of such a large population posed unprecedented challenges at all levels of government.

Traditionally, municipalities play a critical role in shaping the quality of life for urban residents. While urban life is influenced by a combination of structural dynamics and key actors, the allocation of local resources – and, ultimately, who receives what services – is determined by

municipal authorities and relevant legal framework. Municipalities are responsible for maintaining infrastructure and developing urban areas, serving as the guardians of a city's infrastructural functionality and the well-being of its residents. Typically, municipalities cater to the established residents of a city. However, the arrival of Syrians from 2011 onward has raised pressing questions about who qualifies as a resident and how services should be provided. For local governments, this represents a new and complex challenge. As a result, Turkey offers a compelling case for examining a range of political and social questions regarding immigration and municipal governance.

This dissertation seeks to address some of these questions at the intersection of local policymaking and immigration. By integrating insights from both bodies of literature and posing relevant questions, this research aims to uncover the factors driving variation among municipalities in their responses to immigration.

Before exploring these questions further, it is important to delve deeper into the connection between immigration and municipalities. Immigration has long been framed as a national or international issue, yet immigrants predominantly reside in cities. The modern expansion of cities and population growth have been closely tied to migration and immigrant mobility (Eriksson & Ward, 2020). Urban areas are particularly attractive to immigrants for various reasons, offering opportunities that align with their pursuit of better lives.

The modern era has witnessed an unprecedented increase in migrant mobility, with the number of international migrants steadily rising worldwide in recent years (IOM, 2024b). Regardless of the type of migration – whether forced or labor – immigrants generally seek improved conditions and opportunities, including economic, political, social, and educational benefits. At its core, migration reflects a fundamental human aspiration for a better life.

However, this movement is far from unrestricted. Nation-states and international organizations are pivotal in shaping the parameters of both international and national mobility. These actors often impose restrictions or introduce incentives, aiming to attract either the most educated and skilled immigrants or the cheapest possible labor force, irrespective of the migrants' reasons for leaving their home countries.

The policies of destination countries – particularly those concerning immigrants and asylum seekers – not only impact the lives of immigrants but also influence social dynamics and interactions between immigrants and host communities. Consequently, much of the academic literature on immigration has been shaped by a methodologically nationalist lens. Many researchers tend to frame immigration as an international phenomenon influenced by and influencing nation-states and nations as a whole (Ahouga, 2017, p. 3). As a result, nation-states or international organizations often become the central units of analysis, while national legal frameworks, histories, policies, and socio-economic indicators are treated as the main variables (Borkert & Caponio, 2010, p. 10).

However, research increasingly highlights the significant role of cities and municipalities as both policymakers and implementers (Doomernik & Jandl, 2008). Sub-national entities frequently enforce and implement centrally formulated immigration policies. Yet, local governments are not limited to the implementation phase; they often develop localized policies, sometimes diverging from national immigration strategies. These policies shape the lives of both immigrants and host communities, either directly or indirectly (Khan-Welsh et al., 2022). Despite their importance, the influence of local conditions and actors has often been overlooked (McCollum & Packwood, 2017a).

While international norms and national policies largely determine the conditions of immigrant accommodation, urban sub-national units – such as towns and cities – serve as the actual sites where immigrants and host communities coexist. Although immigration is a politically salient issue at the national level and can influence voting behavior, daily encounters between immigrants and host communities primarily occur in urban settings. Despite being underexplored until recent decades, local governments of various types and levels have historically played pivotal roles in the reception, accommodation, and integration of immigrants, often with both positive and negative outcomes.

The growing recognition of the significance and complexity of local contexts has led to a "local turn" in immigration studies, starting in the early 2000s. Researchers have increasingly examined how local governments, far from being mere extensions of national governments, take independent initiatives on immigration and adopt strategies tailored to changing conditions (P. Scholten & Penninx, 2016; Spencer & Delvino, 2019). Depending on local needs and socio-political developments, cities may adopt diverse approaches to immigrant policies (Alexander, 2007a; Bazurli & De Graauw, 2023; Caponio & Borkert, 2010b; Williamson, 2018a).

Comparative studies of municipalities – either with one another or with national governments – are a prevalent method in this field of research (Dekker et al., 2015). These comparisons may focus on cities within a single country or span multiple cities across different countries. Additionally, multi-level governance has emerged as a popular framework for analyzing local immigrant policies (Campomori & Ambrosini, 2020; P. Scholten & Penninx, 2016).

Although much of the literature on local policies has centered on North America and Europe, there is growing interest in newly recognized immigration destinations, such as Turkey.

Turkey presents a promising case for examining local immigrant policies at the municipal level. Despite the strong political and administrative oversight exerted by national government over municipalities, municipal immigrant policies in Turkey vary significantly across regions and over time. Municipalities have demonstrated differing approaches from one locality to another and across electoral cycles.

This variability can be attributed to an ambiguous legal framework and the national government's relative inexperience in managing immigration, which have created an environment of unexpected autonomy for municipalities. Consequently, municipalities have been granted a degree of freedom in shaping their immigrant policies.

Municipalities in Turkey and Immigration

This dissertation aims to investigate the sources of variation among municipal immigrant policies. To achieve this, it integrates two strands of academic literature: local policies and policymaking, and migration studies.

Traditionally, immigration literature has approached Turkey primarily as a country of emigration. This perspective stems partly from the significant migration of Turkish workers to European countries, particularly Germany. However, in recent decades, Turkey's role as a destination country has drawn increasing attention. Turkey became a transit country for immigrants attempting to reach Europe (Kirisci, 2007). Despite the conventional designation, a closer look reveals that Turkey has historically been a country of origin, destination, and transit simultaneously.

The outbreak of the Syrian Civil War reshaped population mobility dynamics in the region, particularly impacting Syria's neighbors. Over a short period, Turkey became host to 3.6

million Syrians under temporary protection (IOM, 2024a). Although the number has declined since 2022, approximately 2.8 million Syrians under temporary protection reside in Turkey as of 2024 (PMM, 2024). Most of this population are members of urban life in Turkey. Over the years, the growing immigrant population in Turkey has drawn the attention of various stakeholders. My intellectual interest in this topic dates back to my work at a human rights-focused NGO during the height of refugee mobility around 2015.

Between 2015 and 2016, I coordinated a year-long research project funded by the Swedish Consulate-General in Istanbul on behalf of the NGO. The project sought to understand how civil society organizations were affected by the arrival of Syrians, increasing interest of funding bodies on immigration and the shifting dynamics of immigration in Turkey. Our research focused on CSOs working with and on immigrants in four major cities: Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, and Gaziantep. During the data collection phase, we conducted focus groups and interviews with representatives from these CSOs. Although my primary role in the project was administrative, I participated in data collection alongside the researchers, visiting all four cities and moderating focus group meetings.

During these visits, I observed a notable divergence in municipal responses to the increasing immigrant population. While some municipalities actively formulated strategies to address emerging challenges, others categorically refused to take any action concerning immigrants. This divergence occurred not only between cities but also within individual cities. Municipalities that chose to act displayed varying priorities, addressing different problem areas and cooperating with diverse stakeholders to build capacity and implement solutions. However, many municipalities struggled with resource allocation, often resorting to external funding sources, as the central government provided no direct support for those wishing to respond to

immigration related challenges. Although the project's primary focus was on the state of civil society organizations, my interest gravitated toward understanding why municipalities responded so differently and what this variation signified.

The conclusion of this project coincided with my Ph.D. application process. After beginning my studies at CEU, I decided to delve deeper into how municipalities react to immigration. Much of the existing literature focused on European and North American contexts, particularly how large metropolitan cities like Berlin, Paris, Rome, and New York City responded to immigration. These studies often sought to identify the key determinants of policy divergence among such cities. However, my preliminary research revealed that in Turkey, district municipalities and smaller cities with significant immigrant populations were also taking noteworthy actions.

While Turkey has become a prominent case for studying local government responses to immigration, the majority of existing studies focus on a small number of cases (Betts et al., 2020; Eliçin, 2019; Lowndes & Polat, 2022; Özçürümez & Hoxha, 2023). These studies have succeeded in providing detailed insights into their specific cases. Nevertheless, few studies have attempted to capture local variation as a nationwide phenomenon or systematically investigate the characteristics of this variation in Turkey. An exception is Balcıoğlu's (2021) dissertation, which examines a larger number of cases but limits its focus to municipalities in a single region of Turkey.

This lack of broader studies has created another gap in the literature: the absence of systematic data collection across a large sample of cities and districts. Without such data, it is challenging to identify major trends or track changes over time in these localities. This dissertation aims to address this gap by examining a larger and more diverse set of cases,

offering a comprehensive analysis of the variation in municipal immigrant policies across Turkey.

The Problem, the Argument

This research seeks to answer why municipalities in Turkey respond differently to immigration, focusing on diverse problem areas and adopting varied approaches. Why is it important to address this question? As discussed earlier, the literature acknowledges the significance of local governments and conditions in receiving, accommodating, and integrating immigrants. However, Turkey and its municipalities remain underexplored in this context. While immigration is not a new phenomenon for Turkey's central or local governments, the unprecedented scale of immigration since 2011 has posed unique challenges for both governance levels.

Historically, Turkey's immigration legal framework was designed to regulate the influx of Turkish-Muslim populations throughout the 20th century and manage a smaller population of residence permit holders from various backgrounds. This framework was primarily shaped by international agreements and domestic immigration laws tailored for specific historical contexts. However, the sudden arrival of a large immigrant population, including forcibly displaced individuals, exposed the inadequacy of these laws.

Turkey's geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention complicated matters further. As a result, displaced people from outside Europe could not obtain refugee status in Turkey. Although Turkey adopted an open-door policy for victims of the Syrian Civil War, these individuals were left in a legal limbo because of the geographical limitation. The prolonged conflict forced Turkey to adjust its immigration policies, introducing the temporary protection status to legalize the presence of Syrians without challenging the geographical limitation.

Subsequent legal reforms enabled those under temporary protection to access basic public services and employment.

While the central government addressed legal frameworks and regulations, municipalities were left to navigate their own legal and administrative challenges. One of the key ambiguities was whether municipalities were responsible for providing services to the new arrivals. This legal vagueness unexpectedly granted municipalities autonomy in immigration-related matters, allowing them to decide whether to act and, if so, what kind of services to provide. However, this autonomy came with limited guidance and no additional funding from the central government, leaving municipalities to manage the situation with constrained resources.

The result was a fragmented response across municipalities. Turkey presents a compelling case for examining how local governments define problem areas, take initiatives, and choose directions for action. Given projections of rising forced displacement globally (DRC, 2024, p. 3), understanding the mechanisms behind municipal responses to such challenges is crucial for developing evidence-based policies.

Turkey's experience demonstrates that uniform municipal actions were unlikely under the circumstances. This raises key questions: What drives variation in municipal policies? What conditions enable local governments to adopt divergent approaches to immigration? Do municipalities shift their strategies over time, and if so, why? Why do some municipalities choose to act while others do not?

To answer these questions, this dissertation explores the role of municipalities in developing local immigration policies. It examines trends in municipal actions, the factors driving variation, and the applicability of broader theoretical frameworks to Turkey's case. Focusing on 18 cities across Turkey that host at least 3% of their population under temporary

protection, this research argues that municipal actions are shaped by a complex interplay of factors. These include socio-economic development, population size, incumbency, and party affiliation of mayors, all of which influence whether municipalities act and the directions they pursue.

Time also plays a pivotal role. Initially, municipal actions often reflect ideological motivations. Over time, however, municipalities adopt a more pragmatic approach, with factors like party affiliation diminishing in significance. Socio-economic development and population size remain important, but partisanship becomes less predictive of municipal behavior.

In Turkey, municipalities face limited control over immigration as a policy domain, with their actions largely confined to shaping local push-and-pull dynamics. However, municipal responses evolve over time, influenced by multiple factors: the role of mayors as policy entrepreneurs, the introduction of new information, and institutional capacity.

Some mayors act as policy entrepreneurs, driving significant changes in the frequency and direction of municipal actions despite existing local constraints. These leaders often spearhead innovative approaches to immigration. Additionally, access to new information – such as a better understanding of local immigrant communities or exchanges with third-party organizations like CSOs – can trigger changes in municipal preferences and actions. Finally, institutional capacity plays a crucial role. Municipalities with limited administrative resources often seek cooperation with external stakeholders, which can lead to shifts in how they respond to immigration.

Outline of the Dissertation

Finally, I would like to outline the structure of this dissertation. Chapter 2 maps out the academic literature at the intersection of migration studies and local policy variation. This chapter explores how municipalities have engaged in immigrant reception and integration and, in some cases, challenged these processes. Furthermore, it examines how and why local governments vary in their responses to immigration across different contexts. Additionally, I tried to track the development of the literature at the intersection of migration studies and local policy.

Chapter 3 opens a broader discussion on Turkey's approach to immigration from the late 19th century to the present. It investigates the role of local authorities in immigrant reception over time. By exploring the historical dimensions of migration management in Turkey, this chapter highlights the transformation in immigration policies and the enduring patterns in the relationship between central and local authorities.

Chapter 4 discusses the research methods employed in this dissertation. A mixed-methods design was adopted to address the research questions effectively. This chapter provides a detailed justification for this choice and explains how it addresses the gaps identified in Chapter 2. It also includes an in-depth discussion of data collection and analytical methods. Given that this mixed-methods design includes case studies, the chapter elaborates on the case selection process.

Chapter 5 is devoted to explain the original dataset created for this dissertation. Considering it is a large dataset promising detailed insight on municipalities and their immigration related actions, I explain the dataset and demonstrated general trends in this chapter.

Chapter 6 and 7 are devoted to the original dataset created for this dissertation. As noted earlier, one of the gaps in the literature is the lack of comprehensive datasets that include a large sample of municipalities and their actions. This dissertation addresses this gap by developing an original dataset comprising an inventory of municipal activities related to immigration. To create this inventory, I thoroughly examined 249 municipalities across 18 cities in Turkey.

Chapter 5 focuses on the problem areas that municipalities targeted while responding immigration. Building on municipal activities, a factor analysis helped me to discuss the main problem areas that municipalities focus on between 2011 and 2021. It also examines the role of time in shaping municipal actions and explores how and why municipalities adapt their approaches over time.

Chapter 6 approaches the dataset from another perspective and aims to test several hypotheses to see how structural, relational and political factors affect municipalities and whether they choose to act in a certain way due to these factors. In this chapter each of the factors are tested with each type of action, integrationist, isolationist, right-based and humanitarian, to reveal their relations.

Finally, Chapter 7 delves into findings from two case studies: Istanbul and Izmir. These case studies, integrated into the mixed-methods approach, provide a more detailed analysis of the arguments discussed in Chapter 5. A closer look at these cities reveals the significance of factors such as mayors acting as policy entrepreneurs, access to information, and municipal capacity in shaping municipal responses to immigration.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The aim of this research is to investigate and understand variations among municipalities in Turkey regarding their responses to immigration. Municipalities are becoming increasingly significant as active participants in the formulation and implementation of immigrant policies. While most research on this topic has focused on Western European and North American contexts, countries like Turkey have begun to draw greater scholarly attention.

This dissertation focuses on the intersection of local governments and immigration. To explore how local governments in Turkey respond to immigration and manage immigrant populations, it is essential to review the literature on the roles local governments play in immigration contexts and the conditions under which their responses form and vary.

Over the past two decades, local governments and immigration have become popular research topics. Globalization and relative democratization in recent decades have enabled decentralization, leading to further delegation of power and responsibilities to local governments (Le Galès, 2021). Decentralization in political systems and local governance has been discussed extensively, not only in academic research but also within the discourse of international organizations. Many view the decentralization of authority as a favorable trend for democratization and a “key tool of good governance” (UN-HABITAT, 2009, p. 9).

In the twenty-first century, international migration has emerged as a critical global issue, driven not only by increasing mobility but also by the fact that migration now impacts nearly every region worldwide (Wihtol De Wenden, 2023). The estimated size of the international migrant population has continued to grow over the past five decades (IOM, 2023). As a result, international migration has become a prominent issue affecting various segments of society

globally and has attracted significant research interest. Cities, in particular, have become central spaces of negotiation and policy formulation as they work to integrate immigrant populations. As cities increasingly function as hubs for immigrant settlement – a process that is not entirely new – municipalities have assumed important roles in managing new residents, providing services, and addressing both local and immigrant needs.

Research in fields such as sociology, geography, and political science underscores that cities serve as vital political units and active policy actors (Brenner, 1998; Sassen, 2002). In this chapter, I will explore how local governments engage with immigrant populations and the various ways they respond to immigration. Understanding municipalities' responses requires a closer examination of how immigration-related research began to emphasize the sub-national level. Before delving into this shift, it is essential to address the concept of methodological nationalism, which has historically shaped the field of immigration studies.

Challenging Methodological Nationalism

Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003, p. 302) define *methodological nationalism* as the assumption that nations and nation-states are “the natural social and political form of the modern world.” This perspective treats nation-states and national-level politics as the primary lenses through which to analyze social and political developments. Within immigration studies, this focus often prioritizes factors like ethnic composition, national policies, and broader economic conditions as primary determinants of social outcomes (Çağlar & Schiller, 2018, p. 4). Consequently, methodological nationalism tends to view local governments as passive implementers of national immigration and immigrant policies. However, as this dissertation will explore, local governments often play more active roles than this framework suggests.

From a policy perspective, immigration has long been seen as a matter for nation-states and the international legal order, especially before the "local turn" in migration studies in the 2000s. Methodological nationalism was the dominant approach among scholars and shaped how migration was studied (Magalhães & Sumari, 2022; Sager, 2016; Wimmer & Schiller, 2003). This focus on the nation-state as the main unit of analysis in migration studies largely excluded sub-national levels, such as regions, states, and cities, from consideration (Haddad, 2008).

The dominance of the nation-state as a unit of analysis has had a lasting impact on migration studies. Studies that compare national policies and examine cross-national variation often seek explanations based on national characteristics. In many cases, factors such as a country's multicultural orientation, regime type, or economic conditions are identified as primary reasons for specific immigration and immigrant policies (Bertossi & Duyvendak, 2012, p. 238).

By focusing on nation-states as the main units of analysis, researchers have examined and compared national policies to understand variations in how policymakers and stakeholders approach immigration. National-level research typically frames immigration as either a global or regional issue, considering immigration policies as primarily a national or international matter (Ahouga, 2017, p. 3; Natter et al., 2020). Studies on immigrant accommodation and integration have thus focused on comparing national legal systems, policies, and politics (Borkert & Caponio, 2010, p. 9). For example, refugee politics and policy have traditionally been treated as international or national issues (Doomernik & Jandl, 2008). Yet, particularly in Europe and North America, cities play direct roles in refugee policymaking (Doomernik & Ardon, 2018). Immigration regimes and immigrant integration have also frequently been analyzed as national processes resulting from broader political, social, and economic trends, which has led to a dominant focus on nation-state

concerns. As a result, local factors and conditions have often been overlooked (McCollum & Packwood, 2017b, p. 156).

Although national governments and politics are crucial for understanding immigration as a social phenomenon, overlooking the significance of local governments means missing the role of the institution closest to immigrants. In most cases, immigrants' legal relationships are with nation-states and their bureaucratic structures. Although national or federal governments often formulate immigrant integration policies, it is usually local governments or local extensions of national institutions that carry out their implementation (Filomeno, 2017; Williamson, 2018b). Moreover, local governments frequently develop their own immigration policies and act as both authorities and community members in immigrant lives (Khan-Welsh et al., 2022). Immigrants, regardless of legal status, first become residents and members of urban or rural communities. Local actors, therefore, play essential roles in immigrants' lives, just as immigrants impact local communities. This evolving relationship has spurred growing scholarly interest in local actors as stakeholders in direct contact and interaction with immigrants.

Local Turn in Immigration Studies

Challenging the predominant methodological nationalism in migration studies, researchers have increasingly focused on local contexts and the specific ways they shape immigration outcomes. This shift, known as the *local turn*, began in the early 2000s and highlights local governments as essential actors in immigration policy. Although this trend in research emerged relatively recently, local governments had already begun developing independent immigrant policies prior to this period. As Alexander (2007b) shows, major European cities such as Amsterdam, Rome, and Berlin were actively engaged in immigration policymaking as early as the 1970s. However, the 2000s marked a period of growing local agency, as local governments adopted

more entrepreneurial approaches to managing immigrant populations within their communities (Spencer & Delvino, 2019). As cities took on a more proactive role, they developed diverse approaches to accommodating immigrants, adapting their strategies to local needs and challenges (P. Scholten & Penninx, 2016, p. 91).

In the United States, for example, immigration policy has traditionally been under federal jurisdiction due to Supreme Court rulings since the late nineteenth century (Varsanyi, 2008). However, this did not prevent local governments from seeking a role in immigration governance. Especially in the 2000s, local officials became increasingly involved in providing services to immigrants and advocating for immigrant rights (Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007). In some large cities, local bureaucrats played an entrepreneurial role in advancing immigrant integration (De Graauw, 2014).

This increase in local activity has transformed local governments from simple implementers of centrally devised policies into active agents that demonstrate autonomy in managing immigrant issues. Thus, variations in how national policies are implemented at the local level are not merely a matter of capacity but reflect a complex set of relationships and conditions that can lead to divergent or convergent actions in relation to central government policies.

According to Poppelaars and Scholten (2008a), divergences between local and national governments are not merely the result of an “implementation gap.” Although local governments are often tasked with implementing centrally formulated immigration policies, their departures from national policy can stem from “a divergent institutional logic on problem framing” (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008a, p. 336). This divergence may occur not only in the implementation of national policies but also when local governments design and enact their own immigration policies and action plans.

Local governments play an active role in implementing national policies, and their actions often determine policy outcomes at the local level. Alexander (2007b, p. 7), notes that the local level is where a wide range of national policies are tested and adapted. Despite the constraints of the national immigration framework, local governments often develop their own approaches toward immigrant communities, shaping policies and practices that influence immigrants' access to services and rights (Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007; Marrow, 2009). In fact, local governments can facilitate, restrict, or even indirectly or directly block immigrants' access to their legal rights (Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012).

In addition to implementing national immigration policies, local governments may also develop independent responses to immigration. Differences in how central and local governments formulate policies often reflect the distinct conditions in which they operate. Although both levels are subject to electoral processes, they face different pressures and priorities. Local officials, who are closer to immigrant populations and constituents, tend to be more attuned to local complaints, demands, and support. This proximity can lead to divergent approaches, with local governments and national governments framing immigration issues differently. Each develops its own problem frames and rationale, which significantly influence immigration policy at both local and national levels (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008a, pp. 347–348). Scholars argue that local governments often adopt a pragmatic approach to policy, reflecting an understanding of immediate community needs that may differ from national policies (Penninx, 2009; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008a; Üstübici, 2022).

As discussed, methodological nationalism typically regards local governments as mere extensions of national governments, responsible only for implementing national immigration accommodation policies. However, diverse local contexts offer varied immigration and integration

experiences due to unique social, political, and economic factors. One line of research suggests that local governments make pragmatic choices that diverge from national policies, while another highlights how local political, social, and economic differences drive asymmetric responses to immigration. These variations often depend on local governments' specific perspectives and experiences with immigration (Alexander, 2003; P. W. A. Scholten, 2013). Localities differ not only in social and economic structures but also in how they encounter and manage immigration, creating a distinct local dimension in policymaking for stakeholders (Caponio & Borkert, 2010b).

As a result of the local turn in immigration studies, local immigrant policies have garnered attention from researchers and policymakers alike. Scholars have investigated the various dimensions of these policies across different contexts. The local level is now recognized as an arena for policymaking and implementation. However, as noted above, local immigrant policies vary widely, shaped by diverse conditions. In the following sections, I will discuss the concept of "local immigrant policy" in more detail and examine the factors that contribute to variation in these policies.

Local Immigrant Policy

Before delving further into the literature on local immigrant policies, it is essential to clarify a key concept central to this dissertation: "local immigrant policy." To understand this, however, it is useful to first define what public policy entails. Thomas Dye (2017, p. 1) offers a straightforward definition: "public policy is what governments choose to do or not to do." According to Peter John (2012), public policies are a series of actions aimed at impacting society, and the study of public policy seeks "to explain how decision makers, working within or close to machinery of government and other political institutions, produce public actions that are intended to have an impact outside the political system." John's definition emphasizes the

intentional impact of government-related actions. Mintrom and Williams (2013, p. 4) see public policy as any action undertaken by governments to produce a predetermined response to specific circumstances. Howlett (Howlett, 2019) describes public policymaking as a product of “the interactions of policymakers in the exercise of power, legitimate or otherwise.” Lastly, Cairney (2020) defines public policy as “the sum total of government actions, from signals of intent to the final outcome.” While these definitions represent only a fraction of the public policy literature, they all share a common element: “government actions.” Accordingly, I will center my definition of local immigrant policies around these actions and their analysis.

Drawing from these definitions, I define local immigrant policy as a set of decisions and actions taken by municipalities aimed specifically at affecting the conditions of foreign-born residents. A municipality's local immigrant policy does not necessarily target only those within its borders, as the literature demonstrates that local immigrant policies, related actions, and outcomes occur within a broader context involving multiple actors – both public and private – across different levels of governance (Bazurli et al., 2022; Campomori & Ambrosini, 2020; P. Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Thus, municipal actions often result from interactions among local, national, or international stakeholders.

Researchers, however, debate whether to use the term “local immigrant policy” or “local immigration policy.” Many scholars argue against “local immigrant policy” due to the direct or indirect involvement of municipalities in immigration governance. In some instances, municipalities process citizenship applications, while in others, they participate in policing efforts (Filomeno, 2017, p. 3). However, in Turkey, municipalities have almost no administrative role in immigration processes, and policing is exclusively managed by central government agents. Consequently, Turkish municipalities are rarely involved in immigration governance

directly. Rather, their involvement in immigration-related issues is entirely voluntary and excludes administrative procedures. Immigration administration and policing fall solely within the central government's remit, and Turkish municipalities are not legally required to provide services to immigrants. Therefore, for this research, "local immigrant policy" is the more precise term.

With this clarification in place, I will delve deeper into local immigrant policies. Local immigrant policies are significant in migration studies and local policymaking for several reasons. Immigration – part of broader migration trends – presents both challenges and opportunities for municipalities (Filomeno, 2017). Immigration places local resources and municipal capacities under strain, often necessitating the reallocation of resources to address issues related to immigration, such as increased infrastructure demands and potential tensions between local populations and newcomers. At the same time, the economic activity and diversity that immigration brings can stimulate local economies and enhance overall prosperity. Additionally, immigrant policies at the city level can shape national policies (Su, 2010). Consequently, immigration and the settlement of immigrants in urban areas have impacts on multiple fronts, while local immigrant policies can influence the actions of other significant actors.

Research on local immigrant policies has grown to encompass various perspectives. The literature began with the identification of a "local turn" in both research and policy, as scholars and stakeholders recognized the pivotal role of municipalities in implementing and shaping immigration policies (Alexander, 2007a; Jorgensen, 2012; Mahnig, 2004). However, scholars remain divided on why and how municipalities participate actively in immigration policies and develop their local immigrant policies.

Many argue that cities play crucial roles in implementing integration policies and shaping immigration-related policies (Penninx & Martiniello, 2004, p. 139). In addition to adhering to national immigration policies, local governments often craft their policies. Thus, scholars have approached municipalities by comparing them either to national governments or to other municipalities (Dekker et al., 2015). Multi-level governance has become an essential framework for examining local government responses and their interactions with different levels of government (Campomori & Ambrosini, 2020; Caponio, 2021; P. Scholten & Penninx, 2016).

One body of research suggests that municipalities formulate more inclusive policies toward immigrants due to their direct interactions with immigrant communities (Borkert & Bosswick, 2007). Such interaction fosters communication and knowledge exchange, enhancing local governments' understanding of immigrants' needs. These municipalities are often more inclined to collaborate with representatives of immigrant communities and organizations (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008a).

In contrast, other research suggests that some municipalities adopt exclusionary practices toward immigrants compared to central government policies (Ambrosini & Caneva, 2012a; Mahnig, 2004). Ambrosini and Caneva (2012a) note that exclusionary practices often focus on culturally sensitive issues, such as religious buildings, ethnic food establishments, and traditional cultural events. Furthermore, municipalities' discourse and practices on migration can be contradictory; while they may publicly support pro-immigrant rhetoric, their actual policies can be exclusionary (Pero, 2001).

Research from various contexts illustrates that local immigrant policies can vary widely from one municipality to another (Alexander, 2007a; Caponio & Borkert, 2010b; Kaufmann et al., 2022; Mahnig, 2004). Therefore, examining variations in municipal actions is integral to

understanding local immigrant policies. I will address the issue of variation in local immigrant policies in the next section. However, before doing so, I will explore a specific category of local immigrant policies that has garnered considerable attention among scholars: sanctuary cities and local sanctuary policies.

Sanctuary Cities

Sanctuary cities represent a distinct category of urban settings that host and welcome immigrants. The term "sanctuary cities" is used for various purposes depending on the context. In North America, sanctuary cities refer to those that welcome and provide services to irregular immigrants, while in Europe, the term often denotes cities that welcome refugees and asylum seekers (Bauder, 2017, p. 174). However, one common aspect of sanctuary cities on both sides of the Atlantic is their role in creating inclusive urban spaces for immigrants with undocumented or irregular status (Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018, p. 125). Despite this shared criterion, the conditions for providing such spaces can vary across countries and cities, resulting in differing practices that contribute to the vagueness of the concept of "sanctuary."

In recent years, researchers have sought to clarify the definition of sanctuary cities, describing them as urban polities that openly enact laws or ordinances prohibiting local law enforcement from inquiring about immigrants' legal status or cooperating with national or federal authorities in immigration enforcement (Collingwood & Gonzalez O'Brien, 2019). These definitions are shaped by the historical development of the concept and institutional practices in the U.S., and as a result, they are primarily formulated within federal political structures.

The origins of sanctuary cities can be traced back to grassroots actions by religious groups in San Francisco, which sheltered Salvadoran and Guatemalan undocumented immigrants. Activists, defying federal authority, provided shelter and protection to these

individuals on the grounds that the U.S. government was wrongfully denying their asylum applications (Mancina, 2016, p. 34). In subsequent years, this grassroots activism was embraced by municipal governments, leading to the adoption of a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that prohibited municipal workers from inquiring about residents' citizenship status or origins (Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018, p. 125). Consequently, municipalities in sanctuary cities systematically rejected the collection of such data, preventing any sharing of information with federal authorities. In addition to the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, sanctuary cities focus on providing services to undocumented immigrants without discrimination. To do so, these cities often rely on minimal indications of residency, such as a local residency card or bill, without requiring federal or national documents. Several Canadian cities have also adopted similar sanctuary policies (Hudson et al., 2017).

In the European context, sanctuary cities operate differently, influenced by variations in institutional settings. According to Kaufmann et al. (2022), European cities tend to be less active in providing legal consultancy and municipal services and often develop less open policies due to the political and institutional differences compared to their North American counterparts. In Europe, cities typically function under national governments that exert more authority over local administrations. As challenging the authority of nation-state governments is often more contentious than confronting federal governments, city administrations in Europe frequently seek to establish parallel structures with the support of civil society organizations (Kaufmann et al., 2022, p. 8). A similar strategy is used by the local governments in Turkey but not to directly or indirectly confront the central government but mobilize financial resources to tackle with immigration (Coşkun & Uçar, 2018; Kaya et al., 2020).

A common criterion for identifying sanctuary cities is the existence of an open disagreement between local and central governments regarding the legal rights of irregular immigrants. A city administration is required to take a definitive political stance, either by refraining from collecting and sharing information with the central government or by supporting and participating in initiatives that facilitate the rights of irregular immigrants. Consequently, the existence of sanctuary cities depends on this discrepancy.

In the Turkish context, however, it is challenging to discuss sanctuary cities. There is little evidence that municipalities in Turkey take specific policy actions to host or target irregular immigrants. While sanctuary cities are not directly relevant to the case of Turkish municipalities, they represent a distinct category of local immigrant policy that illustrates variation. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is essential to explore how and why local immigrant policies vary across different contexts.

Local Immigrant Policy Variation

As indicated by Poppelaars and Scholten (2008a), migration and immigration-related policy issues pose *wicked problems*. Wicked problems are “characterized by complexity, uncertainty about the effects of policy interventions, and strong disagreement on the nature of the problems and adequate solutions” (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008a, p. 338). Therefore, actors and institutions are unlikely to agree on either the nature of the problem or how to solve it. As a result, many propose and implement contradictory action plans, making variation in immigration-related policies an inevitable consequence.

Investigating local immigrant policy variation aligns with efforts to explain how local policies are shaped in different contexts. Studies that aim to explain why and how various local governments act differently from one another generally converge into two broader categories of

explanations. In the literature on local immigrant policies, the factors explaining variation across localities are subdivided into two main categories: *local pragmatist* and *localist* explanations (Emilsson, 2015, p. 16).

Local pragmatist explanations posit that the local interests and priorities of various actors are the primary determinants of the tone of local practices (Caponio & Borkert, 2010a; Jørgensen, 2012; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008b). Pragmatic explanations suggest that, compared to national governments, local governments must more closely address local demands from their electorate and immigrants. Moreover, local governments often collaborate with civil society organizations to meet the needs of immigrants (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008b). Consequently, the conditions of proximity drive them to pragmatically resolve immigrants' issues and strive to meet their needs (Borkert & Bosswick, 2007; Vermeulen & Stotijin, 2010). Additionally, street-level bureaucrats may make pragmatic choices that support elected mayors' re-election by providing services in a discreet manner (Balcioglu, 2024). Therefore, it is arguable that either political motivations or local requirements may lead local governments to adopt pragmatic approaches to solving migration-related issues. This branch of literature assumes that local governments may demonstrate a predisposition to implement more accommodating policies and practices compared to national governments.

Localist explanations, on the other hand, emphasize the significance of local institutional and political differences among localities in explaining variations in policy outputs and outcomes (Alexander, 2007b; Mahnig, 2004). Local peculiarities such as economic conditions, migrant populations, established residents, and political legacies may result in divergences in policy outputs (Caponio & Borkert, 2010a; Schiller & Caglar, 2009). However, the divergence among researchers is not always as pronounced as it is between these broad categories. In many cases,

municipalities may make policy choices influenced by both localist and pragmatic factors. Some studies also combine these explanations (Huang & Liu, 2016; Williamson, 2018b).

Factors Explaining Local Variation

While it is possible to identify variation across localities, multiple elements identified in the literature concurrently impact how local governments respond to the presence of immigrants under their jurisdiction. Five main factors emerge: ideological/party affiliation, local administrative capacity, the composition of the electorate, host-immigrant relations, and problem framing.

Ideological or party affiliations of actors in localities are among the most frequently studied factors influencing local responses to the presence of immigrants. According to Filomeno (2017, p. 26), the dominance of conservative majorities or the election of conservative officials is positively correlated with the adoption of exclusionary immigrant policies. Conversely, if political parties with progressive attitudes gain power, the policies shift accordingly. Multiple studies have demonstrated that changes in the local political affiliation of officeholders can significantly impact the formulation of policy outputs, shifting from accommodating/inclusionary to restrictive/exclusionary, or vice versa. Caponio's work on three Italian cities – Milan, Bologna, and Naples – illustrates that official priorities change in response to a different party taking over local administration (Caponio, 2010, p. 79). In their comparative study on Berlin, Amsterdam, New York City, and San Francisco, De Graauw and Vermeulen (2016, p. 990) assert that left-leaning local governments tend to enact inclusionary policies. In studies examining policy variation across U.S. cities, partisanship emerges as a significant factor influencing local authorities to adopt either a restrictive or accommodating approach toward immigrants' presence. For instance, cities with a larger Democratic electorate are generally more accommodating (S. K.

Ramakrishnan & Wong, 2010a, p. 82). Furthermore, according to Williamson (2018b, p. 94), the federal government's changing discourses on immigration significantly influence local policies based on the local elected officials' party affiliation.

Williamson's (2018b) research also reveals that the conservative/progressive or Democrat/Republican division does not always function as the decisive factor in determining the tone of policy outputs. Although Republicans are generally less supportive of pro-immigrant policies compared to Democrats, many Republican towns and cities in her survey adopt accommodating practices (Williamson, 2018b, p. 95). Notably, these cities tend to be smaller and medium-sized municipalities in the U.S., while metropolitan cities are excluded from her analysis. Even when population size is factored out, the explanatory power of political affiliation is limited but remains significant.

Local government capacity is another crucial factor for understanding municipal responses to immigrants. Capacity is particularly significant in explaining variations in policy outcomes across cities (Press, 1998, p. 29). According to Clarence Stone (1989), cities are vulnerable to challenges for which they have limited capacity to respond. International migration is among these challenges, complicating the formulation of urban policy agendas (Hambleton & Gross, 2007, p. 8). This complexity affects not only central governments but also municipal governments, which typically have less capacity to deal with immigration. Municipalities with greater capacity – more resources and enhanced social capital – can effectively plan and respond promptly, and often proactively, to human mobility (Landau, 2018, p. 219).

Local administrative capacity encompasses more than just the economic and administrative resources of local governments. Research indicates that the social capital of local officials is also a significant factor influencing policy choices (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Press, 1998).

Although this aspect has not been extensively tested at the local level, past experiences categorized under social capital, particularly regarding interactions with immigrant populations, may influence the tone of policies adopted (Jacobsen, 1996). Local officials and institutions may expand their experience and policy toolkits through previous engagement with immigrant communities (Rodriguez, 2008). Therefore, it is logical to define local capacity from a broader perspective rather than merely a managerial one, even if this approach is less straightforward.

The composition of the electorate at the local level is another recognized determinant of the tone of policies employed. This composition includes not only the ethnic or religious makeup of a community but also the political preferences of constituents, which may indirectly influence policy outputs and outcomes. In cases where municipal departments are more susceptible to political influence, the political composition of voters can significantly affect municipalities' immigrant policies (Lewis et al., 2013). A strong electoral majority may empower a local government to pursue its policy preferences confidently, while a weaker majority may compel it to compromise due to re-election concerns. Numerous studies indicate that an existing immigrant voter base can pressure local governments to adopt more accommodating actions (de Graauw & Vermeulen, 2016; Williamson, 2018b). Moreover, larger cities often provide more organized and established support mechanisms for immigrants. Consequently, larger cities create favorable political conditions for immigrants to express their demands and needs (K. Ramakrishnan & Lewis, 2005). Additionally, field research in Istanbul has shown that local organized initiatives aimed at providing services to immigrants and demanding action from local governments can influence whether a municipality adopts accommodating or restrictive approaches toward immigrants (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017, p. 18).

As a societal factor, varying host-stranger relations contribute to variation across different localities (Alexander, 2003, 2007b). Michael Alexander coins the term "host-stranger relations" to describe local attitudes toward and expectations of immigrants. These attitudes and expectations may vary based on "the temporariness or permanence of the migrant presence" (Alexander, 2007b, p. 13). Alexander asserts that these relations and their different dimensions, such as permanence and spatial separation, can influence the characteristics of local integration policies. Moving beyond Alexander's conceptualization, it is essential to consider local culture and identity in host-stranger relations. Local officials may invoke a discourse of protecting culture and identity as a justification for exclusionary or restrictive policies. Ambrosini and Caneva (2012a) demonstrate that arguments centered on protecting cultural identity can lead to differences in immigrant policymaking and implementation. For example, the mayors of Lombardy and Brescia justify exclusionary policies – such as anti-kebab regulations and obstruction of mosque construction – by claiming they are protecting Italian culture and identity (Ambrosini & Caneva, 2012a, p. 20).

The manner in which local and national actors frame immigration and the presence of immigrants as a policy problem is another significant factor. The interpretation of policies may categorize certain groups within society as deserving or undeserving of services (Mettler & Soss, 2004). Such classifications can be observed simultaneously at both the local and national levels. However, the framing of a group within a legal framework does not necessarily transmit identically across localities. Local interpretations of policies and framing of immigrants may result in discrepancies between national and local authorities, leading to variations across localities. Williamson (2018b) shows that both local and national framing of immigrants impacts local practices and policies, interacting with various economic, political, and social factors.

Although the factors mentioned earlier are often studied independently, they are not necessarily independent of one another. For instance, host-stranger relations and electoral composition may be intertwined, particularly when immigrant groups become politically incorporated and gain voting rights. Additionally, local economic capacity and conditions may influence the structure of host-stranger relations. Nonetheless, such categorization offers analytical advantages in explaining and measuring the sources of local variation.

A potentially significant yet often overlooked factor influencing local policies and practices is the regime effect. Regrettably, the literature rarely investigates immigration and immigrant policies beyond the scope of "Western liberal democracies" (Natter, 2018b). Despite the rapidly expanding literature on immigration, researchers predominantly focus on Western democracies and the dynamics of policymaking and policy outcomes. Non-Western countries are often regarded solely as transit countries (Düvell, 2012; Norman, 2018a) or as subjects of externalized migration control (CEAR-EUSKADI, 2013; Haferlach & Kurban, 2017). European Commission (2019) defines the concept of "country of transit" as "the country through which migratory flows (regular or irregular) move. This is taken to mean the country (or countries), different from the country of origin, through which a migrant passes in order to enter a country of destination." Düvell (2012, p. 415) argues that this classification serves as a justification for the EU's policy to externalize migration control. However, categorizing countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Turkey as transit countries obscures the reality that even if immigrants enter these countries to transit to Western nations, their prolonged situation still necessitates the development of policies to address their needs. For instance, as the largest group of asylum seekers, Syrians' return from Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to Syria is not anticipated to occur until the civil war in Syria is resolved (DW, 2018). Nevertheless, Syrians continue to face threats of "enforced disappearance,

torture, and death in detention," despite the ongoing ceasefire since 2020 (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Thus, these countries require more attention than they have received. The literature often approaches migratory movements among these countries as South-South migration. Additionally, these countries of immigration demand different analytical lenses due to their historical and institutional divergences from Western liberal democracies. For instance, differences in political regimes significantly contribute to this divergence. Some of these countries, such as Egypt, can be classified as authoritarian, leading to a lack of explanatory power in traditional immigration policymaking theories concerning their liberal approaches to border policies or their symbolic inaction in clearly defining immigration and immigrant policies (Natter, 2018a, 2018b; Norman, 2018a). Natter (2018a, p. 3) claims that autocracies may, more easily and promptly, adopt open immigration policies than liberal democracies can; and calls this situation an “illiberal paradox” in reference to Hollifield’s (1992) liberal paradox. Norman (2018a, p. 44) argues that engagement with immigrants in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian contexts is more limited compared to the traditional destinations. For example, as discussed below, Turkey adopts a liberal policy of border control and integration policy, while granting indirect autonomy to local governments by leaving the legal framework ambiguous enough for local governments to take actions based on their interpretations or motivations.

In the context of South-South migration, governments may interpret immigrants and immigration differently than Western liberal democracies do (Gagnon & Khoudour-Castéras, 2011; Norman, 2018b). These countries may be less inclined to adopt traditional integrationist or assimilationist perspectives on immigration (Gagnon & Khoudour-Castéras, 2011, p. 59). While Gagnon and Khoudour-Castéras (2011) argue that the absence of such policies may lead to

increased segregation and ghettoization, Norman (2018a, 2018b) contends that refugees and immigrants can still find ways to integrate into host communities, even in environments characterized by inactivity or restrictive policies.

Local autonomy emerges as a crucial factor that allows municipalities to formulate and implement their policies, including those related to immigration. While municipalities are expected to adhere to central government directives on immigration issues, as highlighted in discussions about sanctuary cities, they can leverage their autonomy to pursue contradictory actions (Boudou, 2023).

Control over local governments in centralized political systems is typically tighter than in decentralized ones. Municipalities tend to exercise greater prerogative in decentralized political regimes. According to Ladner et al. (2016, 2023), Turkey scores poorly in terms of local autonomy compared to most other OECD countries. Although there has been a slight increase in local autonomy in Turkey from 2014 to 2022 (Ladner et al., 2023) Turkish municipalities have limited influence over the services they provide and operate within one of the narrowest policy scopes (Ladner et al., 2016). In essence, the central government in Turkey has traditionally maintained a tight grip on municipalities.

However, local governments' immigrant policies present a unique case. The central government neither shares authority over immigration management – ranging from border control to policing and administrative processes – nor regulates local government actions concerning immigrants. Moreover, the central government does not contribute to local budgets for immigrant-related expenses or transfer any obligations regarding immigrants (Yavçan & Memişoğlu, 2023). Consequently, local governments in Turkey are left to manage an increased population without additional funding from the central government. This policy environment

creates a non-formulated area of autonomy for local governments. A vague and less regulated domestic legal landscape allows local governments to operate with greater autonomy than might be anticipated within the national legal framework (Motomura, 2014). As a result, Turkish municipalities have been compelled to explore this uncharted area of autonomy, leading to significant variation in immigration-related policies.

Municipal Responses and Variation among Turkish Municipalities

The recent wave of immigration to Turkey is not the first in the country's modern history. However, there are notable differences between previous waves and the current influx. The immigration trend following the Syrian civil war represents one of the largest accommodation challenges that Turkey has had to face. Additionally, the majority of earlier immigration to Turkey involved Turkish Muslim populations, primarily remnants of the Ottoman practice of population settlement in the Balkans. Consequently, these earlier waves of immigration are considered part of the early Republican nation-building process (Erder, 2018; Kirişçi, 2000; Kirişçi, 1995). From the outset, immigrant policy has been a politically polarized issue in Turkey.

As mentioned previously, the legal framework in Turkey allows municipalities to operate in multiple directions regarding immigrant accommodation. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), enacted in 2013, marks a significant milestone in Turkey's legal framework concerning immigration. It is possible to delineate the history of immigration law in Turkey before and after the LFIP (Ark Yildirim & Özer Yürür, 2019, p. 23). Prior to the LFIP, one of the most substantial legal regulations was the 1994 Asylum Regulation, which was established to manage the mass influx of Iraqis. Approximately 500,000 Iraqis immigrated to Turkey between 1988 and 1991, representing the largest influx Turkey experienced until the

Syrian civil war (Anadolu Agency, 2020; Galbraith, 2003). Due to the government's security concerns, the predominantly Kurdish Iraqis were not settled among the general population but were instead placed in designated concentration areas. Thus, it can be argued that the 1994 Asylum Regulation was developed primarily in response to security concerns rather than as a framework for incorporating immigrants into society. Until 2013, this approach had been the official stance of the Turkish state.

With the LFIP, a significant overhaul of the international protection and immigration regime in Turkey occurred in response to another major influx from Syria. The LFIP initiated a major administrative change: responsibilities and authority were transferred to a newly formed General Directorate of Migration Management (DGMM, later renamed the Presidency of Migration Management) under the Ministry of Interior, from the police organization, which is also controlled by the Ministry. The DGMM is organized through provincial offices in various cities across Turkey. Moreover, the LFIP envisioned the preparation of additional regulations for asylum management. In terms of incorporating immigrants, Ark Yildirim and Özer Yürür (2019) note that the LFIP left immigrants' incorporation into Turkish society relatively vague, lacking clear references to integration or assimilation practices. Furthermore, based on interviews with officials from the Ankara branch of the DGMM, the authors suggest that under the LFIP's implementation, as long as immigrants do not rely on social aid or pose security concerns, incorporation does not require knowledge of the Turkish language (Ark Yildirim & Özer Yürür, 2019, p. 32). Consequently, there is no clear indication that Turkey's immigration legal framework anticipates the incorporation of immigrants into their host communities. While the changes in the immigration regime facilitate the asylum mechanism and regulate it through clear rules and procedures for registration, they do not provide a mid- or long-term framework for

incorporation; rather, they only address the immediate needs of immigrants (Ark Yildirim & Özer Yürür, 2019, pp. 32–33).

Nevertheless, immigrants and local communities must coexist and develop their own daily practices. Given the legal ambiguity, local governments in Turkey may achieve an informal autonomy that exceeds the current framework's recognition, enabling them to develop their local immigrant policies. Several local governments have navigated this landscape to find ways to manage immigrant populations and establish common ground with local communities in the absence of a clear national-level integration policy (Kale & Erdoğan, 2019, p. 229).

The de facto political autonomy provided by the ambiguity in the legal framework allows local governments to pursue a variety of actions in this area. However, existing autonomy explains the existence of variation in municipal responses but does not clarify why municipalities act as they do. The literature offers multiple explanations for the diverse actions of Turkish municipalities. Two major factors contributing to inactivity are the denial of responsibility to provide services (Çamur, 2017) and administrative and financial uncertainty .

One notable divergence among local governments in Turkey is their status regarding the provision of services or taking action. While several municipalities actively respond to the presence of immigrants, many others choose not to take any action. The literature predominantly focuses on the reasons Turkish municipalities opt to engage actively in immigration matters. Factors such as assuming an entrepreneurial role (Özçürümez & Hoxha, 2023; Yanar & Erkut, 2020), street level bureaucrats' motivation to extend services (Balcioglu, 2024), ideological and party affiliations of mayors (Betts et al., 2019, 2020), municipal financial and administrative capacity (Eliçin, 2019), and cooperation with other actors (Lowndes & Polat, 2022) are several influential elements shaping local governments' preferences for activity.

In some cases, municipalities may be more inclined to act in specific policy areas where they have already established a presence and can transfer their experiences (Kaya et al., 2020). For instance, Kaya et al. (2020) demonstrate that Zeytinburnu Municipality, a district municipality in Istanbul, implemented actions to provide services in equality policies and utilized its prior experience in this specific area before the influx of Syrians to Istanbul. Furthermore, the willingness of municipalities to act may vary depending on the local communities' responses (Eliçin, 2019).

Another significant issue influencing municipal responses is the composition of the immigrant population in Turkey. Until recently, the general literature on municipal responses primarily focused on legal immigration. However, recent global developments have shifted attention toward irregular immigrants and asylum seekers. The literature on sanctuary cities represents one strand of this discourse, specifically examining cities that develop policies to host irregular immigrants (Collingwood & Gonzalez O'Brien, 2019).

In the Turkish context, the majority of immigrants are Syrian asylum seekers, who are legally under a temporary protection regime. International organizations that administer and provide assistance to refugees and asylum seekers have historically operated within refugee camps rather than urban settings (Sanyal, 2012, p. 637). Until recent decades, UNHCR and many other organizations based their operations on procedures developed for refugee camps. Local governments can play a crucial role in helping international organizations navigate urban settings, while these organizations can share their expertise on how to address and manage the protracted conditions faced by refugees. Consequently, the involvement of local governments and the initiation of cooperative actions in urban settings to build refugee resilience have become critical topics of discussion.

Cooperation between stakeholders

Cooperation has become a powerful tool for municipalities and other stakeholders to enhance their capacity to respond to immigration in various contexts (de Graauw & Vermeulen, 2016; Preston et al., 2024; P. Scholten & Penninx, 2016). In Turkey, municipalities employ different collaborative strategies to provide services to immigrants and to understand their conditions and needs. Kaya's report (2020) on five municipalities – Bursa, Kocaeli, Esenyurt (Istanbul), Sultanbeyli (Istanbul), Şahinbey (Gaziantep) – demonstrates that these municipalities engage in collaborations with local branches of the central government, NGOs, international organizations, and, in some cases, other municipalities to address the presence of immigrants in their regions.

Regarding cooperation with the central government and its branches, Siviş (2021) argues that inefficiencies and obstacles in forming collaborations between local governments and central government agencies compel municipalities to develop alternative strategies to meet local needs. In instances of cooperation with state institutions, the relationship and resulting services are managed through a state-centered understanding of cooperation, which introduces a hierarchical structure and a single-perspective approach to immigration (Topal Demiroğlu, 2021, p. 972). This dynamic hinders local governments from developing partnerships that could enhance their ability to transfer knowledge and increase their capacity to respond to local needs.

Municipalities and NGOs are also actively seeking collaboration with one another. Recent research on their cooperative efforts and impacts has garnered increasing attention in the literature (Çamur, 2017; Danış & Nazlı, 2019; Woods & Kayali, 2017). NGOs participate in projects related to jobs and livelihoods, educational programs, social cohesion, and protection initiatives, serving as implementers, partners, or contributors (IGAM et al., 2020). To enact their

projects in these issue areas, NGOs mostly cooperate with municipalities to facilitate their operations and increase capacity. To implement projects in these areas, NGOs primarily collaborate with municipalities to facilitate their operations and enhance their capacities. Municipalities also engage in these partnerships to improve their ability to serve local populations, including immigrants (Woods & Kayali, 2017). Establishing proxy organizations is another strategy that municipalities employ (Kaya et al., 2020; Yavçan & Memişoğlu, 2023). These proxy organizations serve to access additional international and national funding, gain greater operational independence, and mitigate the risk of legal action against the municipality, thereby becoming useful tools for service provision and policy implementation. Sultanbeyli Municipality, a district municipality in Istanbul, exemplifies the practice of utilizing proxy organizations (Memişoğlu & Yavçan, 2022). The literature tends to view these proxy organizations as integral parts of the municipal structure rather than as independent NGOs.

Cooperation with international organizations, NGOs, and state institutions facilitates the delivery of services, access to funding, and increased capacity for municipalities. However, there is criticism regarding the nature of these collaborations. While cooperation with actors such as international organizations and NGOs can enhance municipal responses, their involvement often leads to short-term solutions for urgent needs rather than the development of long-term strategic plans (Topal Demiroğlu, 2021, p. 976). Therefore, reliance on these collaborations to build a network of services may result in temporary actions that impede the strategic and institutional development of municipalities. Conversely, Yavçan and Memişoğlu (2023) argue that participation in cooperative networks fosters policy learning for municipal practitioners. As a result, municipalities may acquire long-term policy tools to formulate strategies that address future challenges through these collaborations.

Contesting the National Policy

By entering into cooperations and formulating their own policies, municipalities demonstrate that they are far from being mere implementers of national policy, particularly in the context of Turkey. In some cases, municipalities deliberately diverge from national policies, leading to contestation between the national government and local governments operating under its authority. A similar dynamic occurs in the implementation of immigration policy within Turkey. Although the central government has left immigration as an ambiguous policy area, it maintains a perspective of an open-door policy and liberal immigrant mobility within the country (İçduygu & Özçürümez, 2023). Additionally, the central government adopts a liberal understanding of immigrant integration, emphasizing the prevention of social problems rather than forcing immigrants to blend into the larger society (Ark Yildirim & Özer Yürür, 2019).

Local governments operate according to a different logic than the national government. As the Turkish national government has exhibited a fluctuating stance regarding the presence, rights, and future of Syrians in Turkey – along with an ambiguous, and often oblivious, approach to immigrants of different origins – municipalities have either aligned with or diverged from the central government, influenced by various factors. This contestation occurs across different domains. For instance, Turkish municipalities may deviate from the national government's narrative about immigration and immigrants (Lowndes & Polat, 2022). Furthermore, municipalities craft their own narratives while simultaneously responding to the central government and addressing immigration issues. An ideological divide can be observed in examples like Şişli Municipality in Istanbul. While the central government, led by the religious conservative AKP, formulates its narrative regarding immigration based on religious brotherhood, CHP, the main opposition party since 2002, governs Şişli Municipality with a social

democratic perspective and approaches immigrants from a rights-based understanding (Coşkun & Uçar, 2018; Yanar & Erkut, 2020). Consequently, it is possible to see reflections of this divergence in narratives through policy actions among municipalities and between municipalities and the central government.

Municipalities respond to immigration in Turkey in various ways. As discussed, their actions may be influenced by cooperations in the field, political divergences, or an ambiguous legal framework. However, the literature on Turkish municipalities often overlooks multiple potential sources of variation. For instance, socio-economic development within a locality might influence the chosen set of actions and the framing of immigration. Additionally, the capacity of local governments may serve as another source of variation. Depending on its local capacity, a municipality may be either active or inactive, selecting different actions based on feasibility and applicability within its own context. Another potentially significant issue is the local political composition, which can either facilitate or obstruct local government actions. Furthermore, the discourse surrounding local immigrant policies tends not to focus on the diversity of problem areas but rather on resulting policy-oriented actions. Investigating specific problem areas could enhance our understanding of local government variation. In this context, the evolution of focus and policy actions over time may reveal another dimension of variation. By considering time as a dimension of local immigrant policies, it becomes possible to understand the evolution of variation among municipalities.

Moreover, the literature on local government responses to immigration in Turkey primarily mirrors broader trends in the literature on this issue, often focusing on smaller samples when examining the aforementioned topics. Given the novelty of this research area in Turkey and the challenges associated with collecting reliable data from a larger sample of municipalities,

it is not surprising that small sample research is predominant. However, studies that investigate larger samples remain relatively absent from both the broader literature and the specific literature on Turkish municipalities.

Developing an Immigrant Policy Typology

In the broader literature on local immigrant policies, there are efforts to formulate policy typologies. Policy typologies are beneficial for categorizing and analyzing policies developed by various policymaking bodies. In the context of local immigrant policy literature, these typologies serve a similar purpose, helping researchers compare and contrast different localities while clarifying how to differentiate policy perspectives. I will discuss two typologies below to illustrate how these frameworks are used and how they enhance our understanding of local actions in response to immigration.

Michael Alexander's local immigrant policy typology is based on host-immigrant relations and focuses on explaining how these relationships influence local immigrant policies (Alexander, 2007a). In his comparison of four cities – Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, and Tel Aviv – he identifies four policy phases regarding labor immigrants: non-policy, guestworker policy, assimilationist policy, and pluralist policy. Each of these phases reflects the attitudes of city administrators and elected officials toward immigrants, which are categorized as transient, guestworker, assimilationist, and pluralist, respectively. Each policy type corresponds to the assumptions held by city administrators regarding the immigrant population in their cities. A transient attitude suggests that immigrants are in a city temporarily, only passing through to another destination. The guestworker attitude marks a shift, indicating that immigrants are expected to stay longer, leading cities to develop policies that address the various needs of these immigrants. The assimilationist attitude treats immigrants as permanent residents who differ

from the local population; thus, if immigrants are to remain in a city, they must adapt to the local community without disrupting social harmony. In this perspective, the city is viewed as a melting pot. Finally, a pluralist approach acknowledges labor immigrants as integral to urban life and its diverse cultural scene, accepting them as they are rather than viewing them as subjects to be assimilated.

In addition to policy types, Alexander defines policy domains and issue areas as a second dimension of his typology (Alexander, 2003, 2007a). These policy domains include legal-political, socio-economic, cultural-religious, and spatial aspects. Policy types manifest in various ways according to host-immigrant relations at the local level (Alexander, 2007a, p. 48).

Alexander's typology exemplifies a cross-national comparison of local policies. By specifically targeting immigrant policies, he formulates a typology applicable in different contexts. His analysis, which relies on some of Europe's largest capital cities, captures local government responses to labor immigration within a historically diverse sample and over a longer time frame than many other studies. Furthermore, his research addresses a gap in the literature by developing a tool for studying local immigrant policies across various contexts and local issues.

Alexander's typology seeks to understand how local immigrant policies evolve over time in cities with a history of labor immigration. These cities have attracted labor migration over several decades, and, according to Alexander, host-immigrant relations represent a significant axis for local governments to develop and transform their policies toward immigrants. Although he claims that his typology aims to provide an analytical framework for understanding the immigrant policies of various cities (Alexander, 2007a, p. 52), the ideal policy types he proposes serve as analytical tools for evaluating local policy approaches. He also notes that policy phases

are temporally ordered, but the sequence may change, or some phases may be skipped. However, in the Turkish context, this typology may not fully apply. First and foremost, it relies on local governments' engagements with labor immigrants. While this dissertation shows partial similarities with Alexander's findings, his typology does not address the outcomes of forced migration. The foundation of his model is based on local governments' responses to a gradually increasing immigrant population motivated by work rather than seeking refuge from an ongoing civil war. Given the relatively short time frame since the arrival of immigrants and the tumultuous political and economic environment in Turkey, local administrators' attitudes toward immigrants change more rapidly than those covered in Alexander's study. Additionally, all the cities chosen for data collection are capital cities in countries where political and economic conditions differ significantly from those in Turkey. As previously mentioned, while these countries are politically more democratic, the central government's prerogatives over local governments have been more pronounced in Turkey over the decades (Ladner et al., 2016, 2023).

Van Breugel (2020) has also developed a policy typology to analyze local governments' diversity policies. Her study is based on a qualitative comparison of 16 cities in the Netherlands, intentionally avoiding a focus on the capital city and instead examining smaller municipalities. Through an analysis of municipal reports from these 16 municipalities, she formulated a "three lenses" typology, consisting of lenses of problem definition, policy measures, and targeting (Breugel, 2020, p. 5). Problem definition refers to how local governments identify an issue as "a policy problem." She argues that local governments define their immigration-related policy problems from socio-economic, judicial-political, socio-cultural, or spatial perspectives. Based on these definitions, local governments take action and apply measures that can be categorized as cultural pluralist or cultural monist. The issue of targeting also plays a significant role in van

Breugel's typology. Local governments decide which population to target when implementing their measures, choosing between non-targeting, universal targeting, or specifically targeting migrants. These three lenses; definition, measure, and targeting; aim to assist researchers in capturing and analyzing "local migration-diversity policies, and its internal variation and contradictions that determine policy making..." (Breugel, 2020, p. 6).

Breugel's typology is useful for mapping variation among municipalities and understanding the intended outcomes of local policies, particularly given her emphasis on problem framing. Moreover, the three lenses bring depth to the analysis by compartmentalizing the policy process and focusing on multiple aspects of it. However, her application of the typology primarily relies on an investigation of municipal documents. Additionally, her study is predominantly centered on a Western European country, where political-legal power is decentralized, and the history of immigration – and the experience of responding to it – are more extensive than in Turkey.

The examples provided by van Breugel and Alexander differ significantly from the experience in Turkey. Both researchers focus mainly on municipalities responding to labor immigration. However, in the Turkish case, the majority of the immigrant population consists of irregular or forced immigrants who reside in Turkey under precarious legal protection.

Despite these differences, the literature on local immigrant policies in Turkey lacks a comprehensive policy typology that contributes to the existing literature by classifying local immigrant policies. Although many municipalities have been investigated in depth, a larger comparative analysis of immigrant policies is required to formulate an effective policy typology.

In the current literature on local immigrant policies in Turkey, there have been efforts to categorize the narratives behind policy actions. For example, according to Lowndes and Polat

(2022), municipalities interpret the presence of immigrants and the central government's policy responses, thereby developing their own narratives. This model identifies five narratives that municipalities combine to formulate their policies: equal rights, humanitarianism, pragmatism, social cohesion, and anti-refugee narratives. Based on their analysis of three district municipalities in Istanbul – Şişli, Sultanbeyli, and Zeytinburnu – Lowndes and Polat (2022) argue that municipalities follow these five narratives and develop their policies accordingly. Municipalities utilize multiple narratives to shape their policies, and consequently, their policies are influenced by these narratives. For instance, Sultanbeyli adopts pragmatism, humanitarianism, and social cohesion, establishing a proxy organization, mobilizing international funding for social assistance, and taking actions to enhance the integration of Syrians into the local community. Employing a mixture of narratives to define local immigrant policy and distinguish it from others has significant explanatory power. Focusing on a single city enables a profound analysis of local narratives. While this approach contributes analytically to the literature, its interpretive nature does not aim for generalization or a broader categorization of immigrant policies.

Conclusion

This literature review aims to establish a foundation for this dissertation. In addition to positioning my study within the existing literature, I sought to demonstrate its current state. Following the trend of the local turn in immigration studies, this dissertation also aims to understand the local context of immigration policies and how local governments develop their actions. The literature on local immigrant policies tends to adopt an approach that examines how and why individual municipalities act as they do. Therefore, research focuses on comparisons of

local governments, their actions, narratives, and the local conditions that influence policymaking processes.

Variation appears to be an inevitable outcome of the differences among municipalities. However, factors such as local autonomy, local needs, population characteristics, ideology, and local government capacity define the combinations of resulting policy actions when a municipality chooses to act.

Despite this, the literature often focuses on smaller samples and derives results based on comparisons of a limited number of cases. Although comparing a small number of cases has its merits in contributing to a more profound understanding of local immigrant policies, studies on local governments and immigration generally lack comprehensive analyses of larger samples.

Regarding the literature on Turkey, there have been multiple attempts to understand local government actions in response to immigration. However, research in Turkey rarely analyzes local governments across different cities, and larger samples are even less common. Balcıoğlu's (2021) work is one exception, as it focuses on 39 municipalities in Istanbul.

Time is also a neglected dimension in most research concerning local immigrant policies in Turkey. Considering the novelty of this discussion, it is understandable that researchers aim to capture the current state of local immigrant policies. However, examining changes over time can provide insights into policy evolution and reveal how factors affecting variation may operate differently over even a short period of ten years. In the following chapter, I will explain how I conducted this research and discuss the methodological considerations and tools that influenced my study on local immigrant policies.

Chapter 3 - Decentralization-Centralization Pendulum:

Who runs migration in Turkey?

Introduction

This chapter examines the historical development of modern local administration in Turkey alongside the transformations in migration management in the context of Turkey. Building on a critical review of the literature in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the foundation and transformation of modern migration and, more specifically, refugee management. It also examines how local actors have been continuously incorporated into efforts to address migration-related challenges. This is a story of incremental changes in local administration, spanning from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, and how these transformations have occurred in parallel with shifts in migration governance.

The history of local administration and governance in Turkey reveals an ongoing power struggle between the central government and local actors. In both the Ottoman and Republican periods, central governments have persistently pursued centralization. However, political, financial, and military conditions have often hindered seamless centralization, sometimes working against the central government's objectives. Instead, the balance of power between local actors and the central government has fluctuated like a pendulum. Interestingly, central governments have often employed decentralization as a strategic means of reinforcing central control – decentralizing in order to centralize. This blueprint of centralization efforts is also evident in Turkey's migration management.

Given the increasing role of local governments and political actors in Turkey's national politics, historical policy strategies provide valuable insights into the evolving power relations between the central and local governments. The arrival of Syrian refugees, for instance, has prompted varied local responses, as documented and analyzed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Policies formulated and implemented at the municipal level often become a source of contention between central and local governments. Numerous policy areas – such as health, education, and aid provision – have historically been arenas of central-local power struggles (Blom-Hansen, 1999; Chung, 2016; D. Wilson, 2003). Immigration and immigrant policies, however, occupy a particularly significant place in this contestation (Tao, 2019). The central government's efforts to control immigrant resettlement across the country and enforce centrally formulated policies exemplify this struggle. As such, immigration governance serves as a key policy area through which to analyze power dynamics between central and local authorities. The allocation of resources and the formulation of policies – whether locally or centrally driven – can reveal deeper conflicts over authority and governance.

This chapter traces the gradual evolution of central-local relations, illustrating how historical trends of centralization and decentralization have shaped local policies on immigration. Exploring the modern development of migration management in Turkey, this chapter aims to introduce the case of Turkey and its significance in terms of the larger literature of migration studies. Long defined as a origin country, analysis of migration experience in Turkey as a policy field cannot be grasped fully without recognizing Turkey as a destination country as well. Immigration and emigration in Turkey has a long history and its modern management starts from

the later days of the Ottoman Empire following the Muslim population fleeing from the territories taken over by the Western and Northern neighbors of the Empire.

The transfer of legal authority from one level of government to another does not necessarily equate to a transfer of power. Thus, the relative autonomy of local governments in refugee policy does not necessarily indicate decentralization but rather a strategic governance choice by the central government. Despite this strategy, the autonomy granted to local governments contributes to an ongoing power struggle. This struggle may either lead to greater municipal independence from central control or, conversely, reinforce the central government's dominance. Intersecting with other factors, rising local autonomy may open up the space for varying policy choices. This variation may expectedly cause divergence between the national and local policy preferences and interlocal policy preferences. Moreover, this contestation is not only a result of central-local tensions but also by various factors such as party affiliation, economic capacity, and local political conflicts. These factors collectively influence municipalities' positioning vis-à-vis the central government, which in turn shapes local policy responses and relationships with other actors. The transformation of the local administration and migration management give a series of hints in terms of how these interlinked factors work at local and national level.

The modernization of local administration in Turkey coincided with increasing population mobility and immigration, particularly in the latter half of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century. A historical account of both immigrant policies and the evolution of local administration helps to trace the existing trajectories and key turning points in institutional development. In line with the chapter's objectives, exploring the parallel evolution of these two

policy areas – local governance and immigration – sheds light on how contemporary variations in municipal immigration policies have become both legally and politically feasible. The long-term transformations in these areas have enabled local governments to develop their own immigration policies, despite the fact that migration management has traditionally been regarded as a domain of national policymaking.

Transformation of the local-central relations in the Ottoman Empire

Was there a uniform practice of Ottoman local administration? To answer this question, it is essential to differentiate the period of the Ottoman Empire under discussion and a specific region within the Empire. At its height in the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire stretched from the western edge of North Africa to the Persian Gulf and nearly to Vienna. However, the notion that Constantinople exercised absolute control over the entire empire would be anachronistic by mistaking the Ottoman Empire as a modern state. On the contrary, the Ottoman Empire was an agrarian empire maintaining flow of goods across the empire and collecting revenues of agrarian production. Therefore, different degrees of control was required and existed in various parts of the Empire. In some regions, feudal lords, local warlords, or quasi-independent rulers appointed by the Palace were granted the title of pasha signifying the Palace's approval of that pasha's administration in a given region. These actors aligned themselves with the Palace – representing the central administration – in exchange for protection (Hanioğlu, 2008, p. 7). For instance, the Giray Dynasty in Crimea was granted an unprecedented level of autonomy, while the Regency of Tunis functioned as a vassal polity with relative freedom of action as long as it paid tribute to the Ottomans (Yaycioglu, 2016, p. 19). However, the central administration deployed its agents at

various levels of local governance to exercise a certain degree of authority and supervision. Therefore, it is possible to argue that as an agrarian empire, the Ottoman Empire exercised its authority by different models of alliances with local actors or appointees.

Even before the 16th century, the Ottoman administrative system incorporated viziers, beylerbeyis (provincial governors), and sancakbeyis (governors of smaller administrative units within provinces), along with kadis (judges) and defterdars (finance managers). The latter two were independent of the governors and were directly appointed by the Palace (Inalcik, 1977, p. 27). While viziers, beylerbeyis, and sancakbeyis served as military-administrative commanders, kadis and defterdars were bureaucrats who had received formal education in madrasas (Inalcik, 1977, p. 28). The sancakbeyi, a military-administrative position inherited from the 14th-century Ottoman Beylik, gradually lost significance as the Empire expanded in the 15th and 16th centuries (Şahin, 2003, p. 18). Sancakbeyis were appointed from among local administrators, either financial or military/administrative officers, and held temporary fiefs (sancaks), whose taxes they collected. A portion of the tax revenue was allocated to maintaining a sizable armed force responsible for ensuring public order and responding to the Sultan's calls to arms during military expeditions (Inalcik, 1977, p. 28). Becoming a sancakbeyi was a prerequisite for advancement to the ranks of beylerbeyi and pasha.

By the 17th century, however, beylerbeyis were increasingly appointed from the Palace's inner circle or other posts within the central administration, rather than from among the ranks of experienced provincial administrators (Kunt, 2014, p. 33). As the significance of sancakbeyis declined, sancaks were allocated to central administrators and the Sultan's close associates as sources of revenue. These administrators appointed proxies to manage the sancaks in their name (Inalcik, 1977, p. 29). Consequently, the direct connection between local administrators and the

central government was severed, and the influential role of the sancakbeyis was reduced to that of mere stewards for central elites. This shift coincided with a transformation in the land tenure system from the timar system to iltizam (Tezcan, 2010, p. 19). Unlike timar, iltizam lands were allocated via auction, favoring actors with financial resources, including figures from the central government and local notables (Gençoğlu, 2000). Although this system had existed since the earliest days of the Ottoman Beylik, it became more prominent later, allowing local notables (ayans) to accumulate financial and military power by acquiring more iltizam lands (Inalcik, 1977, p. 33).

Peasant and nomadic uprisings, along with regional tensions throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, challenged the Palace's authority. One of the main reasons for this unrest was the transformation of land management and tax collection. The shift from timar to iltizam marginalized the provincial elite and severed their direct connections to the central government (Inalcik, 1954, p. 110). These elites, composed of early campaign veterans, local lords who had allied with the Ottomans, and military commanders who had risen through the ranks (Kunt, 2014, pp. 31–32), found their influence waning. To compensate for declining provincial tax revenues, governors intensified pressure on local populations, leading to Anatolia- and Syria-wide rebellions by unemployed urban dwellers and peasants (Yaycioglu, 2016).

The transition from timar to iltizam accelerated in the 18th century due to the fiscal strain of prolonged wars with the Habsburgs (Yaycioglu, 2016). As communication weakened between local communities and appointed governors, influential local figures emerged as ayans – local notables who were elected by the community and approved by kadis to represent local interests (Inalcik, 1977, p. 32). Various actors, including valis (provincial governors) and sadrazams (grand viziers), sought to interfere in ayan appointments, as ayans became significant players in

both local and central political struggles. According to Yaycioglu (2016, p. 45), ayans played a decisive role in 18th- and 19th-century reform efforts, with their political alignments influencing the fate of sultans.

The iltizam system provided ayans with opportunities to consolidate power. By securing tax collection rights through auctions, they increased their revenues, military strength, and local political backing (Meeker, 2002, p. 103). Some ayans sheltered fugitives, deserters, and discontented peasants, signaling autonomy from the Palace (Zens, 2011). This allowed some to establish informal hereditary local dynasties (Inalcik, 1977, p. 36). However, their power depended on financial success; those who fell from favor could be swiftly eliminated from local or central administration (Tezcan, 2010, p. 25). Despite their growing autonomy, ayans and other local actors remained dependent on monetary and contractual relations with the central government. Although they appeared feudal in nature, their power derived from the political machinery in Constantinople (Karpas, 2002, p. 207). Thus, the struggle between the center and the periphery was not a binary conflict but a dynamic interplay of multiple actors on a spectrum of centralization and decentralization. While the central administration, to be able to collect revenue from regions, let the autonomy of local actors grow, different from the Western European feudal relations, ayans' power was dependent upon the contractual relations with the Palace. It is fair to call this process "shy decentralization."

Alongside appointed officials, waqfs played a crucial role in service provision, particularly in urban areas. In pre-modern Islamic societies, waqfs functioned as mechanisms for both service delivery and political influence (Kuran, 2001, p. 854). Protected under Islamic law, they also served as a means for individuals to safeguard and transfer property (Keser & Kurt, 2016, p. 112). Service provision in Ottoman cities largely relied on waqfs, which supported

public services such as water supply, medical care, and education (Boyar, 2013, p. 10). However, this system was decentralized and often disorganized.

The Ottoman administrative model was not uniformly applied across the Empire. In mountainous and hard-to-govern regions, such as Albania and Kurdistan, the central government formed alliances with traditional local elites to maintain limited control and extract tax revenues (Kunt et al., 1997, p. 12). As an agrarian empire, the Ottomans prioritized revenue extraction over direct governance, but centralization remained the ultimate objective since Mehmed II's reign (Inalcik, 1977). Nonetheless, deteriorating military, financial, and administrative capacities forced the central administration to compromise with local actors, illustrating the persistent struggle between centralization and decentralization.

Modernization of Local Administration in Turkey

The entire Ottoman bureaucracy and urban life underwent an intensive modernization from the early 19th century onward, and the modernization of local administration was also part of this broader process. However, the modernization attempts began in the 18th century, following the increasing number of defeats in almost every conflict with European empires, starting with the 1683 Siege of Vienna (Akyıldız, 2018, p. 20). The local administration in the Ottoman Empire experienced intense and rapid modernization, along with the rest of the administrative system, after the Tanzimat Edict of 1839. Prior to the Edict, the main actors in local administration included ayans, waqfs, kadıs, and muhtesips (marketplace tax collectors) (Bragg, 2014, p. 32). As discussed above, pre-Tanzimat local administration was shaped by the military, financial, and political needs of the central government, as well as by the ongoing struggle between the figures in the Palace and those in various localities. Rather than a unified system, the Ottoman Empire was administered by a patchwork of differing administrative

systems. It would be anachronistic to expect the Empire to possess a modern, uniform bureaucratic body.

The modernization of both local and central administration represented a successful attempt to further centralize the state by adopting modern administrative institutions and technology from the French public administration system (Ortaylı, 1995b, p. 152). The reform of local administration served as a tool for centralization, blending centralization and decentralization elements and establishing a new provincial bureaucratic and hierarchical structure (Köksal, 2017, p. 471). This dramatic modernization of the public administration system, from top to bottom, also aimed to dismantle the persistent local political and economic ties that had been established over centuries.

One such attempt was the abolition of the iltizam system, the primary source of income for local actors. The Tanzimat Edict marked the beginning of the dismantling of the iltizam system, which was to be replaced by a new tax collection regime based on the individual incomes of taxpayers (Ortaylı, 1995a, p. 56). This new regime aimed to establish local councils composed of local representatives and centrally appointed bureaucrats, who would be responsible for tax collection. However, the system failed and even led to a decrease in annual tax revenue because the iltizam system was dismantled at the same time (Akyıldız, 2018, p. 75). Despite this failure, the reformers were undeterred, and reform attempts continued at various levels.

The Tanzimat Edict transferred the conventional duties of local administrations to the newly established Ministry of Accounting (İhtisap Nezaretî) and the Ministry of Foundations (Evkaf Vekaleti). Reformers sought to professionalize the bureaucracy and, in doing so, enhance local representation (Köksal, 2006, p. 472). In 1849, the Palace established local sancak councils,

which included various groups from each sancak – such as ayans, kadıs, malmüdürü (local finance/accounting officers), and other notable figures from both Muslim and non-Muslim communities (Akyıldız, 2018, p. 77). Similar councils had previously been formed at the eyalet level, involving similar actors. However, in 1864, the eyalet councils were dissolved, and sancak councils became more significant for local matters (Akyıldız, 2018, p. 78). These local councils included professionals appointed by the Palace and locally elected representatives (Köksal, 2016, p. 472). Thus, with the establishment of local councils, the decentralization of power was accompanied by an increase in the variety of stakeholders involved in local administrative functions. This shift allowed the central government to transfer power to local actors while limiting the influence of traditional local power holders.

It may seem paradoxical to decentralize in order to increase central control. According to Akyıldız, one reason for this paradox was that the Palace lacked the strength to challenge the ayans militarily or financially (Akyıldız, 2018, p. 79). The Palace sought to curb the power of local actors and centralize certain services, such as local administration, security, finance, and construction, by professionalizing local bureaucrats. The Palace's inability to directly challenge the ayans led to an attempt to decentralize in order to relatively strengthen the central administration.

While reforming the local administrative system, the Palace also began exploring a new urban administrative reorganization. The first modern municipality was created and initially implemented in Galata, Istanbul, but it was intended to be expanded across the Empire (Arnaud, 2008, p. 38). A key motivator behind the modernization of local administration, particularly in urban areas, was the frequent and devastating fire incidents in Istanbul and other major cities. According to the new law, municipalities were tasked with supervising buildings, providing

shelter for the impoverished, policing marketplaces, and maintaining civil registration – all in line with the broader professionalization efforts across the administration (Arnaud, 2008; Seyitdanlioğlu, 2010). The central government was hesitant to share power with local actors and cautious about implementing a new empire-wide institution. Until that time, urban administration, particularly service provision, had been decentralized across several traditional institutions. As a result, Istanbul's first municipality was founded in the Galata district, which was predominantly inhabited by Europeans, including diplomatic missions and merchants with privileges (Rosenthal, 1980, p. 50). The Palace had minimal authority in Galata due to the ongoing interventions of other European empires' representatives, who held extensive control over local affairs. Therefore, there was little to share in Galata with local actors. Eventually, the creation of a new institution presented an opportunity to extend the Palace's authority into the district.

Reformers adopted and adapted the structure of the French municipal system, integrating it into the Ottoman administrative framework (Rosenthal, 1980, p. 51). However, the Palace appointed the head of the municipality, and elections or an electoral mechanism were not part of the new municipal administration. Thus, the Ottoman reformers designed this new model as an extension of the central government. Following this, a city-wide municipal structure was established for the administration of Istanbul.

Local Administration under the Republic

Local administration remained largely unchanged until the de facto collapse of the Palace's influence over administrative bodies outside of Istanbul. The reopening of the General Assembly in Ankara marked the formation of a new central authority. The democratic and decentralized spirit of the 1921 Constitution significantly influenced the structure of local

administration. Sevinç and Demirkent (2017, p. 37) argue that while the 1921 Constitution strengthened decentralized administration, the 1924 Constitution eliminated some of these decentralizing characteristics. The centralization efforts of the new government were understandable in the context of a post-war nation-state-building process, while potential uprisings in Kurdistan also contributed to the drive for extreme centralization to prevent the fragmentation of the newly founded country (Demirkent & Sevinç, 2017, p. 38).

In 1924, the central government established a municipal administration in Ankara similar to that in Istanbul (Tekeli, 2009, p. 43). The mayor and municipal council members were appointed by the central government. However, within four years, it became evident that this structure did not meet the growing and developing capital's needs for public improvement. Consequently, in 1928, a newly appointed council was established under the Ministry of Interior to oversee Ankara's urbanization (Tekeli, 2009, p. 44).

A new law enacted in 1930 extended the municipal system nationwide, with the exception of Istanbul and Ankara (Tekeli, 2009, p. 56). In these two cities, municipal administrations were merged with the offices of the respective governors. The former and new capitals were deemed too critical to be entrusted to the electoral process, prompting the central government to tighten its control over municipal activities. The democratization process following World War II did not reduce centralization or diminish the importance of appointed city managers. The most significant change was the abolition of the exceptional status of Istanbul and Ankara, allowing for elected mayoral positions. However, central government oversight, particularly by the Ministry of Interior Affairs, remained intact. As a result, municipalities continued to be viewed as local branches of the central government rather than autonomous entities (Ersoy, 1989).

Special provincial administration units also played a crucial role in city governance. Originally established as temporary administrative bodies in 1913, they became institutionalized after the Republic's foundation. Until the end of World War II, they managed hospitals, financed schools, supervised marketplaces, and oversaw neighborhood security (Özden, 2016, p. 29). However, financial constraints led to an increased role for the central government in managing health and education, a trend that continues today (Özden, 2016, p. 30).

The 1961 Constitution defined municipal mayors as elected officials chosen by majority vote. The National Unity Committee, the executive body formed by coup leaders as a result of the coup of 1961, promoted strong elected municipal councils to establish a system of checks and balances on elected officials (Tekeli, 2009, p. 228). The Committee employed a strategy similar to that of the Ottoman Palace in the 18th and 19th centuries: concerned about powerholders strong enough to challenge the center, it sought to counterbalance them through local governance. The new constitution revoked the central government's authority to approve or reject elected officials' appointments, granting the judiciary sole authority to remove municipal mayors (Tekeli, 2009, p. 185-186). This decentralization was intended to limit the power of national actors while strengthening bureaucratic control over municipalities.

Following another coup in 1980, the 1982 Constitution reinstated central government oversight of municipalities, allowing intervention when deemed necessary while increasing municipal autonomy in local investments and financial matters (Bayraktar, 2007). A key change was that the Ministry of Interior Affairs was authorized to remove a mayor under investigation for municipal duties. Thus, centralization was pursued under the guise of decentralization. After 1989, the central government increasingly exercised its authority over municipalities, particularly

due to conflicts between central and local governments (Ersoy, 1999). However, many of these interventions were later overturned by the judiciary (Tan, 2016).

Despite the centralization embedded in the 1982 Constitution, municipalities gradually gained political and financial strength after 1980. A turning point was the enactment of Law No. 3030 in 1984, which introduced metropolitan municipalities in cities with populations exceeding 750,000 (Ersoy, 1999, p. 3). These new entities were granted financial resources for large-scale projects and the ability to establish municipal companies to deliver services. District municipalities, with fewer resources and less authority, operated under metropolitan municipalities, whose primary role was coordinating citywide services. This restructuring expanded the economic and political influence of local actors. The 1984 local elections, the first since the 1980 coup, marked a significant political shift. For the preceding 3.5 years, municipalities had been managed by centrally appointed governors (Doğan, 2007, p. 70). The composition of city councils changed from traditional actors such as small business owners and artisans to individuals aligned with the ruling Motherland Party (ANAP), who prioritized investment in construction over long-term urban planning (İncioğlu & Erder, 2013, pp. 25–27).

Transformation in municipal authority engenders transformation in the profile of politicians involved in local governance. As municipalities gained increased authority over urban planning, they became central to the allocation of land value, attracting more business-oriented candidates to local politics (İncioğlu & Erder, 2013, p. 35). By the 2000s, local political figures began transitioning into national politics. While such transitions were rare in the 1970s and 1980s, they became more common in the 1990s, coinciding with Turkey's rapid urbanization. The urban population rose from 27.8% in 1970 to 51.3% in 1990, further amplifying the importance of local governance (Toksöz et al., 2009, p. 5). By the 2000s, local politics played an

even more significant role (Bayraktar, 2007). Notably, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who served as mayor of Istanbul from 1994 to 1998, became Turkey's prime minister in 2003.

Erdoğan was a member of the Islamist political movement Milli Görüş (National Vision), which gained credibility through effective municipal governance, contributing to the early electoral success of the AKP (Doğan, 2007, p. 269). Starting in the 1990s, local elections also became crucial for political movements excluded from national politics. The two most prominent were the Kurdish nationalist movement, which advocated for language rights and greater autonomy, and Milli Görüş, with its Islamist agenda. The Kurdish nationalist movement turned to local politics as a means of representation (Casier et al., 2015, p. 104), while Milli Görüş leveraged its municipal achievements to bolster national legitimacy (Joppien, 2018, p. 72).

Although the 1961 Constitution granted municipalities legal protection against arbitrary central government interventions, the gradual increase in municipal autonomy from the 1990s to the 2000s was driven by neoliberal reforms and political and legal adjustments required for Turkey's European Union candidacy, alongside domestic political and economic factors (Bayraktar, 2014; Göymen, 2006; Kadirbeyoğlu & Sümer, 2012). Nevertheless, the overarching trend in Turkish public administration has consistently leaned toward further centralization.

Decentralization – Centralization under AKP Governments (2003 -)

With the election of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP – Justice and Development Party), the public administration, municipalities, and their reform entered a new course. Before winning the elections of 2002, AKP's one of the major promises was to initiate a profound reform in the public administration. From 2002 until 2011, the AKP governments addressed this promise with reforms on the public management in great magnitude. European Union membership candidacy

and accession process fueled the enthusiasm of the government and also provided a basis of legitimacy for the initiation of these reforms (Övgün, 2016, p. 161).

Stark changes in the public administration were not limited to increasing the autonomy of the municipalities and restricting the mandate of governors over municipalities. For example, as an attempt to decentralize the development policy, AKP integrated Regional Development Agencies into public management (Ertugal, 2018). The reforms for municipalities focused on structural changes until 2005, which is followed by the second phase of adaptations and revisions from 2006 onwards (Tan, 2018, p. 3). The first phase of reforms were characterized by increasing financial autonomy of municipalities; very limited mandate over municipal decisions and policies; transfer of responsibilities from the central government to municipalities and governors' offices; introduction of new concepts for administration like efficiency, performance-based evaluations, financial transparency and accountability; a transformation in the hierarchical relation between the central government and local governments from political and economic tutelage towards a relationship of coordination.

The second phase focused on the structure of municipalities. The number of first tier (town or district) municipalities were mostly abolished due to a change in the conditions of establishing a municipal body. For a district to be entitled to form a municipality, it should at least have a population of 5000 (*Belediye Kanunu*, 2005). While the number of first-tier municipalities decreased, the number of metropolitan municipalities increased. The fiscal autonomy helped municipalities seek for creditors in Turkey and abroad. The metropolitan municipalities' realm of authority fixated to the city borders. Previously, their authority did not cover rural areas but only city centers and central districts. Consequently, this diversified the

receiving end of public services and caused pressure over the metropolitan municipalities to increase their capacity to provide public service.

As a result, the period between 2002 and 2011 was marked by the increasing local government capacity and autonomy. However, the decentralization was not always welcomed by all local governments. According to Tan (2016), less developed municipalities favored more involvement of the central government in investments and provision of additional funds. Many had neither the capacity nor the experience and know-how to seek for foreign creditors to invest in large scale projects. On the other hand, socioeconomically more developed provinces ask for stronger financial autonomy (Tan, 2016). This divergence in demand for decentralization demonstrates that decentralization is not perceived in the same manner across the country. Such attitude towards decentralization may indicate a diverse degrees of capacity and desire by local governments for local autonomy.

The political tension in Turkey was on rise following the Gezi Resistance in 2013. Following the occupation of the Gezi Park, the government started a peace process to end the protracted conflict with PKK. The negotiations with PKK included recognition of several cultural rights for example easing the restrictions over the use of Kurdish. However, emphasis on centralization and criminalization of PKK and pro-Kurdish party HDP followed the failure of this attempt with the government abandoning the table. It is mostly argued that the empowerment of the Kurdish national movements and AKP's decrease of votes in 2015 general elections were the main reasons for the failure of the process (Savran, 2020, p. 778). Following the collapse of the peace process, President Erdoğan initiated his campaign to push for transition to presidential system and abandoning the parliamentary one.

After AKP and Gulen movement clash had been more apparent and strengthening of the opposition with June 7, 2015, general election, the AKP governments started to lean towards intensified authoritarian practices of control. The authoritarianization of the AKP governments and Erdoğan's increasing personal power structurally caused a re-centralization movement in public administration (Tansel, 2018a). The failed coup attempt gave President Erdoğan the momentum to centralize more executive power abusing his emergency authority. Although municipalities managed to maintain their fiscal autonomy, Erdoğan's intervention to the municipal governments had become apparent before 2016 and made its peak after the coup attempt (Tansel, 2018b).

The state of emergency equipped the government with the authority to start a purge allegedly against the Gulenists. However, this purge expanded towards municipalities as well. Some municipal mayors were deposed gradually following the coup (BBC, 2016). Nevertheless, the method of deposition varied depending on the party affiliation. While AKP member mayors were forced to resign, some mayors from Republican People's Party were discharged by the Minister of Interior. However, the fiercest purge was directed towards municipalities run by DBP¹ mayors. The Ministry of Interior appointed trustees to 95 out of 104 municipalities run by DBP (SOL, 2018). The government employed a similar practice after the 2019 Local Elections and purged 48 municipal mayors elected in Kurdistan of Turkey in the last two years (Evrensel, 2020).

The government started to intervene in the municipal duties and continue to limit authority of municipalities after the 2019 Local Election. Results of the election showed that the governing party lost substantial support and challenged in the local context which may signal a

¹ DPB (Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi – Democratic Regions Party) is a fraternal party to HDP and runs for local offices in Kurdistan of Turkey.

defeat in future general elections in the coming years. However, the transfer of power may mean a more immediate threat to the authority of the central government. The opposition alliance took over the management of the three largest and economically powerful cities in Turkey, Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir. As a response, following the election of the new mayor in Ankara and Istanbul, the central government started to restrict the local government authorities.

Indirect limitation of municipal authority on transportation services is a critical example of cracking down on municipalities run by opposition affiliated mayors. Changing the regulations on the local transportation committees where previously municipalities had the majority vote the government increased the central government's role in the matters of transportation in cities. According to the amended regulation, the number of centrally appointed bureaucrats in each of these committees were increased (Duvar, 2020). Changing the number of the members of transportation councils in cities, the government altered the balance in favor of centrally appointed bureaucrats, while it was the opposite previously. In other words, the central government agents had a veto power over several transportation related decisions.

The story of the central-local tensions over the local authority is an incremental process of change in the power balance. The balance seems to change overtime like a pendulum moving from decentralization to centralization and vice versa. However, actors who remain in power like AKP mostly demonstrate a pendulum movement, too. Depending on the balance of power, various actors enter alliances with others to invest in their future hold of power. Therefore, it is arguable that many of the actors operating in the central government decentralize to centralize. The attempts for decentralization serve to the power struggles and a method of management.

Attempts of decentralization open up a space for municipalities to act more autonomously to exercise their policy preferences. Therefore, many municipal actors have a reach to multiple

economic, political and social assets to manage their resources and local alliances to push for their preferred policies. Additionally,

Migration management during the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey

The Ottoman Empire had extensive experience in migration and how to manage migration. The resettlement and dispersion of various ethnic and religious groups across the Empire were already established practices. Nomadic groups and Yörüks migrating through the Empire's eastern borders were resettled in uncultivated areas to initiate agricultural production on idle lands (Kale, 2014, p. 258). Thus, the Empire had considerable experience in the resettlement of newly arrived populations. Additionally, forced migration was a strategy employed by the central administration to prevent local disputes between different factions and potential revolts (Erder, 2018, p. 22). However, according to Dündar (2018, p. 169), these practices were not institutionalized until the refugee waves began in the second half of the 19th century. Particularly in the pre-institutionalization period, individual and municipal actors played an active role in migration management (Dündar, 2018, p. 168). Given the role of urban institutions like waqfs in public works and service provision, along with the decentralized nature of service delivery in cities, municipal services and urban institutions likely managed incoming migrants without significant difficulty.

During the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire transformed into an empire of migrants. The first half of the century was marked by population shortages. A limited workforce meant vast amounts of uncultivated land. Along with trade and tariffs, one of the Empire's most significant income sources was agricultural production and land taxes (Pamuk, 2014, p. 12). Therefore,

uncultivated land translated into lower tax revenues. Chronic population problems drove the Palace to increase the workforce in these regions (Karpát, 2002, p. 205). In 1857, the Palace issued an imperial decree declaring that individuals, regardless of religious affiliation, who swore allegiance to the Ottoman Sultan were permitted to immigrate to Ottoman territory. The Palace even advertised this invitation in newspapers across Europe (Karpát, 2002, p. 206). The open invitation initiated a temporary influx of voluntary migrants mixed with refugees. However, compared to the forced migration waves of the latter half of the 19th century, the number of voluntary immigrants remained a small fraction of the overall migrant population. Although the refugees seeking asylum in the Ottoman Empire came from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Hungarians, Poles, Circassians, and Tatars, Muslim refugees constituted the majority (Karpát, 2002, p. 225). The predominantly Muslim and Turkish origin of the incoming population contributed to broader macro-political changes in the Empire. At the same time, the Empire's local administrative structure was evolving and played a crucial role in accommodating new arrivals.

The 19th century witnessed a series of events that significantly altered the territorial structure and demographic composition of the Empire (Hanioglu, 2008, p. 129). In 1804, the Serbian Revolt, which began as a local uprising against Ottoman officials and later transformed into a nationalist movement, marked the beginning of the Empire's disintegration in Europe. This was followed by the Greek rebellion in 1821, culminating in the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece in 1831. In 1854, the Crimean War erupted, lasting two years, and was followed by Russian expansion in the northern Black Sea and the Caucasus. The Bulgarian Revolt of 1876 led to the establishment of the Principality of Bulgaria in 1878, which later became the Kingdom of Bulgaria in 1908. The First Balkan War erupted in 1912. Each of these events triggered mass

migrations of the Muslim population from the Balkans into Ottoman territories. The disintegration of the Ottoman control in the Balkans reshaped the Empire's demographic structure. As the non-Muslim population declined, the proportion of Muslims increased (Karpát, 2004, p. 120). According to Karpát (Karpát, 2002, p. 228), this trend continued until the Empire's collapse and persisted into the Republican period until the late 1950s. Therefore, Ottomans' decline of power and loss of territory in the Balkans triggered a demographic change in favor of Muslim population within the Empire.

These demographic changes fueled the rise of Turkish nationalism among political and intellectual elites. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Empire was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious entity. However, following these developments, Turkish-speaking and Muslim populations became more concentrated in the remaining territories (Karpát, 2004, p. 120). Despite the predominance of Muslim migrants, the Ottoman Empire maintained a relatively liberal and open refugee policy. In contrast, the newly founded Republic adopted an ultra-nationalist approach, emphasizing Turkish-Muslim identity in immigration policy as part of its nation-building efforts (Kirişçi, 2000, p. 3). The function of immigration policy also evolved. While the Empire's more inclusive policy aimed to increase agricultural production and boost tax revenues, the Republic's selective policy prioritized homogenizing the population under a Turkish-Sunni Muslim identity (Şeker, 2013, p. 8).

According to Dündar (2018, p. 178), migration institutions established during the late Ottoman and early Republican periods were "reactionary, crisis-centered, spontaneous, reliant on charismatic leaders, and lacking organizational memory and continuity." The increased mobility of populations was handled by multiple central state branches, each with its own interests. Thus, migration was not merely a problem to be managed but also a tool that different actors utilized to

serve macro- and micro-political agendas. The dying Empire, and later the Republic, used immigrant resettlement to shape local and national identity formation and to influence societal developments. Consequently, large-scale immigration was not perceived as a crisis but rather as a solution to an existing one. The 19th-century immigration experience coincided with the Empire's modernization efforts. At that time, Europe had no equivalent examples of large-scale immigration or institutions designed to manage such flows. This compelled the Empire and its bureaucrats to develop their own migration institutions, a significant departure from the prevailing practice of importing administrative models, primarily from France, in the 19th century.

One of the earliest refugee waves consisted of Tatar and Nogai migrants from the Northern Caucasus and Crimea, fleeing Russian expansion. Both groups were Muslim and Turkish-speaking. The Tatars had long-standing ties with the Ottoman dynasty. The Crimean Tatars, in particular, held a privileged position as the only Muslim and Turkish-speaking community with a ruling dynasty, the House of Girays, which was a vassal of the Ottomans (Inalcık, 1994, p. 6). Due to religious and linguistic similarities, integrating Tatars and Nogais into the general population was relatively straightforward. However, the Ottomans granted them a degree of autonomy to avoid resistance from the Crimean aristocracy and a costly struggle for full submission (Inalcık, 1994, p. 7). The major challenge in the 19th century was the sheer number of refugees arriving from Crimea. Before the Crimean War, the numbers were manageable without central intervention, and provincial administrations had sufficient resources to accommodate them (Kırımlı, 2008, p. 761). The Ottoman government even encouraged this migration, as the newcomers were predominantly urban and skilled workers, a demographic the

Empire often lacked. While the Ottoman Empire was generally welcoming, it was relatively indifferent to migration management at the local level.

The earliest recorded arrival from Crimea occurred in June 1855, with 220 people (Kırımlı, 2008, p. 762). The primary agency responsible for managing refugees was the Ticaret Nezareti (Commerce and Trade Administration), which initially settled them in Dobruja. The Palace instructed provincial administrations to provide accommodations, financial support, and even soap for the refugees (Muchinov, 2016, p. 84). As numbers grew, Jews and Poles from Crimea also joined the migration to Ottoman lands. The local administrative response proved insufficient, prompting the establishment of a formal Migration Commission (Muhacirin Komisyonu) in 1860. This marked the first institutionalized effort to manage migration, albeit with limited resources and personnel (Dündar, 2018, p. 169).

The role of the state and non-state local actors was mostly to meet the burden of the incoming immigrants. The main non-state actors were local communities and religious networks. The regulation of 14 June 1878 officially designated local communities as the caregivers of the incoming population. The regulation estimated the distribution of migrants to villages and towns: one migrant family for ten local household (Dündar, 2018). Local communities played a key role in accommodating and integrating immigrant population particularly in the absence of official institutions. Official institutions' foundation, on the other hand, did not fully meet the needs of the process of immigrant accommodation. Dündar (2018) argues that local people's involvement in hosting and welfare of immigrants engendered a mentality of institution which helped and played the primary role in the integration of immigrants. Additionally, newly formed municipalities played a critical role in accommodating refugees, providing shelter and aid. Yet, most of the official response was inadequate to provide and manage increasing number of

refugees across the years as the political turmoil and ongoing wars displaced more people who sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire.

Gradually, the Ottoman Empire developed several transitory institutions to administer settlement procedures. These institutions were founded for issue specific needs of the central government and, even though they had short lives, state and non-state actors developed a series of refugee reception practices during the last days of the Empire.

The Immigration Flows during the Republican Period

The first half of the 20th century witnessed various waves of immigration from Greece, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia to Turkey. The Republic, like the late Ottoman Empire, benefited from this immigration as a tool for its homogenization policy and nation building project (Şeker, 2013, p. 8). Moreover, throughout the republican period, Turkey experienced rapid urbanization. The urban population increased from approximately 20% in 1950 to over 75% in 2018 (Zhukova et al., 2017). Such rapid urbanization reshaped the role of municipalities in Turkey. This section focuses on the Republic's immigration policy and the role of cities and local communities. Throughout the 20th century, a similar trend to that of the late Ottoman Empire can be observed regarding the central government's approach to local governance. The central government primarily framed local governments as administrative extensions of the central administration. Yet there had been a gradual increase in local governments' autonomy.

The main goal of early Republican immigration policies was the Turkification of the remaining population. The newly founded Republic encouraged Turkish and Muslim people to immigrate to Turkey (İçduygu & Aksel, 2013, p. 168). According to Çağaptay (Çağaptay, 2001, p. 12), early immigrants were eager to integrate into the new Republic and quickly embraced the Turkish identity, which was already part of their identity, with encouragement from the central

government. However, other Muslim groups, including the Kurds, were less enthusiastic about adopting the new national identity (Zürcher, 2004, pp. 169–172).

Between 1923 and 1945, 840,000 people migrated to Turkey (Kirişçi, 1995, p. 63). The Treaty of Lausanne triggered a significant wave of immigration due to the population exchange with Greece. While 1,500,000 Greek Orthodox individuals migrated to Greece, 500,000 Muslims migrated from Greece to Turkey (Erden, 2004, p. 279). The governments of Greece and Turkey, alongside the League of Nations, oversaw this exchange. The selection of populations in both countries was based on religious affiliation rather than ethnic background or native language (Kirişçi, 2000, p. 13). Through this forced migration, both governments used population exchange as a nation-building mechanism.

To regulate the resettlement of newcomers, the Parliament passed the Law of Settlement in 1924. The law categorized immigrants into two groups: "independent immigrants" (*serbest göçmenler*), who were privately sponsored, and "settled or state-sponsored immigrants" (*iskanlı göçmenler*) (Kirişçi, 1995, p. 63). Settled immigrants were provided land and resources in designated areas by the central government. The Muslim population migrating from Greece fell under this category, and until 1950, most immigrants arrived as settled migrants.

Another significant group of settled migrants was Yugoslavian immigrants, the majority of whom were Muslim. Prior to 1950, these immigrants faced settlement restrictions and were relocated to rural areas where Armenians and Greeks had previously been forced to migrate or had suffered massacres (Şen, 2007, p. 119). The abandoned properties of Armenians and Greeks were granted to the newcomers, which created tensions between immigrants and local populations, who had hoped to appropriate the vacated wealth. In some parts of Anatolia, this

local resentment led to long-lasting cleavages between the newcomers and the locals, which eventually evolved into political tensions (Erden, 2004; Shields, 2013).

In the early years of the Republic, Turkey, like the late Ottoman Empire, faced a population deficit and large tracts of uncultivated land. By the 1970s, however, the availability of agricultural land for settlement diminished, leading the state to halt the reception of settled immigrants until the 1989 wave of Bulgarian immigration. After 1950, immigrants were largely free to choose their place of residence, leading to settlement in newly developing industrial areas rather than agricultural regions.

The first wave of Bulgarian Turks arrived in Turkey after 1950. In 1950, the Bulgarian government-initiated talks with Turkey to facilitate the migration of Bulgarian Muslims. Meanwhile, forced migration policies were implemented against the Turkish population in Bulgaria. Between January 1950 and November 1951, approximately 155,000 Turks migrated from Bulgaria to Turkey (Kirişçi, 1995, p. 65). They were categorized as settled immigrants and were provided land and resources to integrate into host communities. Most of these immigrants were farmers who settled in Thrace, as well as Western and Central Anatolia.

From the 1950s onward, Turkey witnessed massive and continuous internal migration from rural areas to urban centers. As a result, cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Bursa became the primary destinations for immigrants, rather than rural areas. Karpat (2004) argues that rural-to-urban migration was driven by rapid industrialization, overpopulation, and poverty in rural areas. These migration waves continued through the 1960s and 1970s, reshaping Turkey's urban landscape. During this period, the term 'gecekondu' – meaning shantytown in Turkish – became widely used. These gecekondu areas were established by both internal migrants and immigrants

(Karpat, 2004). Earlier immigrants who had initially settled in rural areas also participated in this migration to urban centers.

By the 1970s, Turkey had also become a transit country for refugees and labor migrants heading to Western Europe, with annual numbers reaching 100,000 for irregular labor migrants and 150,000 for regular immigrants (Bosswick, 2009). The arrival of Afghan refugees in 1982 during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan marked another shift. Under the 1936 Law of Settlement, Turkey accepted "Afghans of Turkish origin" as free immigrants. However, municipal support was largely limited to infrastructure services, such as installing electricity, telephone lines, and sewage systems (Baran, 2019, p. 152). Before the arrival of Syrians, municipalities' involvement in migration was restricted to infrastructural needs.

The second wave of Bulgarian Turkish immigration occurred in 1989 due to the Bulgarian government's assimilationist policies, which included bans on speaking Turkish and wearing traditional attire in public. This was followed by the forced Bulgarization of Turkish names, triggering protests from the Turkish minority. After diplomatic efforts failed, Turkey opened its borders to those seeking refuge. However, unlike previous migrations, the 1989 Bulgarian migration was unexpected for Turkey (Erder, 2018, p. 163). Most immigrants initially settled in Edirne and Kırklareli, but following political changes in Bulgaria – including the reinstatement of Turkish-language education – many chose to return (Kirişçi, 2000, p. 12).

Since the late Ottoman period, Turkey has pursued a selective immigration policy. While the Empire briefly adopted a liberal approach by welcoming immigrants regardless of religion or nationality, both the late Empire and the Republic later implemented selective policies prioritizing ethnic Turks and Sunni Muslims as the core elements of Turkish national identity (Kirişçi, 2000; Kirişçi, 1995). Despite this increasingly strict policy, settlement regulations

loosened over time, allowing most immigrants to choose their place of residence after 1950, with the exception of the 1989 Bulgarian migration.

The continuous transformation of Turkey's population and administrative structure throughout the late Ottoman and Republican periods was accompanied by reforms in public administration. Inspired by European models, new administrative bodies were introduced, both at the central and local levels. Despite gaining greater political significance, autonomy, and financial resources, current scholarship suggests that municipalities played a limited role in immigration policy throughout the modern history of Turkey. Yet, municipalities are mostly ignored stakeholders of migration policy in Turkey. Further research is required to reveal more on the relation between municipalities and immigrants in the context of Turkey. This chapter, on the other hand, is an attempt to document history of immigration and local governments in Turkey and attempts to find out the intersections of both topics.

Municipalities were largely absent in providing direct support to immigrants. The central government orchestrated immigration and resettlement, with Turkish-speaking Muslim immigrants integrating relatively easily into urban communities. Municipalities' involvement was mostly limited to irregular contact with and occasional support for immigrant hometown associations (hemşeri associations), which provided essential services such as language education, legal guidance, and basic supplies (Trix, 2017, p. 43).

Therefore, municipalities' involvement in accommodating and responding to Syrian immigration to Turkey after 2011 may become a milestone for local governance in Turkey to expand institutional capacity and develop know-how to become a regular and recognized stakeholder of immigration processes.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline my methodological approach to address the main research question. I also detail the research design, which adopts an explanatory framework. However, as discussed in the following pages, due to the limited body of research on this topic in the context of Turkey it has exploratory features as well. Furthermore, the absence of a comprehensive inventory of municipal actions related to immigration requires a focus on systematic data collection as a core component of the research design. To address this gap and facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the newly created dataset, I employed a mixed-method research design.

The starting point for this dissertation was a crude observation of variation in immigration-related policy actions undertaken by municipalities in Turkey. Municipalities have played a pivotal role in accommodating immigrants since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war. This dissertation seeks to explore the reasons behind this variation. While addressing this central question, I also aim to investigate the trends in cities and how their policy preferences evolve over time.

There are multiple approaches to studying these factors. A qualitative research design could involve an in-depth examination of a small number of cities to uncover the underlying factors driving variation among municipalities. However, this approach might overlook broader trends across municipalities in different parts of Turkey facing similar challenges. Alternatively, a quantitative strategy could involve creating a sample of municipalities across Turkey to identify general patterns in municipal actions responding to immigration.

In this dissertation, I opted for a third approach: combining both strategies through a mixed-methods design. To investigate the variation across different localities and the factors and conditions shaping these differences, I systematically collected data on municipal actions of a large sample of municipalities. Based on the results, I conducted two case studies to delve deeper into specific cities and uncover the underlying dynamics causing variation among municipalities and over time. The primary advantage of this mixed-methods approach is its ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of variation by integrating the complementary strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods, offering insights that neither method could alone achieve.

Research Design

A mixed method research design can be applied various stages of a study – data collection, analysis, or interpretation – to purposefully integrate qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007, p. 4) define mixed method design as “research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in a single study or a program of inquiry.” Integrating qualitative and quantitative elements to research design dates back as early as 1800s. However, mixed methods could only gain recognition as a “third way” in addition to qualitative and quantitative research strategies only in late 1980s and early 1990s (Maxwell, 2016, p. 1). It became a popular methodological approach across disciplines. Nevertheless, a few number of studies resorted to mixed-method designs to study local government action in response to immigration and immigrants’ presence in urban settings (Balcioglu, 2024; Kaufmann et al., 2022; Williamson, 2018a).

Because a mixed method research design aims to combine the best of both worlds while mitigating limitations as well, it offers multiple practical and theoretical advantages over exclusively depending on quantitative or qualitative strategies to answer a research question. Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 298) suggest that mixed method research design helps to “have a more complete understanding of research problems and questions.” Green, Caracelli and Graham (1989, p. 258) pinpoint five purposes of mixed methods: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion. By addressing these purposes, a study can fully exercise the advantages of mixed-method design.

Triangulation involves using additional methods to provide confirmatory evidence, thus increasing validity and reducing potential bias in data collection and analysis. Complementarity refers to clarifying the results of one method – either qualitative or quantitative – with the other. Development points to utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods and procedures together for sampling. Initiation addresses gaps and contradictions in either of the methods with the other. Finally, expansion refers to employing qualitative and quantitative methods to address distinct parts of a research question in a single study. Addressing these purposes, mixed methods offer comprehensive and complex research designs to answer complex research questions and avoid potential limitations of employing a single perspective (Greene et al., 1989; Hendren et al., 2018).

Mixed-methods designs achieve these goals through various combinations of qualitative and quantitative strategies, either sequentially or in parallel. These combinations have evolved into distinct models of mixed-methods research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) identify 15 different attempts to classify mixed-method research designs. Over years, the number of design

types has changed due to different perspectives developed and infused into mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).

Various standard designs are proposed for mixed method research. For instance, a research design may aim to investigate results of a quantitative research process by integrating qualitative case studies. Alternatively, a research design can plan to collect qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously and continue with a joint interpretation of qualitative and quantitative analysis results. Creswell and Creswell (2018) coin three core design approaches for mixed-method research: convergent design (one-phase design), explanatory sequential design (two-phase design), exploratory sequential design (three-phase design). They also offer that the core designs were to be integrated into other methods, so that researchers could address even more complex research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 309–314).

Convergent design consists of two parallel procedures: qualitative and quantitative research. Both approaches address the same research question, but the results are analyzed independently. Upon completing both procedures, the results are merged and compared. The rationale behind a parallel design is to confirm or disconfirm results through comparison (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 300).

Explanatory sequential design, or two-phase design, begins with quantitative data collection and analysis. The results of this initial phase guide the subsequent qualitative research, identifying specific points for further exploration. In this design, the qualitative phase serves to explain and contextualize the quantitative findings. In other words, while the quantitative phase provides insights from a large dataset, the qualitative phase delves deeper into those results, offering greater depth and nuance. This combination is the key strength of explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 304).

Exploratory sequential design, or three-phase design, follows an inverse approach. It begins with a qualitative phase, often involving data collection and analysis through methods such as focus groups. This phase identifies key characteristics, features, or indicators that inform the subsequent stages. In the second phase, these indicators are operationalized. Finally, in the third phase, researchers use these operationalized indicators to conduct quantitative data collection and analysis. This design aims to: first, explore a small sample; second, operationalize the findings from the qualitative phase; and third, test these findings through quantitative analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 306).

Nevertheless, not all research questions can be adequately addressed using one of these core designs. Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 309) argue that more complex research questions may require adaptations or combinations of the core design patterns. They suggest more complex mixed method designs by “intersecting a secondary method (mixed methods) within a primary quantitative or qualitative research design..., intersecting mixed methods within another methodology..., intersecting mixed methods within a theoretical framework” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 309).

For this study, I employed a variant of a mixed-methods case study design. This approach integrates one or more core mixed-methods designs – convergent, explanatory sequential, or exploratory sequential – into a case study framework. The primary rationale for this design is “to develop or generate cases based on both qualitative and quantitative results and their integration” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 311).

Figure 1 illustrates equally prioritized qualitative and quantitative procedures of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, which inform the case selection phase. Research designs following this framework aim to leverage both qualitative and quantitative methods to identify cases and compare their results to answer research questions. This approach is referred to as an inductive mixed-methods case study design. By contrast, the deductive version begins with case selection and proceeds to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data on the chosen case(s) to interpret the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 311).

Applying the Mixed Method Case Study Research Design

In this study, I adopted an adapted version of the mixed-methods case study design to address my main research question. Specifically, I implemented a design that integrates convergent, explanatory and exploratory elements within a case study framework. Although the design is based on two-phase model explained by Creswell and Creswell (2018), reflecting the exploratory nature of this study it has exploratory elements integrated into the design.

My primary research question focuses on examining the variation among local government actions regarding immigrants and identifying the core variables that influence this variation, as outlined in the relevant literature. Accordingly, this research seeks to explore two key dimensions of local immigrant policies: the variation across different localities and the factors and conditions that generate this variation. The research design is structured into four stages:

- 1- Data Collection on Municipal Actions and Formation of the Dataset
- 2- Quantitative Analysis of the Data
- 3- Qualitative Data Collection
- 4- Case Study

The first stage focuses on gathering data on municipal actions using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to create an original dataset for the sampled localities. In the second stage, quantitative methods are employed to analyze the dataset and examine variation across the sampled localities. Based on the findings from this analysis, a case selection procedure was conducted between the second and third stages.

In the third stage, additional qualitative data collection was carried out for the selected cases. This data was integrated with the findings from the quantitative analysis to conduct a case

study on the chosen cases. The subsequent sections of this chapter provide a detailed explanation of each stage and the case selection procedure.

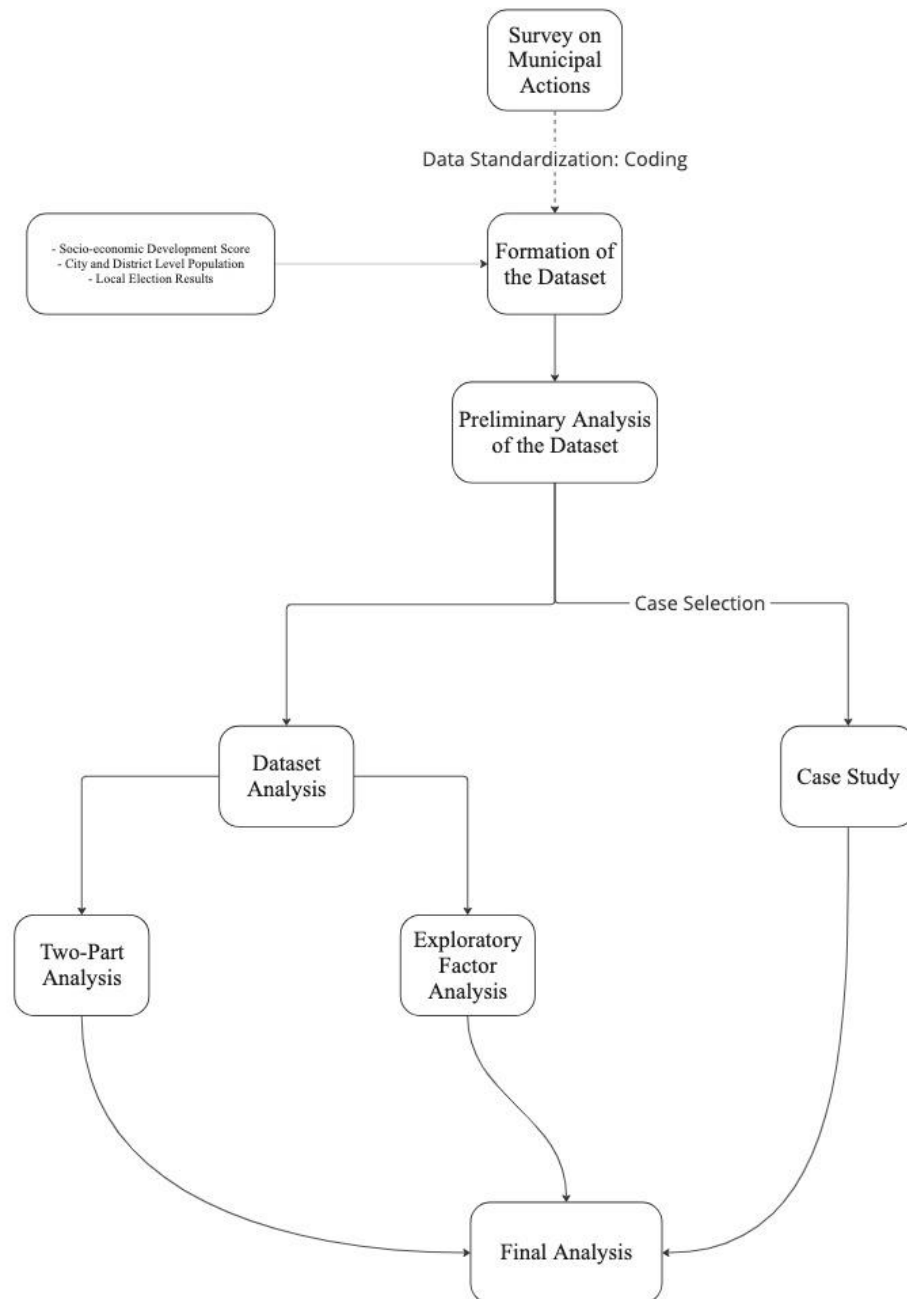


Figure 2: Overview of Research Design and Steps

Data Collection

In this study, there are three separate procedures of data collection:

- 1- Desk Research on Municipal Actions
- 2- Collecting Complementary Data for the Dataset
- 3- Qualitative Data Collection on Two Cases

Given the explanatory framework of the design, the first task was to establish the dataset. Therefore, I began with desk research on the activities of 249 metropolitan, city, and district municipalities regarding immigrants. This initial phase was also crucial for selecting cases for the qualitative data collection process. The desk research was followed by qualitative data collection focusing on two case studies. Additionally, external sources were utilized at every step of the analysis to supplement and enrich the data.

1- Collecting Municipal Actions and Formation of the Dataset

The literature on immigration and municipalities in Turkey examines various urban contexts and how local governments engage with immigrants, providing services in diverse ways and driven by different motivations. Most studies rely on qualitative data and analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of specific localities, their conditions, transformations, and relationships, aiming to make sense of this novel and growing policy challenge. However, the literature lacks studies that capture general trends and explore similarities and differences across Turkey. Balcioglu's dissertation is a notable exception, as it seeks to catalog municipal actions and employs a mixed-method strategy to investigate the motivations of local governments to provide services across cities in the Marmara region of Turkey (Balcioglu, 2021). Beyond this work,

there is a significant gap in studies examining local immigrant policy preferences across a large number of municipalities in Turkey.

As of 2024, Turkey comprises 81 cities and 922 districts, resulting in a total of 1,408 municipalities when small-town administrations are included. However, the density of immigrant populations varies significantly across the country. Covering all municipalities and investigating their actions is impractical within the scope of a dissertation. Moreover, only a limited number of municipalities are active in addressing immigrant-related issues, primarily due to the uneven distribution of immigrants. Cities with few or no immigrants are less likely to take any policy action in this area. As a result, covering all cities would be inefficient and unnecessary. Therefore, I decided to narrow my focus to a sample of cities.

I selected cities with an host-immigrant population ratio of at least 3%. Based on this criterion, there are 18 cities in the sample, which are Adana, Adıyaman, Burdur, Bursa, Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, Izmir, Kahramanmaraş, Kayseri, Kilis, Konya, Malatya, Mardin, Mersin, Nevşehir, Osmaniye, Şanlıurfa (Figure 3). The population data to sample the cities was drawn from the Presidency of Migration Management's website in 2021 (PMM, 2021). As one would reasonably expect, most of the sampled cities are located at or close to the Syrian-Turkey border. The rest of the sample are mostly cities with high industrial and agricultural production.

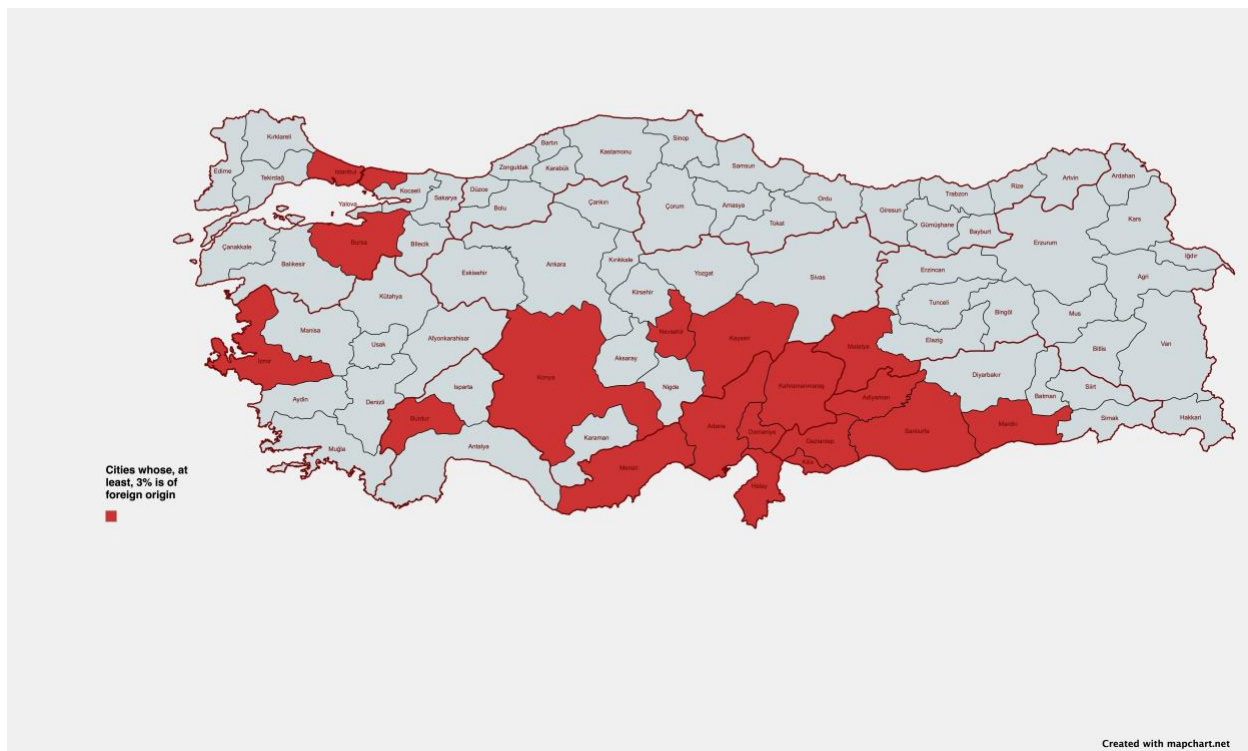


Figure 3: Map of Sampled Cities (based on PMM, 2021)

A more accurate sampling strategy would have involved including districts in the sampling procedure, alongside cities, to assess the percentage of the immigrant population registered in each locality. However, to incorporate districts into the sample, it would be necessary to have data on the number of immigrants registered in each district. Unfortunately, the PMM does not make this data publicly available. Despite my requests for such information through official channels, these were either declined, left unanswered, or redirected to public sources that only provided data at the city level. Furthermore, no reliable studies estimating district-level immigration data exist. As a result, the sampling was limited to data available at the city level.

The time scope of the research starts with the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. The civil war started in 2011 with wide spread anti-government protests and founding of the Free Syrian Army which indicated an armed rebellion against the central government (Ford, 2019, p. 2). The

first mass immigration, 252 Syrian citizens, from Syria to Turkey happened on April 29, 2011 (M. Erdoğan & Çorabatır, 2019, p. 4). I conducted the data collection in 2022. Therefore, I ended the time scope of the study by the end of 2021. This period covers 11 years of municipal actions from the start of the civil war in Syria until the final year of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Table 1: Sampled Cities with Immigrant Ratio (PMM, 2021)

City	Immigrant Ratio	City	Immigrant Ratio
Adana	11.3%	Kayseri	5.7%
Adıyaman	3.5%	Kilis	74.2%
Burdur	3.1%	Konya	5.4%
Bursa	5.8%	Malatya	3.8%
Gaziantep	21.6%	Mardin	10.5%
Hatay	26.3%	Mersin	12.5%
İstanbul	3.5%	Nevşehir	4%
İzmir	3.4%	Osmaniye	8.51%
Kahramanmaraş	8%	Şanlıurfa	20.1%

By 2021, the number of immigrants and their internal mobility across Turkey had stabilized. Although these ratios fluctuated in the later years, with some cities falling below the 3% threshold for sampling, the four-year period within the scope of this study exhibited relative stability in the immigrant population. Therefore, I relied on the demographic data from 2021, provided by the PMM's website (PMM, 2021).

After selecting cities based on the 3% threshold, I conducted qualitative data collection in 2022. Initially, I gathered texts from various sources to identify the types of activities municipalities had undertaken in relation to immigrants between 2011 and 2021. To identify municipal actions, I drew on a range of sources: local and national media outlets, official announcements by relevant state organizations (Presidency of Migration Management, Ministry of Interior, etc.), activity reports and publications by municipalities (annual reports, pamphlets, strategy documents, municipality websites), reports by INGOs and NGOs, academic publications (journal articles, books, working papers), and studies by researchers (reports, policy briefs, etc.) (see the Appendix A).

Municipalities in Turkey publish annual activity reports that are available on their respective websites. These reports provide detailed information on municipal activities, performance assessments, and budgetary information. Additionally, many international, national, and local organizations have issued reports on municipalities' activities concerning immigrants. These sources offer valuable insights into municipal actions. However, while some municipalities omit certain actions from their reports, others report but provide limited details about the scale and scope of their activities. Although these reports serve as crucial sources of data on municipal actions, they may not be as comprehensive as one would expect.

Furthermore, I discovered that some municipalities do not publish their activity reports online, although most larger municipalities and metropolitan districts do. Smaller municipalities, in particular, may be less consistent in fulfilling their reporting obligations.

Another key source of information on municipal activities is reports published by third parties, such as NGOs and international organizations (IOs). These reports are particularly valuable because they systematically collect data on municipal activities. However, they are

rarely comprehensive and typically cover only a small number of municipalities. Moreover, these reports often focus on specific aspects of immigrant policymaking, neglecting others. They also tend to focus on well-known or "exemplary" cases, while omitting less prominent ones. For instance, Sultanbeyli in Istanbul is frequently cited in these reports due to its exemplary and proactive immigrant policies, while cities like Izmir or Bursa, which have seen limited activity until recently, are often overlooked. Despite these limitations – such as their narrow scope and selective case coverage – these reports remain important complementary sources for data on municipal actions.

Academic research also serves as a valuable complementary source. Studies focusing on specific cities or districts collect data on municipal activities and, given their attention to validity and reliability, are generally dependable. However, many of these academic works do not provide a comprehensive inventory of municipal activities, instead concentrating on the analysis of selected actions. Nevertheless, together with third-party reports, academic research constitutes a reliable and important source of information on municipal activities.

The news articles have been a major source of data for this dataset. Following a search protocol, I collected news articles online to track municipal actions within the sample. Many of the actions mentioned in the annual reports, third-party reports, and academic studies were validated through these news articles. Additionally, the news articles served as valuable sources for identifying actions not captured by other sources, thus providing a broader range of municipal activities.

As previously mentioned, I employed a search protocol to collect municipal actions. The general web search was based on keywords most frequently used to refer to the immigrant population in Turkey. Historically, “muhacir” (migrant) and “göçmen” (migrant) were terms used

to describe different waves of immigration to Turkey. While "muhacir" was predominantly used during the 19th and 20th centuries by both the Ottoman and later Turkish Republic administrations, "göçmen" became more widely used by the mid-20th century. These terms were also embraced as part of the identity by Muslim and Turkish-speaking immigrants from Yugoslavia, Greece, and Bulgaria. More recently, terms such as "mülteci" (refugee), "sığınmacı" (asylee), and "Suriyeli" (Syrian) have entered common usage, particularly after the arrival of Syrian asylum seekers following the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. Although the Turkish public is familiar with mass immigration cases due to armed conflicts or persecution in neighboring countries or regions like Afghanistan, these were relatively smaller in scale compared to the Syrian influx. The scale of Syrian immigration over the years has made "Syrian" the generic term for immigrants in Turkey.

In the web search, I used combinations of each keyword with the names of municipalities and their mayors during the period from 2011 to 2021. For example, I searched "Adana Büyükşehir Belediyesi muhacir" on Google, and the same pattern was repeated with each of the keywords. After completing the search for the municipality's name, the same search was conducted with the names of the mayors. Throughout the timescope of this research, Adana had three mayors: Zihni Aldırmaz (2010-2014), Hüseyin Sözlü (2014-2019), and Zeydan Karalar (2019-present). Each mayor was combined with the keywords, and the search was repeated accordingly. Given the prominence of mayors in most municipalities, municipal activities are often publicly associated with the mayor's name rather than the municipality itself. Therefore, I included an additional search for the mayors in the protocol.

I recorded relevant news articles and announcements until the search results became repetitive, and no new information about the actions taken by municipalities was found. Each

news article or announcement was recorded with the following details: the access date, the publication date, the date of the municipal action (month and year, and day if available), a summary of the source, and any collaboration indicated with other local, national, or international actors or institutions. In total, 741 different sources were collected for municipal activities. Most of the sources include multiple actions.² For further data collection, I also relied on reports, academic publications, and annual municipal activity reports as valuable sources. A similar recording strategy was applied to the texts gathered from these additional sources.

Coding and Formation of the Dataset

After collecting raw data from the sources mentioned above, I conducted a coding procedure to categorize the incidents. Since forming the dataset was an exploratory effort in itself, I employed an inductive coding process. Inductive coding refers to a strategy where the codes are not predefined but rather developed based on the data itself. Inductive coding process in this dissertation was theoretically informed by the literature review in the Chapter 2. Therefore, although the coding process was inductive, it is also call it a hybrid process considering the theoretical insight drawn from the existing scholarship on the immigrant policymaking.

As I reviewed each text, I labeled it according to the type of activity it described. For each code, I provided a definition and adhered strictly to it. If I encountered an activity that did not align with the existing codes, I created a new code and developed a corresponding definition. This approach allowed me to explore the variety of activities involved. Given that no

² For further information on how the collected sources were translated into a dataset see Chapter 4.

systematically prepared inventory of municipal actions existed, this strategy was particularly helpful in creating a diverse and coherent pool of activities.

As the pool of codes was assembled, I labeled each text based on three factors: the year the activity occurred, the type of action(s) the municipality took, and whether or not the action involved cooperation. For example, in 2020, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality signs a protocol with GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – German International Cooperation Society) to distribute food and medical supply. The municipality’s role was to organize distribution and GIZ provides the supply (IBB, 2020). This action was coded with four labels “2020, material aid, coordinating aid distribution, international cooperation.” This action initially has two actions and one cooperation. For each of the label other than year, the labels included in the dataset whether each action occurred as “material aid 2020” and “coordinating aid distribution 2020.” Additionally, in another column, for Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality “international cooperation 2020” was recorded as 1.

After completing the coding process, the next step was to form the dataset. However, I encountered challenges in translating the codes into a structured dataset. As mentioned earlier, the raw data collected from various sources did not provide reliable information to assess the volume or outreach of the actions. By *volume*, I mean the quantity or any numerical representation of an action. For example, for the material aid code, there were only vague indicators, such as the number of boxes filled with various materials distributed to immigrants. Additionally, some action codes did not lend themselves to numerical indicators, such as psycho-social support or the organization of events. Similarly, the *outreach* of such activities posed challenges. While it might be possible to note that a municipality conducted employee training, it was not always feasible to determine how many employees participated.

Given these limitations, it was not possible to register each action in a standardized format that included details about its volume or outreach. To ensure a certain level of standardization across municipal actions, I recorded each action in the dataset based on whether or not the municipality undertook that action, rather than by its volume or reach. In other words, each action was recorded as a binary variable, indicating whether the action occurred in a given year. The cooperation codes were treated in the same manner. To create the dataset, I also drew on external sources.

2- Collecting External Data Sources

After translating the codes into the dataset, I gathered additional data from open sources to incorporate as variables for quantitative analysis. These variables include the socio-economic development score, population, and local election results. Socio-economic development scores were obtained from the Ministry of Industry and Technology's regularly published reports. These reports, based on an index, provide socio-economic development scores for each district and city in Turkey. Separate reports are published for cities and districts. The most recent city report was released in 2017, "Research on Cities' and Regions' Socio-economic Development Ranking – SEGE 2017"³ (Acar et al., 2019). Although there is a more recent district report, I used the 2017 version for districts to maintain consistency (Yilmaz et al., 2019).

Additionally, for each year covered by the study, I incorporated population data for each city and district. This data was sourced from the Turkish Statistical Institute's website (TÜİK, 2024).

³ Acar, Bilen Kazancık, Meydan Işık, 2017. "İllerin ve Bölgelerin Sosyo-Ekonomik Gelişmişlik Sıralaması Araştırması – SEGE 2017". Kalkınma Ajansları Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları. Ankara

Another source used as an external source was the local election results. For each city and district, local election results were used to identify the winning parties, if an incumbent mayor kept their seat, winning margins of mayors and political parties in local assemblies. During the time scope of the study, two local elections were held in 2014 and 2019. Official election results of each city and district were gathered from Supreme Committee of Elections (YSK, 2021).⁴ The details of how each of the external data sources was included as a variable in the analysis will be explained under the next chapter.

Intermezzo – Case Selection Procedure

Before proceeding with the third phase of data collection, I would like to detail the case selection procedure. Since this phase is directly tied to the case study component of the research design, it is necessary to explain how I selected two cases.

The role of case study in this research design is both explanatory and complementary in the larger mixed method research design. While because the quantitative first phase and qualitative second phase have an explanatory nature, case studies in this design also aims to further explore underlying factors with a closer look at the selected cases. As Gerring (2009) suggests, exploratory research benefits from focusing on cases that diverge in outcomes rather than those that differ entirely in other characteristics. This approach allows researchers to concentrate on the underlying reasons for divergence while controlling for numerous factors that could presumptively influence the outcome. While planning this research I reached a fork which forced me to make a decision. I would either choose to make a complementary addition to the first phase of the research design, the quantitative analysis of the sample, or mainly focus on

⁴ The Supreme Committee of Elections (YSK) is the highest judiciary authority supervising and executing the local and national elections in Turkey. It also declares the official results and resolves any disputes regarding the electoral process.

explaining and retesting the same hypotheses tested in the first phase of the research. I preferred to go with the first option to capture factors that are not examined in the quantitative phase. Therefore, I preferred a most-similar case selection. Given that this research seeks to identify factors and reasons why municipalities vary in their actions and approaches toward immigration and immigrants, a most-similar design is well-suited to the study's aims. While I was able to identify some of these factors in the first phase, I continued to discover other factors in the second phase as well.

Resultingly, the case selection procedure was based on divergence in the dependent variable, municipal activity, convergence in a set of criteria which aimed to eliminate internal factors that would cause divergence between cases.

To identify comparable cases, I used a set of criteria designed to minimize extraneous variation and isolate the factors of interest. These criteria included:

- Municipal Activity: Whether the city's metropolitan municipality exhibited active engagement in immigrant-related policies.
- Host-immigrant ratio: The proportion of immigrants relative to the local population.
- Local political party composition: The dominant political parties in a locality.
- Proximity to national borders: Geographical location relative to Turkey's borders.

These parameters were carefully chosen to eliminate potential confounding factors that might otherwise explain variations in municipal activity, ensuring the selected cases were optimally suited for the study's objectives.

Municipal Activity

Municipal activity forms one of the core starting points of this research. Understanding how and why municipalities chose to engage with immigrant issues, despite having no formal

legal obligations to do so, is a central question of this dissertation. While some municipalities remained silent or indifferent, others took initiative. Active municipalities adopted various approaches to managing immigrants' arrival as a new population. Some reacted to immediate needs, while others proactively planned their activities. Since the focus of this research is to explore the factors influencing municipalities' choice of specific actions, fieldwork was conducted in areas where such activity exists. At the city level, potential field sites were expected to demonstrate activity in the field of immigration, ideally with varying levels of activity over time.

Municipal activity can be examined at two levels. Rather than treating cities as single entities, I analyzed municipal activity at both the metropolitan and district levels, leveraging the available data. For this criterion, cities were required to meet two conditions: an active metropolitan municipality in at least one of the time periods and variation in the percentage of active municipalities within the city. For the first condition, I sought similarity between cases, while for the second, as mentioned earlier, I focused on differences.

Host-Immigrant Ratio

In cases of mass immigration, the local host-immigrant ratio holds significantly more weight than in situations where immigration occurs over an extended period. According to Ramakrishnan and Wong (2010b), the sheer number of immigrants within a community does not substantially influence public attitudes toward immigrants. However, their study does not account for the pace of immigration. A sudden, large-scale influx of immigrants, rather than gradual changes, may provoke nativist and anti-immigrant sentiments (C. Wilson et al., 2022).

In Turkey's case, particularly following the arrival of asylum seekers from Syria, the speed of immigration increased exponentially within a short timeframe. During the Syrian Civil

War, approximately 4 million forced migrants sought refuge in Turkey (PMM, 2021). Although Turkey hosted immigrants in different periods, the scale and visibility of Syrian immigration to Turkey was unprecedented until 2015. As Hopkins (2010) suggests, a rapid increase in the immigrant population, accompanied by anti-immigrant national rhetoric against immigrants, potentially engender anti-immigrant attitude. Although the ruling party endorsed the open-door policy and supported the arrival of Syrians, societal anti-immigrant sentiments resonated among opposition parties.

Acar (2021) further demonstrated that a higher percentage of Syrians in urban Turkey correlates with increased hostility toward immigrant populations. Referencing the contact hypothesis, Acar notes that interaction with immigrant groups tends to reduce prejudice and foster more positive attitudes. However, this dynamic is primarily observed in cities with a low host-immigrant ratio. In cities where immigrants make up more than 10% of the population, public attitudes toward immigrants tend to deteriorate. This suggests that both the pace and scale of immigration significantly shape societal responses. As such, similarity in host-immigrant ratios is a critical factor in selecting case study cities.

Given that a large immigrant population arrived in a city within a relatively short period of time, municipalities have possibly grown concerns due to the incoming population on two fronts: their service capacity and the host community's consent to allocate resources to immigrants. Since central government funding primarily supports services for citizens of Turkey, the accelerated arrival of immigrants strained municipal service provision. This decline in service quality and capacity has the potential to fuel dissatisfaction within host communities. Thus, when selecting case study cities, it is essential to consider those with comparable host-immigrant ratios to ensure consistency in analysis.

Local Political Party Composition

Beyond host-immigrant ratios, national politics and the broader ideological landscape exert significant influence on local policymaking. National political discussions often pressure local actors, shaping policy outcomes. Several studies highlight how political party support and ideological stances influence municipal immigrant policies (Campomori & Caponio, 2017). Issue framing is a fundamental component of policymaking (e.g. Bacchi, 2009). Ideology is a factor which shapes how one problematizes and frames. Local actors and political parties with differing ideological orientations frame immigration as a policy issue in diverse ways. Consequently, the dominant ideology of a local community, along with the ideological affiliations of mayors and leading political parties, plays a pivotal role in shaping local policy decisions.

To account for these dynamics and select cases for qualitative phase of the research, the cities in the larger sample were categorized based on the dominant political parties securing first and second place in local election results over the eleven-year timeline. Cities with similar dominant parties were selected to minimize ideological variation. This approach ensures that intersecting factors influencing the framing of immigration as a policy issue are examined within a coherent analytical framework.

Proximity to National Borders

The location of a city is a critical determinant of policy outcomes. Particularly in the context of local immigrant policy, a city's proximity to borders – and which specific borders it is near – provides insights into the general attitudes of policymakers and the public. In Turkey, geographical proximity to the southeastern borders (Iran, Iraq, and especially Syria) is associated with more negative attitudes toward immigrants. Acar (2021) argues that negative sentiment

against Syrians is higher in cities closer to the border compared to the national average. At the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, many asylum seekers initially fled to border cities or those close to the region. As the violence escalated, more people immigrated to Turkey, with the border regions bearing the brunt of this influx. Consequently, cities near the border have been host to immigrants for longer periods, making the host population more likely to develop negative sentiments. In such cities, immigration often becomes a source of social and political polarization (Hopkins, 2010). For this research, the selection of cases considered the proximity of cities to the Syrian border.

Divergent Criteria

The selected cities, Istanbul and Izmir, were chosen based on their **divergence** in three main outcomes: the change in the level of policy activity between periods, differences in overall activity levels, and variations in the percentage of active municipalities within each city. Each of these criteria were determined based on potential factors of divergence in municipalities' approach to immigration and immigrants.

- 1- *Change in Municipal Activity Over Time*: This criterion focuses on how municipal activity levels evolve across different periods. While some municipalities demonstrate consistency in their immigrant-related policies, others do not. Exploring these temporal changes provides insight into the factors influencing policy continuity or inconsistency.
- 2- *Overall municipal activity*: This refers to the total number and frequency of policy actions recorded over the years. While it does not measure the volume of activity, this aggregation of binary-recorded activities highlights variation between cities in terms

of municipal engagement with migration policy issues. As cities differ in their overall activity levels, they are also likely to diverge in the types of actions they undertake.

- 3- *Percentage of Active Municipalities*: This criterion examines the proportion of municipalities within a city that engage in immigrant-related actions. In some cities, municipal activity is widespread, while in others, only a small subset of municipalities demonstrates any involvement. This variation suggests different underlying dynamics motivating either activity or inactivity, providing a valuable avenue for exploring the factors driving municipal behavior.

Cases were selected based on divergence in these factors and convergence in municipal activity, host-immigrant ratio, local ideological tendency and geographical location. Based on the criteria outlined above and insights derived from the dataset, I selected two cases: Istanbul and Izmir. A more detailed discussion of how this decision was reached will be provided in Chapter 7.

3- Qualitative Data Collection about Two Selected Cases

Following the case selection procedure, I conducted fieldwork to collect qualitative data on the cases. In Istanbul, I focused on Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and two district municipalities: Küçükçekmece and Zeytinburnu. In Izmir, I concentrated on Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Karabağlar Municipality and Konak Municipality.

During the fieldwork I conducted twenty seven interviews between January and June 2023. Fifteen of the interviewees were from Istanbul while the rest were from Izmir. In total, seven of these were municipal officials, twelve civil society workers, three immigrants and six municipal street-level bureaucrats. Seven out of twenty seven interviews were conducted remotely due to logistical convenience. The rest were conducted face-to-face. All were semi-

structured interviews with changing set of opening questions depending on the interviewees' role in immigrant policies. The anonymity of the interviewees was ensured. None of the quotations was tracable to any interviewee.

This fieldwork had two main purposes. First, it aimed to closely examine the field to assess the alignment of the hypotheses tested in Chapter 4 and to understand the impact of the main factors causing variation across localities. Second, it sought to go beyond the insights provided by the dataset on municipal actions, delving into the patterns and mechanisms driving power contestation at the local level. Even though I focused on municipalities specifically, my aim was to capture a general picture of the policy environment in these two cities.

I focused on the main stakeholders of local immigrant policies to seek interview opportunities: municipalities, local branches of the central government, civil society organizations, immigrants, and members of the host community. Among these, municipalities were my primary interest. Consequently, I prioritized identifying interviewees from Istanbul's and Izmir's metropolitan and district municipalities. Local branches of the central government were also critical actors, given their role in data collection and implementing central government policies. CSOs, with their local, national, and transnational networks, play a key role in building municipal capacity. Many municipalities rely on CSOs for financial resources and expertise. Additionally, CSOs often act as intermediaries between municipalities and both immigrant and host communities. Lastly, I aimed to interview immigrants and host community members to understand their perspectives. Immigrant agency, often overlooked, is essential for the success of immigrant policies, while host communities influence the nature of local immigrant policies as the electorate of municipal mayors, who are pivotal in shaping local policies.

Despite my efforts, I was unable to secure interviews with representatives from local branches of the central government, such as officials from local directorates of migration management. Repeated attempts to establish contact and arrange interviews were unsuccessful.

In municipalities, I targeted officials who work with immigrants or on immigrant policies. The municipalities in my sample either have dedicated departments or specific units addressing immigration and immigrant-related issues. These branches are central to local immigrant policymaking. In municipalities actively engaging with immigrants, multiple departments often contribute, but immigration is not always their primary focus. Units or departments dedicated to immigrant-related work possess the advantage of collaborating across departments and maintaining close contact with immigrants on the ground. These officials are typically well-informed about both the operational and experiential aspects of their work. Furthermore, they are often specialized in immigration issues and are part of Turkey's expanding network of immigration professionals. Consequently, they were my primary choice for interviews among municipal employees. I also attempted to arrange interviews with municipal mayors but was unable to secure any.

Among CSOs, I focused on organizations collaborating with municipalities. CSOs engage with municipalities in various capacities, such as providing consultancy in formal boards or informal networks and collaborating on projects where they contribute financial or operational resources. I anticipated that these CSOs would be particularly knowledgeable about the issues at hand. However, I remained cautious of potential bias, as CSOs working in partnership with municipalities might be more selective in their criticism of these partners. Therefore, I also sought to interview CSOs active in the field but not directly collaborating with municipalities.

With the completion of the fieldwork, the data collection procedure ended for this research. While I conducted analyses on the collected data previously, the final assessment and analyses were conducted after the fieldwork. The analytic discussion will offer further details in relevant chapters.

Limitations

Finally, I would like to address some limitations arising from the research design. As mentioned earlier, this research is based on an explanatory mixed method design with exploratory characteristics aiming to investigate variation among municipalities. To analyze differences in local immigrant policies, I collected data on local government actions targeting immigrant populations and their presence. Since no comprehensive inventory of municipal actions existed, I conducted a sampling procedure to compile this data. However, certain limitations stem from the data collection process and the nature of the sources used.

The data collection process followed a structured search protocol to capture as many documents as possible and create an inventory of municipal actions. However, several challenges are inherent to this method. One of the primary sources of information was news articles, which introduces two notable issues related to data availability.

First, information obtained from media sources often lacks consistency in the level of detail provided about municipal actions. While some news articles offer comprehensive information, such as the scope, specific target groups, the amount of aid provided (if material assistance), or the duration of an initiative, others omit most or all of these details, reporting only the mayor's or municipality's name. These discrepancies likely result from varying editorial priorities or resource capacities of media outlets, leading to inconsistencies in the collected data.

Second, media outlets tend to focus their coverage on major urban centers, often at the expense of smaller or mid-sized cities. National outlets, in particular, prioritize developments in cities like Istanbul, resulting in a greater volume of data about urban centers compared to other localities. A third and more substantive bias concerns the visibility of actions in public sources. Depending on the context, different types of actions may be actively publicized or concealed from the public eye. In some localities, any action that would be perceived as an accommodating action for immigrants may draw backlash. Nevertheless, it is possible to see increasing number of isolationist actions in election periods or any encouragement by the central government. The consequence is a structural undercount of several actions in any dataset built from publicly available sources, including this one. As to be discussed further in the Chapter 8, fieldwork also proved that some municipalities tend to conceal their actions. Yet, dominant number of integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions may partially overcome this problem, counterintuitively.

Furthermore, municipalities with better infrastructural capacity, communication departments and larger budgets have the opportunity to publicize their activity easier than compared to those with lower capacity. During the data collection, it was apparent that larger municipalities publish their activity reports more regularly and find more space in media outlets. Therefore, these municipalities' activities are more publicly available. Municipalities with limited resources required more digging to catalogue municipal activities. Therefore, particularly for smaller district municipalities recording and publicizing their work may become more troublesome than larger ones. This limitation is acknowledged throughout the analysis, and the case study chapters draw on interview material to recover instances of restrictive behaviour that

do not appear in official or media sources. These three issues introduce potential biases in the dataset derived from media sources.

To address these challenges, I applied the search protocol as extensively as possible to maximize coverage. Additionally, municipal annual reports served as another significant data source to verify and complement information obtained through media searches. Although annual reports have their own limitations, they often work well alongside news articles as complementary sources.

For each of the municipalities, after collecting relevant sources via the web search, I also collected annual action reports by municipalities. In Turkey, municipalities, city and district, are obliged to share regular annual activity reports on their websites. Using these annual reports, I crosschecked the activities collected via the web search. Although all city level municipalities share their annual activity reports on their websites, several district municipalities, particularly the smallest ones, did not share these reports. In total 32 out of 249 municipalities, I could not collect annual activity reports. Furthermore, reports by NGOs, international organizations, and academic publications provided additional layers of information, helping to mitigate potential biases in the dataset by diversifying the sources used. I still included most of the collected data on these municipalities in the dataset since almost exclusively annual reports published were compatible with the results of the web search. However, I excluded web search results in case that, for example, a news article did not provide details about the municipal activity. Some texts were missing information on the year or the exact content of the activity.

Another notable limitation stems from restricted access to immigration-related data maintained by state agencies. State-provided data on immigration is limited to national-level figures, and district-level data on immigrant registration is not made available. As mentioned

earlier, my inquiries to obtain such data were unsuccessful. The lack of district-level data affected the sampling process, as more granular information would have facilitated the selection of districts for analysis. Additionally, access to district-level host-immigrant ratios would have enabled a deeper investigation of the relationship between this variable and policy trends at the local level.

Following this chapter, the dissertation proceeds with three chapters that analyze the data collected during the research process. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the dataset, detailing its structure, the periodization and variables generated, and the general trends observed in the sampled localities. Chapter 5 addresses the central question of the dissertation by examining variations among municipalities, identifying the problem areas they focus on, and exploring the factors influencing these variations and focus areas over time. Finally, Chapter 6 shifts to an in-depth analysis of two selected cases, drawing on the dataset, fieldwork findings, and external sources to further investigate the hypotheses tested in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 - The Dataset

This chapter aims to describe and introduce the dataset which is the backbone of this research. In addition to secondary sources and the findings in the field, the dataset helped me to navigate in the larger policy context via a sample of municipalities. One purpose of forming this dataset was to create a systematic inventory of actions by municipalities. Thus, I could investigate the variation among municipalities in Turkey. This dataset includes, along with collected action data as described in the methodology section, further data on sampled cities and district. Below, I briefly explained the content of the dataset.

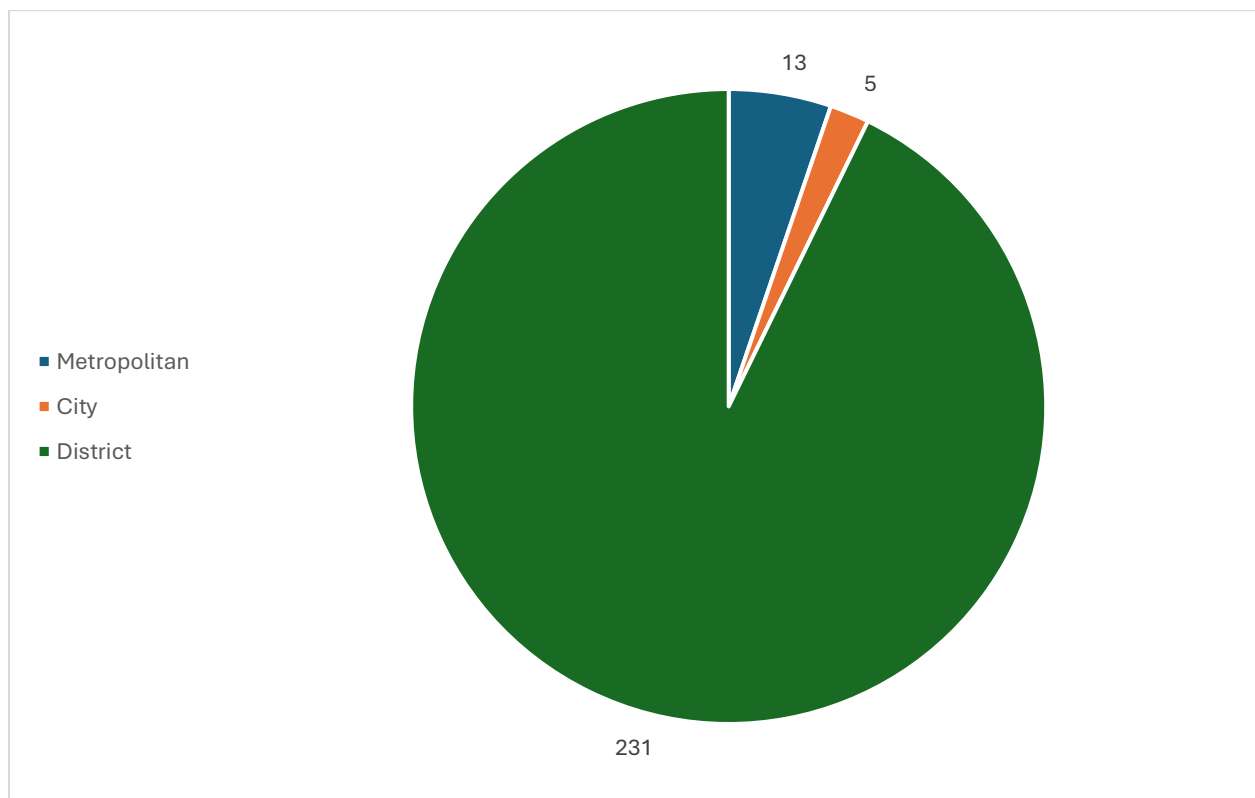


Figure 4: Distribution of Municipalities by Legal Status

The dataset includes 249 municipalities in total: 18 cities and 231 district municipalities. 13 of city municipalities are categorized metropolitan based on the legal framework in Turkey.

Metropolitan cities are those with population higher than 750000. Other city municipalities are of cities with population lower than the threshold of 750000. District municipalities are under those operating as second tier municipalities under metropolitan and city municipalities. As indicated in the Figure 1, majority of municipalities in this sample are district municipalities.

The timeframe of actions collected were between 2011 and 2021. While actions were categorized in the dataset yearly based, I also created custom periods based on the local electoral cycles in Turkey. Due to the starting and ending year of this study, these periods are asymmetrical in terms of the years they cover. Because there were local elections in 2014 and 2019, I divided 2011-2021 period into three: 2011-2014 (Period 1), 2014-2019 (Period 2), 2019-2021 (Period 3). Such periodization proved useful to see how electoral cycles and potential changes across periods; mayors or party affiliations; might affect policy changes and variation.

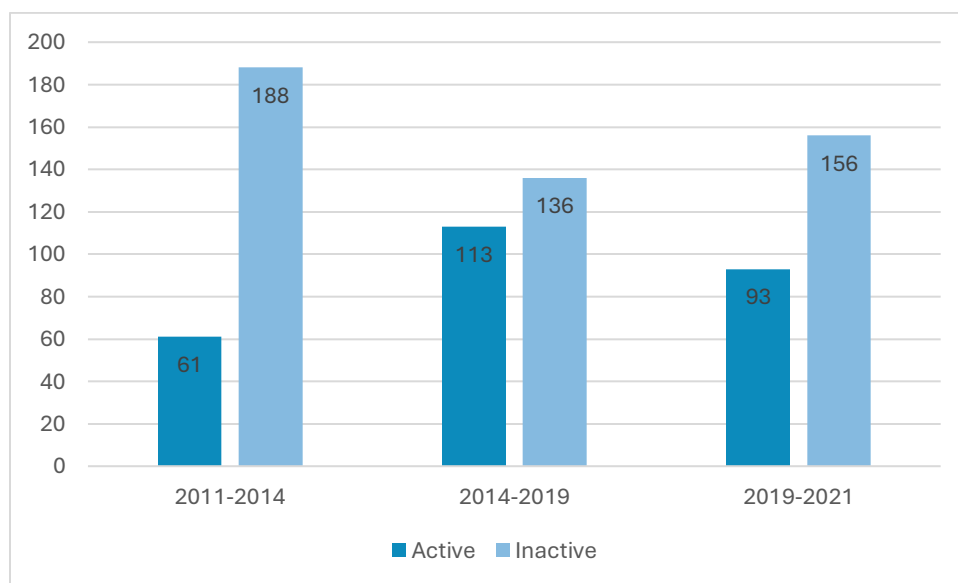


Figure 5 Active and Inactive Municipalities

Within these periods, municipalities' activity in the immigrant policy field changed. As indicated in the Figure 2, the highest number of active municipalities were in 2014-2019 period. Yet, it is also possible to see in each period majority of municipalities were inactive.

As the result of the data collection procedure described in the methodology section, the dataset catalogues 43 different type of actions by municipalities. These actions were categorized under four large action direction and approaches. Actions can either be in integrationist or isolationist direction in terms of their potential outcome. As for approach, actions may become humanitarian or right-based. The weight of these actions also changes over time.

Briefly defined, *integrationist* actions are those that foster the social, economic, and political inclusion of immigrants in the host community – measures that seek to create shared spaces and facilitate immigrants' access to urban life. *Isolationist* actions work in the opposite direction, restricting immigrants' participation or public visibility. These two directions constitute the first axis of the typology. The second axis captures the underlying logic of the action. *Humanitarian* actions respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable newcomers, providing welfare, emergency services, and material support without necessarily altering the legal framework governing immigrants' status. *Rights-based* actions, by contrast, treat immigrants as rights-holders and aim to establish or expand their formal entitlements, creating an institutional framework for their long term participation in civic life. A single action can occupy both axes simultaneously - for instance, legal consultancy is both integrationist and rights-based, while emergency accommodation is both integrationist and humanitarian. This cross-categorisation is not a weakness of the typology but reflects the multidimensional nature of municipal action. The two axes are designed to capture different aspects of the same action independently – its direction (integrationist or isolationist) and its underlying logic (humanitarian or rights-based) – allowing each action to be described more precisely than a single-category framework would permit. Furthermore, as to be seen in the Chapter 7, a municipality may take integrationist and isolationist or humanitarian and rights-based actions along with each other. Neither end of the

axes is mutually exclusive. The full development of these categories, including the rationale for the two-axis structure, is presented in Chapter 7.

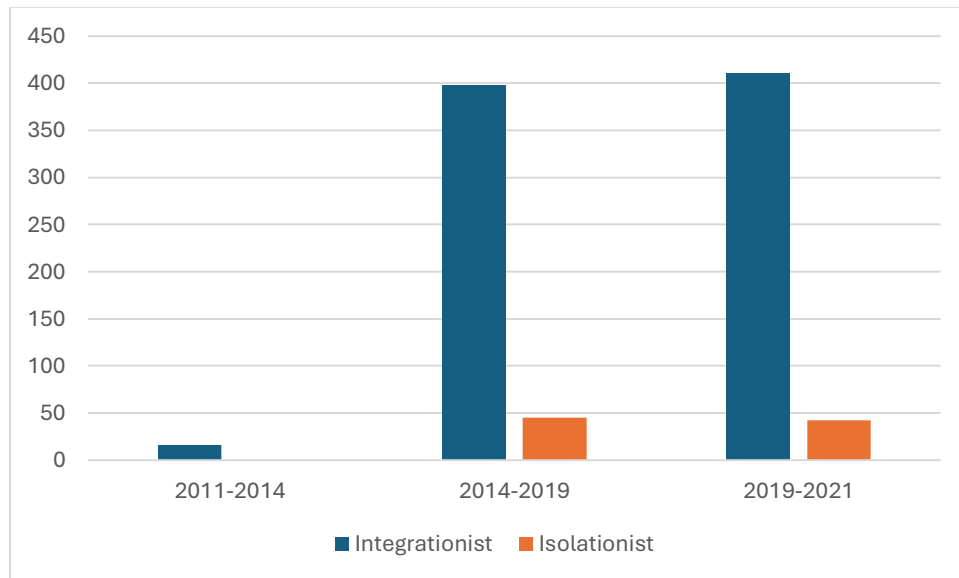


Figure 6: Total number of integrationist and isolationist actions across years

The Figure 3 shows that integrationist actions were overwhelmingly higher than isolationist actions within the time scope of the research. Active municipalities in the sample did more integrationist actions than isolationist actions. As mentioned before, this might be result of potentially limited coverage of isolationist actions in official documents and the media. Yet, in Figure 4, there was more balance between humanitarian and right-based actions. Overall, right-based actions gained over humanitarian actions in the period of 2019-2021.

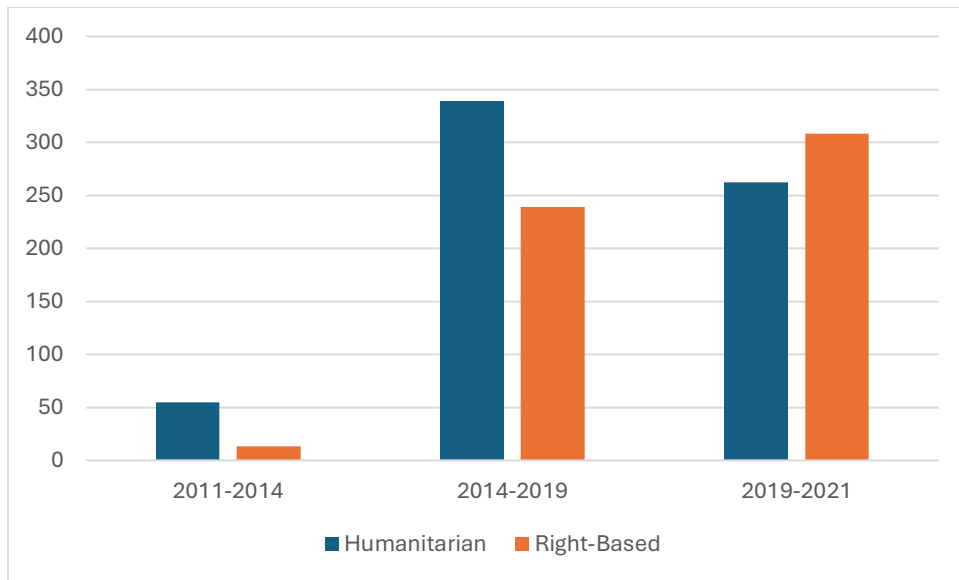


Figure 7: Total number of humanitarian and right-based actions across years

Distribution of political parties between 2011 and 2014 is as indicated in the Figure 5. AKP was the most popular political party within the sample. Most of the mayors in this period were affiliated with AKP which was followed by CHP. Yet, diversity does not directly mean action or less dominance by the governing party. AKP dominated the political arena and voters consolidated around a limited number of political parties.

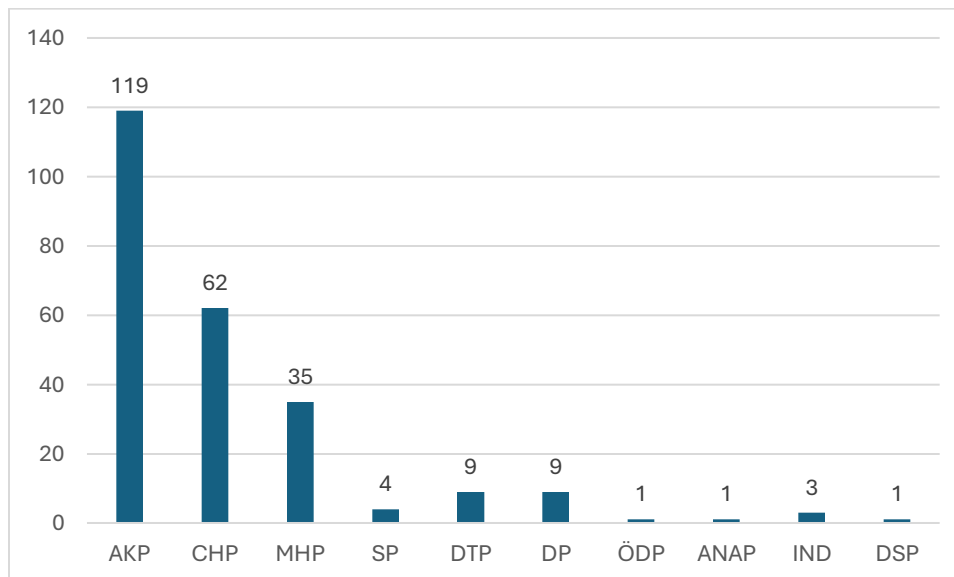


Figure 8: Part distribution of municipalities in 2011-2014

In 2014-2019 period, it is possible to see increasing dominance of AKP compared to other political parties. This trend did not change within the time scope of this research. The number of AKP affiliated mayors almost triples the closest competitor party's number of mayors. Therefore, while we investigate policy preferences in the field, it was dominated by a specific party. Additionally, the diversity of political parties within the sample was in decrease compared to the previous period. Particularly, within the sampled cities, there was mostly an open competition between AKP and CHP, and in some cities and districts MHP.

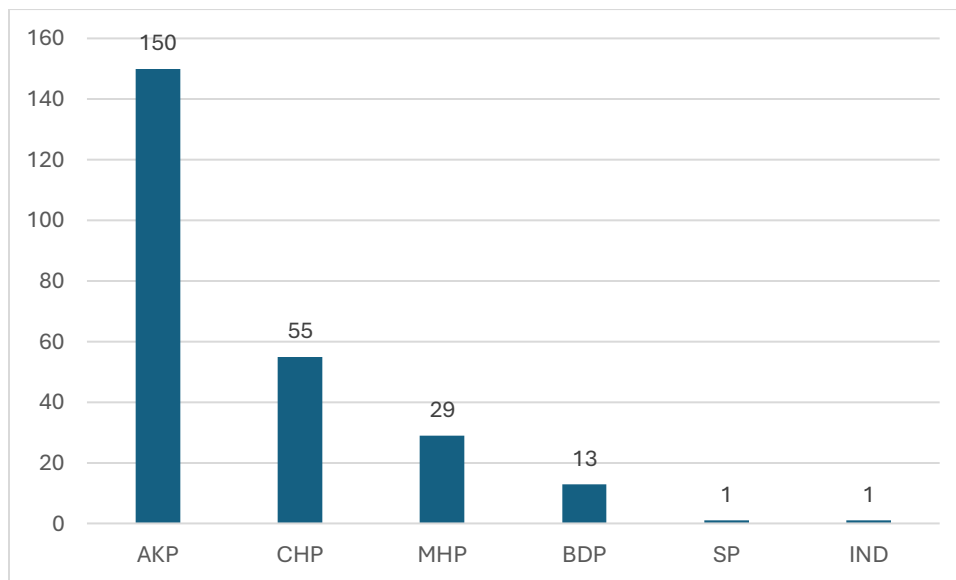


Figure 9: Party distribution of municipalities in 2014-2019

In the period of 2019-2021, CHP increases the number of municipalities taken over but still there was an undisputed majority of AKP in terms of the numbers. Still, this minor change would be a rising trend in the Turkish politics. Especially in local elections the main opposition party, CHP, gained further victories. Yet, this development is not part of this research.

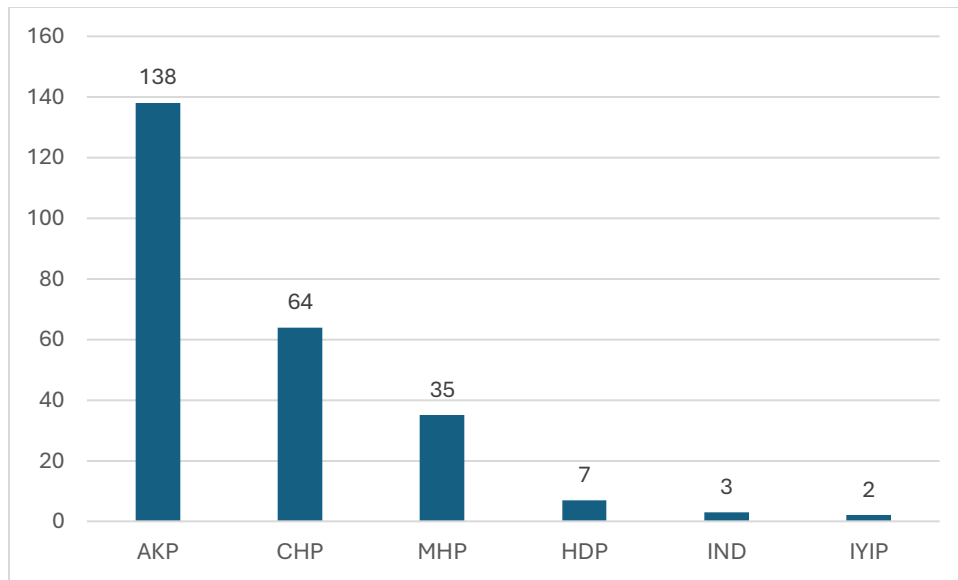


Figure 10: Party Distribution of municipalities in 2019-2021

As for population, Istanbul is the most populated city in the sample. Izmir is the second most populated city with a population of slightly over 4 million. Mean population is 2302954,06. Median population is 1552534,5. Apart from Istanbul, the other cities are relatively close to each other in terms of their population.

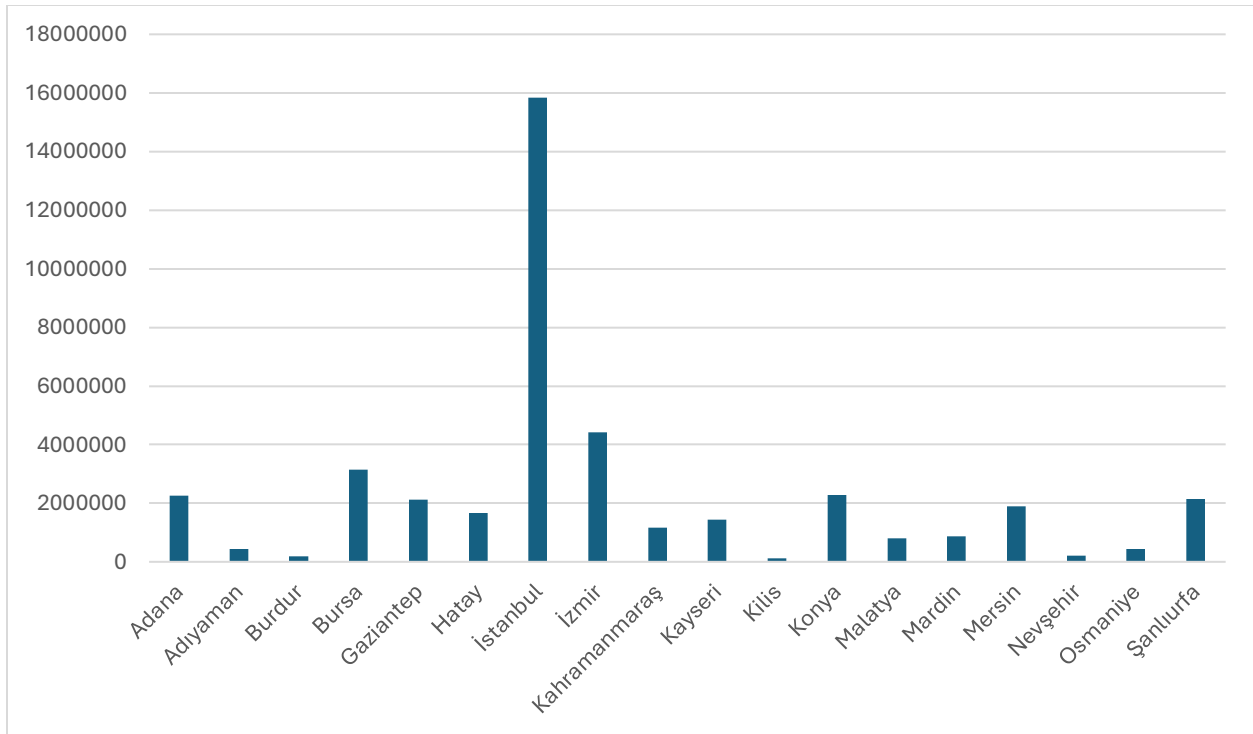


Figure 11: Population by City (TUIK, 2023)

The dataset also includes data on winning margin in each city and district municipal election. For each city and district, this margin changes and indicate local popular support for the elected mayor. As indicated in Figure 9, in some cases like Burdur, Bursa, Gaziantep, Istanbul and Izmir, average margin of winning in the city did not change between two elections. Yet, in Adana, Malatya, Mersin or Osmaniye, the margin of winning changes dramatically compared to previous elections.

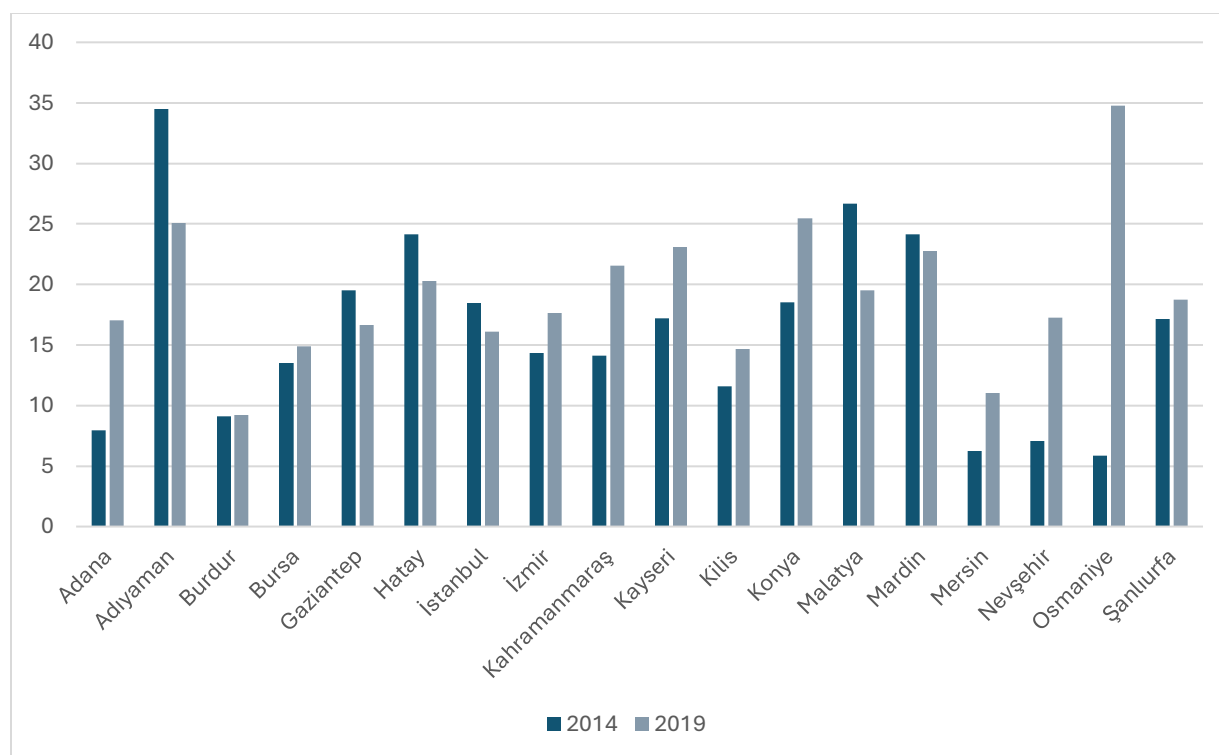


Figure 12: Average Margin of Winning by City in 2014 and 2019 local elections

Problem areas represent a further dimension of the dataset. Rather than analysing all 43 municipal action items individually, I grouped them into eight empirically derived problem areas using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), a dimension reduction technique that identifies which actions tend to co-occur across municipalities. The factor analysis methodology is discussed in Chapter 4 and the full factor loadings and groupings are presented in Chapter 6; here the eight categories are introduced briefly as a descriptive tool for the figures that follow. The eight problem areas are: *orientation* (familiarising immigrants with host-community services and institutions), *resilience building* (supporting immigrants' economic and social self-sufficiency), *institutional adaptation* (restructuring municipal procedures to accommodate an immigrant population), *immigrant accommodation* (providing housing and material aid), *needs management* (addressing basic and urgent needs), *approaching immigrant communities* (building formal channels of communication and participation with the immigrant population), *palliative help*

(providing minimal one-off assistance), and *limiting public presence* (restricting immigrants' visibility or activity in public space). As shown in Figure 13, the relative attention municipalities directed at these eight problem areas shifted considerably over the eleven-year period, with orientation and resilience building becoming increasingly prominent while the final category remained marginal throughout.

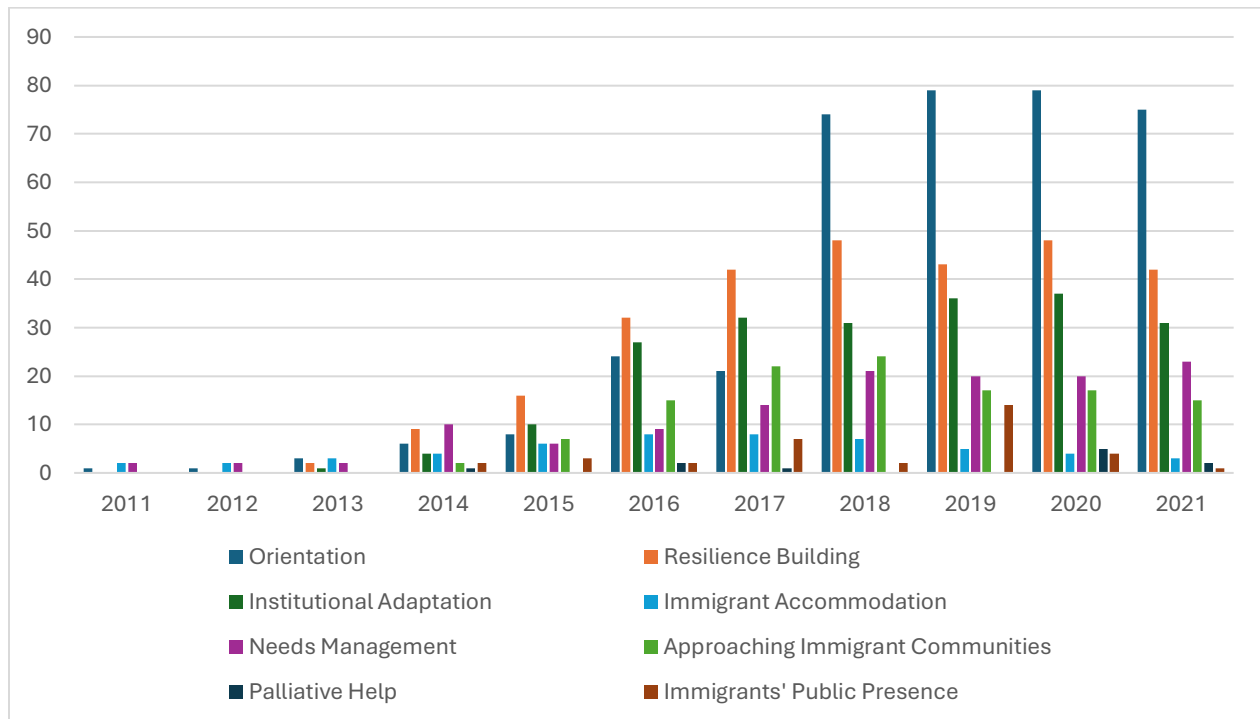


Figure 13: Focused problem areas across years

In addition to the dependent variables described above, the dataset includes a set of independent variables that aim to cover structural, political, and relational factors expected to shape municipal immigration policy. Each variable is introduced briefly here; the full theoretical rationale, operationalization details, and hypothesised effects are discussed in Chapter 7.

Socioeconomic Development Score measures the economic and social development level of each locality, based on the composite index published by the Ministry of Industry and Technology in

Turkey. Localities with higher development scores are expected to have greater resources, institutional capacity, and human capital to address immigration-related challenges – making them more likely to implement integrationist, rights-based, and humanitarian actions.

City Municipality Budget serves as a proxy for administrative capacity and is measured as the annual average budget of the city municipality for each electoral period, in Turkish Lira.

Administrative capacity – the ability of a local government to mobilise financial and organisational resources – is a widely recognised determinant of whether municipalities can translate policy intentions into implemented actions. District municipalities are assigned the budget of their respective city municipality, consistent with the nested structure of Turkish local government described above. Even though district municipalities have their dedicated budgets approved by district municipality assemblies, it is hardly possible to consistently access district municipality budgets with a desktop research. As a proxy, I preferred to use city level budgets, potentially indicating difference between cities.

Host-Immigrant Ratio captures the share of the immigrant population relative to the total local population in each city. Across this dissertation, host-immigrant ratio is calculated based on the local immigrant population over local population. Cities with lower host-immigrant ratios may find it more feasible to adopt integrationist and humanitarian approaches, while higher ratios may be associated with greater pressure toward isolationist responses as host community concerns intensify.

Cooperative Relations is a continuous variable measuring the average number of cooperation events per municipality in each electoral period. These events include partnerships with civil society organisations, international organisations, universities, government agencies, and other

municipalities. In the context of Turkey's centralised administrative structure, where municipalities have limited formal authority over immigration matters, cooperation with third parties provides critical resources – material, institutional, and informational – that may compensate for legal and budgetary constraints.

Winning Margin measures the vote-share gap between the winning party and the closest competitor in each municipal election. It operationalises electoral competition: a large margin indicates a politically secure mayor, while a small margin indicates a contested environment. Mayors who win by comfortable margins may have greater latitude to pursue policies on politically sensitive issues, such as immigration, that more electorally vulnerable incumbents might avoid.

Party Affiliation is represented by binary dummy variables indicating whether the sitting mayor is affiliated with the AKP, the CHP, or another party. In the context of Turkey, the expected ideological direction diverges from the conventional left–right pattern in the comparative literature: AKP, the right-leaning governing party, has publicly supported the continued presence of Syrian immigrants in Turkey, while CHP, the main left-leaning opposition party, has advocated for their return. This reversal makes party affiliation a particularly important variable to test empirically.

Incumbent Mayor is a binary variable equal to 1 if the sitting mayor won re-election in the preceding municipal election. Incumbents may draw on established stakeholder relationships and accumulated institutional knowledge to sustain policy programmes over time. Unlike the other variables above, incumbency is included primarily as a control variable rather than the focus of a

standalone hypothesis, given the limited theoretical basis for predicting its direction of effect in the immigration policy context.

This chapter introduced the dataset that serves as the backbone of this research, offering a systematic inventory of municipal actions to investigate the variation in local immigrant policies across Turkey. By cataloging actions from 249 municipalities over an eleven-year period, this dataset provides a comprehensive foundation to analyze trends, problem areas, and the impact of contextual factors such as political affiliation and socioeconomic conditions.

The data reveal several critical patterns. The periodization based on electoral cycles underscores the evolving nature of municipal actions, with peaks in activity corresponding to 2014–2019. Despite the predominance of inactive municipalities, active ones demonstrate a preference for integrationist approaches over isolationist ones, reflecting a broader inclination toward fostering social cohesion. Meanwhile, the balance between humanitarian and rights-based actions shifted over time, with rights-based actions gaining prominence in the later period.

The dataset also highlights the dominant role of AKP-affiliated municipalities, underscoring the influence of political centralization on policy formation. However, the nuanced variations among municipalities suggest that local factors, including population dynamics, and electoral competition, play significant roles in shaping responses. Additionally, the identification of key problem areas – such as orientation, resilience building, and public presence of immigrants – adds further layers for our understanding of municipal priorities and policy trajectories.

In sum, this dataset offers a robust empirical basis for the subsequent analysis chapters. By documenting the diversity and dynamics of municipal actions, it lays the groundwork for exploring the broader implications of local governance in the context of immigration. The

findings from this chapter not only inform the analytical framework of this research but also contribute to the growing field of studies on local government responses to migration.

Chapter 6 - Municipal Focus in Immigration: Problem Areas in Local Immigration Response

Policymakers use policy instruments and actions to address societal challenges (Hoornbeek & Peters, 2017). For elected officials, addressing such challenges is a key motivator in their policy decisions. Municipalities in Turkey address different policy areas and issues to mitigate problems arise after the arrival of refugees from Syria. As discussed in Chapter 3, historically municipalities acted only as auxiliary administrative bodies in case of that a central government was not able to provide extensively for immigrants' subsistence. Yet, diverging from previous experiences of immigration, municipalities widely took initiative and active role in immigrants' accommodation in Turkey and their integration to the local communities and the society in Turkey. To do so, municipalities individually addressed several problem areas concerning refugees' rapidly increasing population and presence in urban areas. Yet, these problem areas were not extensively researched. Targeting this gap, this chapter is dedicated to identifying these problem areas.

Due to the absence of a coherent and comprehensive data source outlining the specific problem areas municipalities prioritize, I inferred these areas based on recorded municipal actions. To determine the policy areas, I employed a backward induction approach to identify problem areas in Turkey's municipal policies on immigration.

To identify these problem areas, I analyzed the actions already undertaken by municipalities. By applying factor analysis, I examined which actions tend to cluster together, thereby revealing the primary areas of municipal focus. Factor analysis is a commonly used

method for reducing the complexity of large datasets (Yong & Pearce, 2013). In this study, municipalities engaged in a wide range of 43 different types of actions, from material aid to psycho-social support. Given the diversity and volume of these actions, drawing meaningful conclusions based solely on individual actions and local conditions would be challenging. A dimension reduction method was essential to make sense of municipal activities, and factor analysis presented an effective solution due to its ability to identify patterns in large datasets.

Factor analysis is frequently used to uncover underlying patterns in data. There are two primary types: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). While EFA is used to identify underlying relationships between variables without pre-existing hypotheses, CFA tests whether hypothesized factors emerge from the data (Yong & Pearce, 2013). In this study, I employed EFA to determine the minimum number of latent factors that could explain the interdependence among various municipal actions. By identifying these factors, I aimed to provide a clearer understanding of how municipalities conceptualize and respond to immigration-related issues at the local level.

Table 2: Factor Loadings based on Exploratory Factor Analysis

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Uniqueness
Restricting Immigrant Work					0.8449				0.2421
Targeted Investigation								0.5523	0.6758
Restricting Access to Services									0.9038
Limiting Access to Public Places									0.9989
Banning Signboards in Immigrant Language								0.4872	0.5400
First Accommodation				0.9589					0.0662
Housing Support					0.8633				0.2248
Housing Modification									0.9849
Psycho Social Support	0.8699								0.0499
Medical Support	0.7160				0.5596				0.0693
Medical Consultancy	0.9652								0.0485
Medical Aid							0.7754		0.3836
Covid-19 Medical Aid									0.7232
Medical Service		0.9154							0.1207
Material Help					0.4761				0.5680
Cash Support				0.7061					0.4946
Coordinating Aid Distribution				0.7406					0.3553
Formal Channels with Immigrant Community				0.8725					0.1602
Communicating with Immigrant Representatives						0.5231			0.6335
Awareness Raising									0.7193
Training Employees	0.4089								0.7021
Equal Access to Services									0.6808
Legal Consultancy	0.8714								0.0747

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Uniqueness
Providing Consultancy to Access Public Services	0.5221								0.5934
Multilingual Events									0.9921
Vocational Training		0.5559	0.4257			0.4052			0.1544
Employing Immigrants		0.7217							0.2392
Employment Support		0.6352							0.2526
Supporting Immigrant Business									0.9163
Translation							0.7014		0.2533
Preschool Education		0.9464							0.0756
Local Immigrant Events	0.4324								0.4785
Systematic Data Collection									0.6833
Educational Consultancy	0.8999								0.1254
Interpreter	0.4638	0.4429	0.4438						0.1757
Kindergarten		0.8962							0.1173
Setting up Communication Office			0.8229						0.2527
Institutional Rearrangement			0.8494						0.1348
Immigrant-Only Event									0.7553
Turkish Language Course	0.8145								0.1348
Educational Support		0.6260	0.4629			0.4680			0.0955
Informational Material									0.9782
Education in Turkish Language			0.9071						0.1489

Note. Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation. N = 249 municipalities. Factor loadings below 0.40 are suppressed for clarity. The primary loading for each variable (highest absolute value) is shown in bold. Uniqueness values reflect the proportion of variance in each item not explained by the retained factors.

Considering the interdependencies of actions, I argue that municipalities concentrate on specific measures that reflect the most problematized policy areas. Each correlated action under these areas exhibits a strong interdependency, meaning they are likely to occur together within a city or district. Table 1 demonstrates the most correlated actions.

Table 3: Problem areas and assigned actions based on EFA

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Problem Area</i>	<i>List of Action</i>
<i>Factor 1</i>	Orientation	Psycho-Social Support, Medical Support, Medical Consultancy, Training Employees, Legal Consultancy, Providing Consultancy to Access Public Services
<i>Factor 2</i>	Resilience Building	Medical Service, Vocational Training, Employing Immigrants, Employment Support, Preschool Education, Interpreter, Kindergarten, Educational Support
<i>Factor 3</i>	Institutional Adaptation	Vocational Training, Interpreter, Communications Office, Institutional Rearrangement, Educational Support, Educating Children in Turkish Language
<i>Factor 4</i>	Immigrant Accommodation	First Accommodation, Cash Support, Coordinating Aid, Formal Channels with Immigrant Representatives
<i>Factor 5</i>	Needs Management	Restricting Immigrant Work, Housing Support, Medical Support, Material Help
<i>Factor 6</i>	Approaching Immigrant Communities	Communicating with Immigrant Representatives, Vocational Training, Educational Support
<i>Factor 7</i>	Palliative Help	Medical Aid, Translation
<i>Factor 8</i>	Limiting Public Presence	Targeted Investigation, Banning Signboards

Factor analysis reveals eight major latent factors as indicated in the Table 2. Based on factor loadings and groupings, I have named these factors as follows: orientation, immigrant

resilience, institutional adaptation, immigrant accommodation, immigrant needs, building channels with immigrant communities, and immigrants' public presence.

These factors indicate that the municipalities in the sample primarily engage in a combination of these eight types of activities. While some similar actions like employment support and vocational training fall under different factors, some actions appear under multiple factors. For example, vocational training both belongs to resilience building (Factor 2) and institutional adaptation (Factor 3). Explaining each factor in detail, I will also address these overlaps and divergences in actions which seems to share different purposes.

Problem Areas

A key problem area municipalities address is the *orientation* of immigrants to host communities. Actions correlated within this area include psycho-social support, medical support, medical consultancy, training employees, legal consultancy, and providing guidance on accessing public services. Each of these actions only cluster under the first category. Orientation problematizes immigrants' familiarization to a new society and facilitates this process. Services like providing consultancy and information on public services and setting up the environment for immigrant to access these services help immigrants to navigate in a new community.

Psycho-social support is particularly crucial in mitigating trauma-related issues associated with forced migration. By offering such services, municipalities enable immigrants to participate more effectively in everyday life after the distressing experience of displacement. One of the most traumatic aspects of forced migration is the uncertainty of returning home in the foreseeable future and losing social support networks. Therefore, immigrants suffering from forced migration live under stress. According to IOM (2024), better social conditions and psychological well-being contributes to positive social outcomes. Thus, absence of psycho-social

support for immigrants intensifies social cohesion challenges for both immigrants and host communities. Addressing these difficulties through psycho-social support can alleviate societal tensions. As a result, immigrants may build better social relations. Additionally, municipalities provide various consultancy services to facilitate daily adaptation. Immigrants have rights to access services provided not only by municipalities but also by the central government, NGOs, and INGOs. Access to these services is essential for their well-being and integration. By familiarizing immigrants with local institutions and social norms, these services help them navigate life in a new environment more effectively.

The second problem area is *resilience building*. Different from orientation this problem area concerns about strengthening immigrants' capacity to live in a community. Resilience building refers to actions that help immigrants activate "coping mechanisms and leverage assets and resources" to mitigate potential difficulties (Tellez Lieberman et al., 2019). This category includes providing medical services, preschool education, kindergartens, educational support, vocational training, employment opportunities, and hiring interpreters. Therefore, it is possible to assume that municipalities take actions to make possible for immigrants to get required education and economic development services to enhance immigrant capacity to find jobs and bodily healthy to survive and, ideally, thrive in a new community. Contrary to passive aspect of services in orientation, these services aims to actively involve immigrants.

Medical services, which refers to provision of medical services by municipal facilities, help immigrants, particularly in the early years of their arrival when access to healthcare was limited until the central government established regulations. Additionally, interpreters facilitate immigrants' access to municipal services, including employment-related opportunities.

Interpretation is the only service that seems to be characteristically resembling orientation focused services.

Employment related measures include vocational training, direct employment, and assistance in accessing the labor market in Turkey. In order to enhance immigrant's integration to the job market, municipalities take measures take these actions. Providing vocational training, municipalities offer immigrants to take several skills to find jobs in the market. Educational support also contributes immigrant efforts to find jobs in the market. Cooperating with actors of private and civil society sectors, municipalities aim to help newly arrived population to facilitate their job market integration.

To further support economic participation, municipalities provide childcare services, such as preschool education and kindergartens, allowing women with children to attend vocational training or participate in municipal programs. These actions contribute to immigrants' self-sufficiency, reducing their reliance on municipal resources and external aid.

Another significant problem area is *institutional adaptation*. Immigration is a relatively new policy domain for municipalities in Turkey, and the recent influx of immigrants differs from previous immigration waves. Consequently, Turkish municipalities, like other state institutions, were initially unprepared in terms of resources and institutional structures. Many lacked the expertise required to manage immigrant populations within their jurisdictions. Larger cities may have had some transferable capacities, but adapting these to the new reality required institutional adjustments. Creating new municipal institutions is one way municipalities have responded to this challenge (Yavçan & Memişoğlu, 2023). Some municipalities addressed the influx of immigrants by formulating institutional responses, such as establishing communication offices, founding new departments, or repurposing existing ones to regulate local immigrant affairs.

Organizing vocational training and hiring interpreters also contributed to improving municipal responses. Vocational trainings also clustered under the second factor, resilience building. There might be multiple reasons behind such clustering of actions. Firstly, vocational trainings also take an adaptation process of either that municipalities repurpose existing capacity to immigrants, or that to provide vocational trainings municipalities enhance their institutional capacity in providing such education. Another reason might be that municipalities willing to undertake a process of institutional adaptation may also have willingness and enough capacity to provide vocational trainings, as well. Therefore, a high correlation might occur in these municipalities.

Considering actions such as educational support and providing education in Turkish language are under this category, vocational training may be part of a capacity building process of providing educational services by municipalities. Providing education is not a novel area of policy for some municipalities. However, it is not a primary policy area that municipalities are responsible for or expected to develop policies. Education is primarily and legally under the authority of the central government. Therefore, education related activities can be logically categorized under institutional adaptation. These measures, in general, reflect municipalities' efforts to enhance their capacity for managing immigrant-related challenges.

Accommodation is another critical issue for immigrant populations, given their limited resources and barriers to accessing local housing markets (Erdoğan, 2014). Forced migrants, in particular, face difficulties securing stable housing both upon arrival and over time. Municipalities have responded to this challenge by providing initial accommodation, cash support, coordinating aid distribution, and establishing formal channels with immigrant representatives. The strong correlation between first accommodation services and other support

measures suggests that municipalities offering housing assistance also tend to provide financial aid and organize relief efforts.

Managing immigrants' basic needs is another major concern for municipalities. Local governments play a crucial role in addressing the precarious conditions of immigrant populations, particularly refugees (Lowndes & Polat, 2022). As seen in the history of migration management in Turkey, the central government tend to expect local actors to contribute and, even sometimes, to shoulder immigrants' subsistence. The key actions grouped under this category include restricting immigrant work, providing housing support, medical aid, and material assistance. A notable pattern in this combination is the presence of work restrictions alongside various support measures. This suggests that municipalities may perceive immigrant subsistence as a policy issue while simultaneously aiming to limit their economic integration. The assumption that immigrants are in need of support but should not enter the labor market appears to underlie this approach. Additionally, such negative measure may occur under this factor may be the result of mixed responses given by municipalities. We already know that the same municipality may take positive and negative actions together. However, correlated occurrence of these measures may be result of keeping immigrants integrating into local communities. Eventually, it is possible to assume that such municipalities taking these actions together may designate immigrants' presence in their communities as temporary and denying their potentially long term integration.

Approaching immigrant communities is another important area problematized by municipalities. Establishing connections with these communities is essential for understanding their needs and providing appropriate services. To achieve this, several municipalities have established formal and informal communication channels with immigrant representatives. This

category also includes educational support and vocational training. These interactions may facilitate mutual understanding between municipalities and immigrant communities, helping municipalities identify specific needs related to education and employment. Both educational support and vocational training are correlated with other actions under different factors as discussed above. Under this category, either action might be a byproduct of these established channels with immigrants. If communicating with immigrant communities arose these potential solutions to alleviate immigrant well-being within municipal capacity, municipalities would resort to these actions correlated with communication efforts. Therefore, considering the correlation among these actions, it is possible to argue that municipalities communicating immigrant communities organize vocational trainings and provide educational support as well, potentially in line with their encounters with immigrants.

Providing palliative assistance constitutes the seventh problem area. This category includes basic medical aid and translation services. These measures offer minimal support to immigrants but do not actively facilitate their integration or long-term well-being. Medical aid typically consists of distributing basic medical supplies, while translation services help immigrants to translate their documents. By providing basic medical supplies, municipalities can contribute to immigrants' urgent needs of medical supply. However, such action does not target immigrants' long term medical well-being. It is only a temporary solution, in most cases needed upon arrival of immigrants until they are registered to the health system and have access to the state provided medical services. Translation services also help immigrants to prepare their documents for administrative use. Therefore, it is also a temporarily beneficial service for immigrants to further access to the legal system. Such actions, medical aid and translation, provide immediate relief but do not contribute to broader social cohesion or economic

participation. As passive interventions, they remain reactive rather than proactive in addressing immigrant-related challenges.

The final problem area concerns *immigrants' public presence*. The visibility of immigrants in public spaces can become a contentious issue for municipalities for various reasons (Ambrosini & Caneva, 2012). Some municipalities have taken steps to limit the public presence of immigrants, targeting immigrant businesses or restricting the use of non-Turkish languages in public signage. Given the everyday violence and discrimination that immigrants may encounter, these restrictions can exacerbate social tensions and reinforce exclusionary policies (Saraçoğlu & Bélanger, 2021).

Over the years, the dominant problem areas addressed by municipalities have shifted. Figure 14 shows the total number of actions taken by municipalities in each problem area. From 2011 to 2021, orientation emerges as the most prominent focus. There are two key turning points in orientation-focused actions: between 2015 and 2016, the number of such actions rises from 8 to 24; between 2017 and 2018, it jumps again from 21 to 74. After 2018, orientation-focused actions stabilize at a high level. From this point onward, orientation consistently surpasses and dominates all other problem areas.

The year 2016 also marks a turning point for the resilience building and institutional adaptation problem areas. Annual actions related to resilience building increased from 16 to 32, while those focused on institutional adaptation rose from 10 to 27. In the earlier years of the Syrian influx, municipal activity across all problem areas remained limited – fewer than 10 actions per year were recorded in each category until 2015.

The years 2015 and 2016 were critical for both the trajectory of the Syrian Civil War and the political developments concerning Syrians in Turkey. By 2015, the national legal framework

governing temporary protection and the rights of immigrants had largely taken shape. However, two major international developments complicated the prospect of Syrians returning home: Russia's military intervention in Syria and the Siege of Kobane. The Russian army began launching attacks on anti-Assad forces, while the battle for Kobane, near the Turkey-Syria border, further destabilized northern Syria. As conditions in Syria worsened, the possibility of return became increasingly unlikely.

In parallel, 2016 saw the finalization of the EU-Turkey Deal. Officially titled the Statement of Cooperation between EU member states and Turkey, and signed in March 2016, the agreement aimed to prevent irregular migration from Turkey to Greece. Under the deal, individuals arriving on Greek islands from Turkey would be returned to Turkey, in exchange for €6 billion in aid to improve humanitarian conditions for irregular migrants within Turkey (IRC, 2023). As a result of these developments, it became even more difficult for Syrian refugees to leave Turkey. Consequently, municipalities were expectedly under further pressure to act in the field of immigration.

As can be seen in the Figure X and explained above, orientation, resilience building, and institutional adaptation gained further prominence among other problem areas that the municipalities focused. It is arguable that as the refugee presence became more protracted issue, the municipalities further problematized how to develop institutional response and addressing immigrants' habitation in local communities.

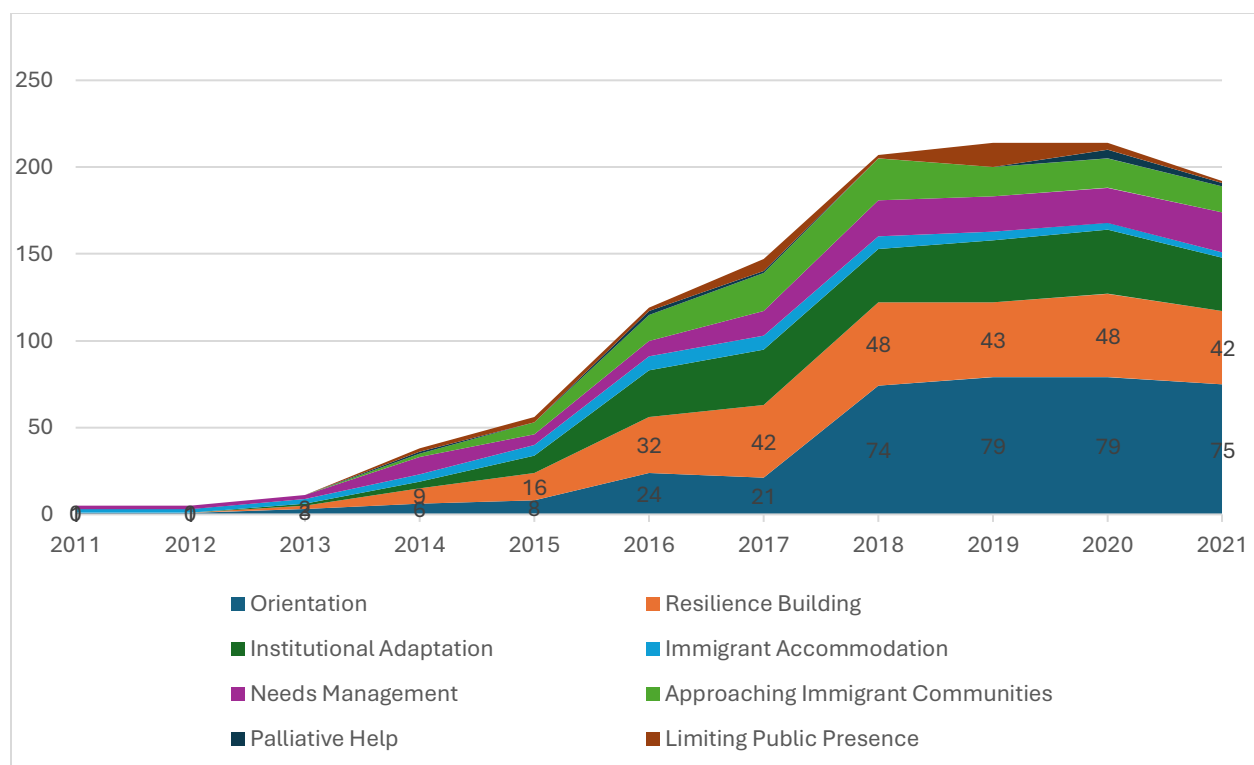


Figure 14: Breakdown of problem areas over the years

This chapter has identified and conceptualized the primary problem areas that Turkish municipalities address in response to immigration, using municipal actions as indicators of local policy priorities. These priorities represent another dimension of local immigrant policymaking along with the directions that municipalities take over the course of ten years. Through exploratory factor analysis, eight distinct problem areas emerged: orientation, resilience building, institutional adaptation, immigrant accommodation, needs management, approaching immigrant communities, palliative help, and limiting public presence. Each area reflects a different dimension of how local governments in Turkey have responded to the arrival and presence of immigrants, particularly those displaced from Syria.

These categories reveal both the breadth and complexity of local policy approaches. While some municipalities focus on fostering integration through orientation and resilience-

building efforts, others adopt more short-term or restrictive strategies, such as palliative aid or actions that limit immigrants' public visibility. Importantly, certain actions, such as vocational training or educational support, span multiple areas, underscoring that municipalities often pursue overlapping goals that blend concerns of cohabitation, undertaking required institutional transformation and meeting the needs of the local immigrant communities.

The diversity of these responses suggests that municipalities are not passive implementers of national policy but active agents shaping local immigration governance. Considered with the international and national developments, municipalities respond to changing conditions by taking initiatives. The next chapter builds on this foundation by exploring the direction of these actions, whether they reflect integrationist, isolationist, humanitarian, or right-based approaches, and constructs a typology of local immigrant policy orientations based on these findings.

Chapter 7: Variation in Municipal Actions: Drivers of Variation

Introduction

How and why do municipal immigrant policies vary in Turkey? Although this question may seem straightforward at first glance, a closer look at Turkey reveals intriguing answers. This chapter aims to examine municipal actions in response to immigration and illustrate how they vary among different localities and over time. While some municipalities prioritize fostering coexistence between the host community and immigrants, others focus on addressing immigrants' immediate needs by providing social aid. Some municipalities, however, adopt exclusionary practices that restrict immigrants' public presence or limit their interaction with the host community. In short, municipalities take a range of actions regarding the immigrant population within their borders, and the underlying reasons for these actions also differ. While these actions may initially seem to reflect a particular policy orientation or perspective on immigration, they often result from a complex interplay of factors.

Following the discussion on what problem areas that municipalities prioritize in the previous chapter, from this point on I will focus on categorizing the types of actions they implement to address immigration-related issues. I categorized municipal actions into four distinct types: integrationist, isolationist, humanitarian, and right-based. To further examine the determinants of these actions, I applied a two-part model to assess whether municipal policies are shaped by the factors most commonly discussed in the literature on local government immigration policies. While municipalities differ in how they define immigration-related

problems and in the measures they adopt, they also converge in certain trends. So far, the previous chapter covered the problems areas that the municipalities focus based on the analysis of the actions taken.

By mapping out these problem areas and exploring the factors that shape municipal policy preferences, I aim to demonstrate how local dynamics influence municipal responses to immigration. Since municipalities focus on different challenges, they also develop distinct strategies to address them. In this chapter, I focus on political, structural, and relational factors that shape municipal policy choices. Additionally, I examine how the influence of these factors evolves over time.

In the following section, I analyze how municipal responses vary based on political (local electoral competition, party affiliation), relational (cooperation with other actors), and structural (socioeconomic development) factors. Chapter 2 thoroughly discuss potential reasons why local immigrant policies may vary from one locality to another.

In the following pages, to this end, I test my hypotheses regarding the four types of municipal actions. Based on the results of testing these hypotheses, I argue that while political factors initially play a role, their significance diminishes over time. In contrast, structural conditions – particularly the level of socioeconomic development – and cooperative relations remain consistently relevant in shaping local government policy choices. This shift suggests a pragmatic turn in municipal attitudes toward immigration. This trend is also reflected in municipalities' preference for employing a diverse set of actions rather than adhering to a single policy approach. A municipality may implement both integrationist and isolationist measures, despite their contradictory nature. While integrationist actions aim to foster coexistence between the host community and immigrants, isolationist actions target immigrants' public visibility,

restrict their presence in public spaces, and limit their interactions with the host community. However, municipalities use isolationist actions not only to restrict immigrants' attendance to public life, they may be used to mitigate local tension and to lure voters who are critical about immigrants' presence in the local community.

One of the main objectives of this research is to identify the types of activities municipalities have undertaken since the onset of the Syrian civil war. The war triggered the largest immigration wave Turkey has had to manage, bringing over three million people under temporary protection over the years. In addition to Syrians, large numbers of Iraqis, Afghans, Iranians, and others have also migrated to Turkey. According to the Directorate General of Migration Management (2024), approximately 4.5 million immigrants currently reside in Turkey under temporary protection, international protection, or residence permits – accounting for roughly 5% of the total population. Unofficial sources suggest the actual number may be even higher. Given the rapid increase in the immigrant population over a short period, municipalities became key actors in immigrant accommodation and management, assuming a more active role than usual. However, there remains a lack of systematic information on municipal actions. While several studies have examined the policies of specific municipalities (Betts et al., 2020; Özçürümez & Hoxha, 2023; Üstübici, 2022; Yavçan & Memişoğlu, 2023), research on broader trends remains limited. While some studies have worked with larger samples (e.g. Kaufmann et al., 2022; Williamson, 2018), research on Turkey using large municipal datasets is scarce – except for Balcıoğlu's work (Balcıoğlu, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to reveal the ongoing trends in the migration management and municipal immigrant policies in Turkey.

Before explaining the hypotheses and the variables, I will detail the data collection procedure further to clarify how I collected and categorized the raw data. For this dissertation, I

collected data on municipal actions from publicly available sources, including news articles, municipal annual reports, academic research, and reports from NGOs and international organizations. The dataset covers a sample of metropolitan, city, and district municipalities. In total, 249 municipalities were analyzed, spanning 18 cities selected based on their immigrant-to-total population ratio. The sample includes cities where at least 3% of the population was under temporary protection in 2021 (PMM, 2024). Since district-level immigrant population data is unavailable publicly, I opted to include all district municipalities within these cities and metropolitan areas.

The 18 cities in the sample represent almost 50% of Turkey's total population. Among them, 13 are metropolitan cities, which, according to the Metropolitan Municipality Law in Turkey, have greater authority and budgetary resources than regular cities. These include:

- Metropolitan cities: Adana, Bursa, Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, Izmir, Kahramanmaraş, Kayseri, Konya, Malatya, Mardin, Mersin, and Şanlıurfa.
- Small cities: Adıyaman, Burdur, Kilis, Osmaniye, and Nevşehir.

By analyzing this sample, this dissertation seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how and why municipalities in Turkey respond differently to immigration, identifying both trends and the underlying factors shaping municipal policy choices.

Data Collection

As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature on local immigrant policy suffers from a lack of systematic data collection on municipalities. While research on individual or a small number of localities is rich, most of these studies rely on qualitative data. Such studies have the advantage of uncovering underlying dynamics that are difficult to capture through quantitative methods.

However, data collected from a larger sample provide insights into general trends and how various factors influence local policies on a broader scale.

Data Collection

Due to the absence of a comprehensive dataset covering municipal activities in Turkey, I needed to collect data on municipalities to test the hypotheses mentioned above. Although my initial plan was to conduct a survey, the skyrocketing costs following the pandemic made this option unfeasible. Therefore, I opted for a desktop research approach, gathering data from publicly available sources, including online media outlets, journal articles, academic and semi-academic reports, municipal strategic plans, and municipal annual activity reports (see the Appendix A).

The data collection process took place over six months, from January to June 2022. Given the lack of comprehensive data on municipal activities related to immigration in Turkey, I developed a systematic protocol for collecting data from public sources. The collected data were cataloged based on the time of publication, the time of the reported action, and the location of the municipality. Once the texts were compiled, I coded each policy action according to the type of activity it represented (see Appendix B).

However, identifying duplicate reports and assessing the scale and scope of actions – particularly in local news sources – was sometimes challenging. For instance, while a news agency might report an action by a local government, it often omitted details regarding its scale or the number of immigrants affected. This posed a challenge in determining how to include these coded actions in the dataset.

Since my primary aim was to examine variation in municipal responses and the factors influencing it, I decided to record whether a particular type of action occurred each year rather

than its scale or the number of beneficiaries. Additionally, sources I depend on rarely focus on the coverage of the actions but more on the activities. Thus, I disregarded the total volume of services provided and instead focused on whether a municipality undertook a specific action within a given year. Nevertheless, tracking actions across multiple years allows for an analysis of their consistency, making it possible to identify when a municipality discontinues a particular policy or initiative over time.

Search Protocol

I conducted a general web search using Google and Bing, based on keywords commonly used to address the immigrant population in Turkey. Historically, the terms *muhacir* (migrant) and *göçmen* (migrant) have been used to describe different waves of immigration to Turkey. While *muhacir* was widely used during the Ottoman Empire to name Turkish-Muslim immigrants fleeing from former Ottoman territory in the Balkans, *göçmen* became more prevalent after the foundation of the Republic to identify all sorts of migrants. These terms were also embraced as identity markers by Muslim immigrants from Yugoslavia, Greece, and Bulgaria.

The terms *mülteci* (refugee), *sığınmacı* (asylee), and *Suriyeli* (Syrian) entered colloquial Turkish primarily after the arrival of Syrian asylum seekers following the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. Although the Turkish public has long been familiar with mass immigration due to armed conflicts or persecution in neighboring countries and Afghanistan, these movements were relatively small in scale compared to Syrian immigration. The sheer magnitude of Syrian immigration over the years has led to *Suriyeli* (Syrian) becoming a generic term for immigrants in Turkey. Many people in Turkey now refer to any immigrant from the MENA region as *Suriyeli*.

During the web search, I used combinations of each keyword with the names of municipalities and the municipal mayors in office between 2011 and 2021. For example, I searched “Adana Büyükşehir Belediyesi muhacir” on Google and Bing and repeated the pattern with each keyword. After completing the search using the municipality’s name, I conducted the same search using the names of the mayors. During the time scope of this research, Adana had three mayors: Zihni Aldırmaz (2010–2014), Hüseyin Sözlü (2014–2019), and Zeydan Karalar (2019–present). I combined each mayor’s name with the keywords and repeated the search accordingly.

Given the traditionally powerful position of municipal mayors in Turkey, media coverage of municipal activities often mentions only the mayor’s name, sometimes omitting the municipality's. To account for this, I included additional searches using mayors' names.

I recorded relevant news articles and announcements until I encountered repeated results and web pages no longer provided new information about municipal services for immigrants.

In addition to media reports, I collected academic research and relevant publications from NGOs, international organizations, and municipalities. These sources helped verify municipal actions and identify additional initiatives that were not covered by media outlets.

Recording and Coding Raw Data

Each news article and informational text from other sources was recorded with the access date, the publication date, the date of the action taken (including the month and year, and the exact day if available), a summary of the source, and any collaboration mentioned with local, national, or international actors or institutions.

Following the completion of data collection on municipal activities, each recorded text was coded. Some policy actions received multiple codes because a single action could involve

multiple actors and be associated with various services. For example, if a municipality organized vocational training for women while also providing daycare services, the action was coded as both “vocational training” and “kindergarten.” Each service and activity were assigned one point based on whether they occurred in a given year.

In many instances, assessing the volume of each action was challenging. When activities were reported in media outlets, the details often focused more on who provided the service and how it was implemented rather than the scale or outreach of the action. Therefore, I chose to code each activity for each year of interest based on whether that type of action was undertaken, rather than its specific volume.

As a result, I identified and coded 43 different types of municipal actions within the sample. The number of action types reflects the diversity of municipal responses across different localities. However, this alone does not fully indicate the specific policies municipalities developed to address the arrival and settlement of immigrants within their jurisdictions.

Periodization of the Actions

The collected actions happened between the years 2011 and 2021. There were two local elections in 2014 and 2019. In Turkey’s municipal administration, strong mayors play a key role in municipal management and policy decisions (Tan, 2020). Consequently, a change in mayoral leadership can result in significant policy shifts. To account for potential changes in municipal leadership, I divided this period into three uneven intervals based on election years: 2011–2014, 2014–2019, and 2019–2021. Given the influential role of mayors in Turkey, local elections – often resulting in the replacement of numerous mayors – can serve as critical junctures for shifts in municipal policies, including those related to immigration. In addition to this periodization, each action in the dataset is recorded for its specific year of occurrence.

Classification of the Actions

Classifying the recorded actions was necessary to identify patterns and trends within the dataset. To determine common themes and categories, I employed multiple approaches.

First, I conducted a manual categorization. Using an inductive approach, I coded the actions to capture the variety of municipal responses. Second, I performed a factor analysis to uncover latent relationships among different actions. This method identifies which actions are frequently implemented together, allowing me to examine two key aspects: the primary problem areas that municipalities focus on and the types of actions employed to address these problems. These problems are discussed in the previous chapter. Third, I used another manual classification method that places each action along two axes: action approach and action direction.

Action approach refers to the lens through which municipalities address immigration-related challenges. Do they adopt humanitarian or right-based solutions? Action direction examines, on the other hand, the societal conditions municipalities seek to shape for immigrants. On one end, municipalities may promote integration by fostering social cohesion between immigrants and host communities. On the other end, they may attempt to isolate immigrants by drawing strict boundaries and, in some cases, restricting their public presence.

In the following sections, I will elaborate on these classification methods, highlight variations among municipalities; and explore the different approaches and directions municipalities take and examine the factors associated with them.

Towards a Typology of Local Immigrant Policy in Turkey

One of the main contributions of this dissertation is the development of a policy typology to explain local government actions in response to rapid and largely unregulated immigration. Given the relative novelty of immigration management in Turkey, such a typology is essential for

advancing research and fostering the development of viable immigrant policies. To construct a valid typology, I adopted a bottom-up approach, beginning with the collection and categorization of municipal actions and culminating in a two-axis immigrant policy typology. This typology is built upon two key directions and two approaches to municipal actions, which together define a local government's immigrant policy. Ultimately, as the analysis will demonstrate, these policies are complex and cannot be neatly reduced to a single approach or direction. On the contrary, municipalities often adopt actions that span different, and at times contradictory, approaches, which may shift over time for various reasons.

I also categorize these actions based on how each of the actions affects and targets the problem. As indicated in the Table 4, four action types fitting into a framework of “reactive-transformative” and “community-oriented-immigrant-oriented.”

Table 4: Actions Typology

	REACTIVE	TRANSFORMATIVE
COMMUNITY-ORIENTED	Isolationist	Integrationist
IMMIGRANT-ORIENTED	Humanitarian	Right-Based

Reactive actions aims to respond to the phenomenon of immigration without changing the status-quo of a community. Through these actions, actors target existing problems in a reactive sense to quickly mitigate problems potentially forming around a phenomenon. Therefore, these actions are mostly either short term solutions or preventive measures to coserve a given community or target group. In such a framework, isolationist actions fit into community-oriented reactive action due to their aim to prevent immigrants from engaging with a host-community. On the other hand, humanitarian actions reactively address the grave immigrant situation without aiming to alter immigrants' status in the host community.

Transformative actions, on the other hand, targets either community or immigrants and change their conditions in a community. For example, integrationist actions plan to transform a community trying to bring together immigrant and host communities. On the other hand, right-based actions attempts to facilitate immigrants' access to their rights or tries to give further rights to immigrants. Such actions are transformative in nature because they aim to alter immigrant conditions and how immigrants engage with a host community. I will explain further how each characteristic of action means more in detail below while explaining each action. This dichotomous table intends to facilitate how each type of action structurally positioned against each other.

Four Types of Actions

To formulate these axes, I categorized municipal actions into four distinct directions. On one axis, actions are classified as either integrationist or isolationist – representing their overall direction. On the other axis, actions are characterized as either humanitarian or rights-based – indicating their underlying approach. While actions on opposing sides of each axis are mutually exclusive, some actions fall under both axes, such as rights-based isolationist or integrationist humanitarian approaches. Below, I define these directions in detail and explore how multiple factors influence them across three different time periods.

Integrationism

In this research, integration refers to the process of creating the social, economic, and political conditions necessary for cohabitation, fostering a sense of mutual belonging, and promoting social cohesion between immigrants and host communities. Integration is not solely about immigrants adapting to their host society; rather, it involves a reciprocal transformation

that results in immigrants becoming “an accepted part of the society” in which they live (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p. 11). Ideally, integration is a joint process in which both the host and immigrant communities contribute to the formation of a new, shared community.

Thus, local integrationist policies seek to create conditions that allow immigrants to fully enjoy their rights as local residents while also fostering mutual adaptation between immigrant and host communities. Therefore, integrationist actions are transformative and community-oriented. The ultimate goal is to dissolve the host-immigrant dichotomy (transformative) and cultivate a sense of shared belonging (community-oriented), regardless of an individual's origin or background. While the degree of success and the nature of integrationist policies may vary across localities and stakeholders, the overarching aim remains the same. Although integrationist actions alone cannot guarantee integration, they contribute to strengthening the dynamic between immigrants and local residents.

Isolationism

In contrast, isolationist actions aim to exclude a specific group based on their identity or origin. Municipalities may adopt policies that actively restrict immigrants' participation in their host community (Ambrosini & Caneva, 2012).

I use the term "isolationist" to describe actions that deliberately target a particular group for exclusion. Local stakeholders may adopt a selective approach to diversity, favoring certain immigrant subgroups while marginalizing others. For example, a municipality may be welcoming toward one group of immigrants for cultural or economic reasons while treating another group as undesirable. As a result, exclusionary attitudes toward immigrants may be inconsistent and subject to shifting preferences.

Segments of a host community may also seek to prevent immigrant integration by obstructing encounters between the two groups and restricting services to which immigrants are otherwise entitled. Local isolationist policies, therefore, encompass a set of actions that actively work to segregate immigrant populations from the host community in all aspects of life. Therefore, these actions ultimately aim to prevent (reactive) a community (community-oriented) to engage with an immigrant population. A clear example is the prohibition of foreign-language signboards, which directly targets the public presence of immigrant communities.

Humanitarianism

The nature of immigration to Turkey in recent years has also created a humanitarian crisis. The forced displacement of millions of people within a short period necessitates a humanitarian response alongside traditional immigration policies (Harild, 2016). Addressing the immediate needs of displaced populations requires coordinated action from multiple actors, making humanitarian aid a necessity rather than an option (Robles & Guadagno, 2024). Since the beginning of Syrian immigration to Turkey, municipalities have played a critical role in providing humanitarian assistance (Betts et al., 2020). As a result, humanitarian efforts are widely reflected in municipal actions within the timeframe of this study.

Humanitarian actions aim to address the immediate and primarily material (reactive) needs of immigrants (immigrant-oriented) as they navigate the difficulties of migration. In cases of forced migration, the provision of basic necessities can be a matter of survival and can also influence future social and economic stability for immigrants, host communities, and the state.

While humanitarian aid has been widely studied in academic literature – both praised and critiqued – this research adopts a narrow definition of the term. Here, humanitarian actions refer to any form of material aid that supports the daily survival of immigrants who lack sufficient

resources to maintain a basic standard of living. These actions are discretionary, dependent on the goodwill of aid providers rather than being tied to formal rights.

Right-Based Actions

Although Turkish municipalities lack legal authority to grant formal rights to immigrants due to their legal status, they can establish rights-oriented practices that enable immigrants to access certain benefits and services. Even undocumented immigrants may participate in urban life and receive municipal services if local governments create policies to facilitate their inclusion (De Graauw, 2014). Rights-based actions focus on recognizing and enforcing immigrants' rights regardless of their socioeconomic status. Unlike humanitarian efforts, which are need-based and discretionary, rights-based approaches emphasize the long-term establishment, protection and, in some cases, expansion of immigrant rights (immigrant-oriented). These actions aim to create a legal and institutional framework in which immigrants are treated as rights-holders rather than passive recipients of aid (transformative).

Each direction of action positions on an axis. These two axes are integrationist-isolationist axis and humanitarian-right-based axis.

Integrationist-Isolationist Axis: This axis represents whether municipal actions promote or restrict the participation and presence of immigrants in the host community.

Integrationist actions foster inclusion, such as hiring interpreters or organizing events that bring immigrants and local residents together to create spaces of encounter between host and immigrant communities. These measures facilitate service access and social cohesion.

Isolationist actions aim to restrict integration opportunities, such as banning immigrant-language signage, thereby limiting public visibility and engagement. Contrary to integrationist

actions, isolationist actions disintegrate opportunities of encounter between host and immigrant communities.

Right-Based-Humanitarian Axis: This axis defines the approach municipalities take when addressing immigrant needs. Humanitarian actions provide short-term material support, such as cash assistance or medical aid. Rights-based actions focus on ensuring equitable access to services, such as legal consultation or employment support, which empower immigrants to claim their rights rather than depend on discretionary aid.

For example, if a municipality provides medical consultancy for immigrants, this action is on the right-based side of the model. It is so because such consultancy aims to facilitate immigrants to access a service which is a right rather than a short-term contribution. Conversely, if a municipality distributes medical support for immigrants, this municipality performs a humanitarian action which aims to meet a need rather than granting a right or facilitating access to it.

Yet, policies and actions are too complex to label with a single code sometimes. Some actions fall under both axes, meaning they embody both an approach and a direction. For example: *Ensuring equal access to municipal services* is both rights-based (approach) and integrationist (direction) since it facilitates inclusion through institutional mechanisms. *Restricting access to services*, on the other hand, is both rights-based (approach) and isolationist (direction) because it enforces legal barriers to immigrant participation.

These "dual actions" contribute to defining municipal immigrant policy by influencing both the direction (integrationist/isolationist) and the approach (rights-based/humanitarian) of a municipality's overall stance on immigration.

The model below visualizes how different policy directions and approaches intersect. It illustrates that while no single approach or direction overlaps internally, each direction intersects with both approaches and vice versa. The center of the model represents municipalities that remain inactive, neither taking an approach nor a direction. Otherwise, based on their policy choices, municipalities fall into one of the types outlined above.

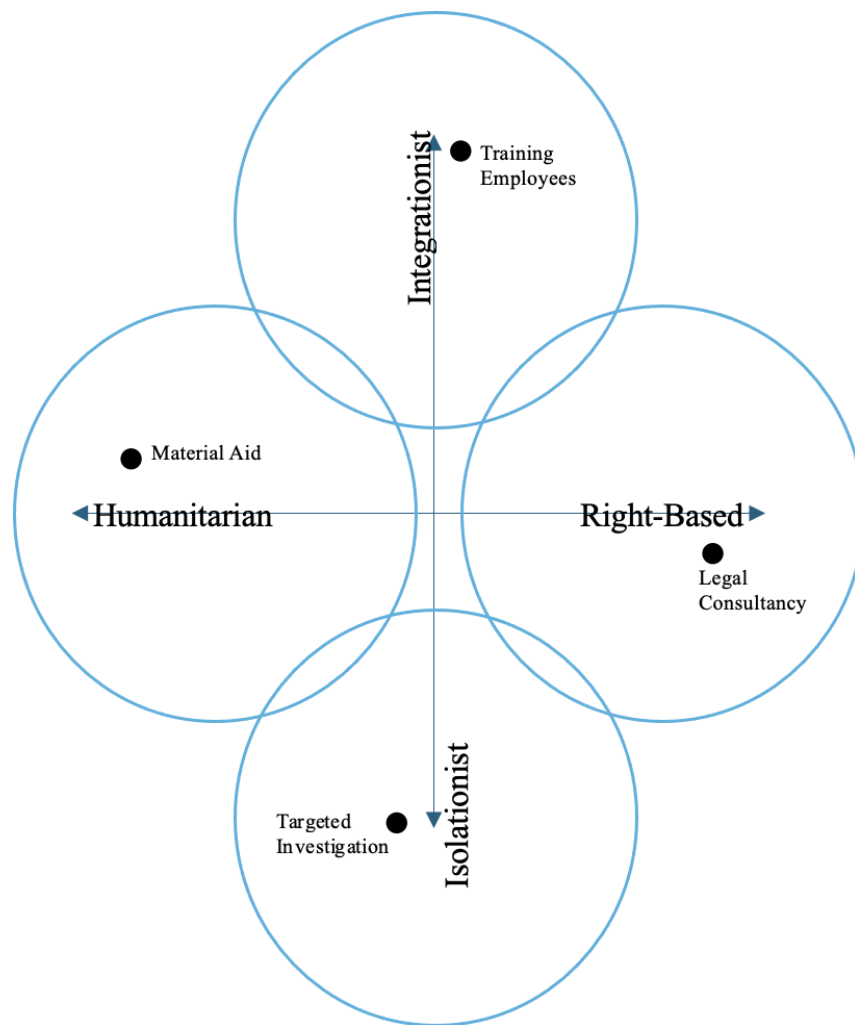


Figure 15: Model for Types of Actions with Examples

Municipal Actions in Turkey

These actions can be observed in many municipalities within the sample of 249 city and district municipalities. Based on three periods of actions; 2011-2014, 2014-2019, 2019-2021; four types of actions occur as listed below:

Table 5: Allocation of Municipal Actions across Three Periods

Period	2011-2014	2014-2019	2019-2021
Integrationist Actions	16	398	411
Isolationist Actions	0	45	41
Right-Based Actions	13	239	308
Humanitarian Actions	55	339	262
Active	61	113	93

As indicated in the final row of the table, the number of active municipalities also varies across the three periods. Active municipality refers to those which at least take one action in a given period. For example, if a municipality distributes material help in 2014 but takes no other action from 2015 to 2019, this municipality is categorized as active for 2014-2019 period. If there is no recorded action from 2019 to 2021, a municipality is labeled as inactive for that period. It is arguable that, in addition to problem areas, municipalities' level of activity and the direction and approach they take to resolve problems also differ.

Based on these categories of actions and municipalities' activity status, I conducted tests to determine whether they are significantly associated with some of the most frequently discussed sources of variation. Below, I will examine each of these categories in each period concerning the political affiliation of mayors, local socioeconomic development, local administrative capacity, and the number of cooperative initiatives each active municipality engages in.

Impact of Local Factors

As mentioned above, I tested the sample for multiple factors. I will summarize the results of these tests below based on the category of action and period of activity. However, some of the conventional methods of analysis were not useful in evaluating this dataset.

As shown in the table above, in none of the periods are more than half of the municipalities in the sample inactive. For each category, the data is skewed toward zero and deviates significantly from a normal distribution. This results in an excess of true zeros in the dataset, making some of the most common analytical procedures, such as linear regression, less reliable (Boulton & Williford, 2018).

Boulton and Williford (2018) propose four methods to address the issue of excessive zeros. The first is data transformation, a technique used to mitigate problems related to non-normal distributions. However, in this study, true-zero cases (inactivity) are also significant. Thus, it is necessary to preserve the semi-continuous nature of the dependent variable.

The second method is data discretization, which involves dividing a continuous variable into discrete categories to enable the use of logistic regression. However, this is not a viable solution for this study. Since the volume and frequency of actions over time serve as key

indicators, it is essential to retain this characteristic to properly assess how different factors influence these actions.

The third proposed solution is Tobit regression, which accounts for the skewed dependent variable by emphasizing latent variables and censored observations. Although Tobit regression could be applied to this study, the two-part model, the fourth method, offers a more suitable approach.

The two-part model, the fourth proposed method by Boulton and Williford (2018), differs from Tobit regression in its testing approach. It first applies a logistic or probit regression to distinguish between zero and non-zero outcomes. The first phase shows how IVs are significant in indicating activity of municipalities. Then, for non-zero observations – i.e. active municipalities, it uses a generalized linear model to examine how the positive continuous variable is associated with independent variables.

For this study, the two-part model has two main advantages. First, it allows testing whether a municipality's activity status (active vs. inactive) is associated with any of the independent variables. Second, among active municipalities, it enables an analysis of whether the same independent variables influence the frequency of activity. Thus, instead of focusing on only one aspect of the dependent variable – either activity or frequency – the two-part model makes it possible to assess both within a single framework. Consequently, I chose to implement two-part models to determine whether a municipality's activity is associated with specific factors and to investigate, among active municipalities, how each independent variable correlates with the frequency of activity.

In each model discussed below, I tested every outcome variable against local socioeconomic development, the number of cooperative initiatives, administrative capacity, and

the winning margin of each municipal mayor. I also controlled for ruling party affiliation, the role of mayoral incumbency, and ideological orientation (left or right).

The measure of socioeconomic development is based on the socioeconomic development score calculated by Turkey's Ministry of Industry and Technology. The Ministry periodically publishes reports on socioeconomic development for every city and district in Turkey, assigning a score to each locality. While separate reports are issued for districts and cities, they rely on the same variables. Although these reports are sometimes published in different years, in some cases, they are released simultaneously. For this study, I used the reports from 2017, as this was a year when both district and city reports were published together.

Party affiliations and ideological positions were determined based on elected mayors' party memberships and their associated ideological stances. Given that strong mayors are key decision-makers at the local level, I prioritized mayoral affiliation when analyzing municipal actions.

From this point forward, first I explain the dependent and independent variables and hypotheses. Second, I present the results of the two-part models and discuss their implications for municipalities' policy preferences.

Variables & Hypotheses

Before discussing and testing hypotheses, I explain dependent variables and independent variables below.

DVs

Integrationist Actions

Integration of migrants into a host community is a core point of discussion in the migration studies. Integrationist actions were aggregated into three periods in the dataset: integrationist actions 2011-2014, 2014-2019, 2019-2021. These periods were formed based on elections as cutting points. In each period, there are 249 municipalities observed. The first period between 2011 and 2014 demonstrates limited number of actions compared to other periods. This is probably result of ambiguity in who is responsible for immigrants in the urban setting. Municipalities, after 2014, became active participants in the immigration policy field as a stakeholder. Thus, we see that the municipal actions skyrocket in almost all action types.

Isolationist Actions

As explained above, municipalities may take segregating and isolating actions to prevent communication between host and immigrant communities and hinder integration of immigrant groups into a larger society. In the dataset, a similar periodization applies to isolation as other action types. Different from the others, no isolationist actions observed in the first period. Compared to other types of actions, isolationist ones remain marginal. Maximum values are very low across periods and the means, as well.

Right-based Actions

Right-based actions aim to establish a rights-oriented relationship between immigrants and municipalities. In some cases, these rights may exceed legal rights provided by the central government. Creating an environment and conditions to let immigrants enjoy their de facto rights

is one of the main focuses of this type of actions. In the dataset, as in the other types, we see that a low number of actions in the first period. A similar trend as in integrationist actions happen in right-based actions. Increase in the maximum value in the second period and decrease in the third. Yet, mean of number of actions slightly increases across periods.

Humanitarian Actions

Humanitarian actions target immigrant populations particularly when they first arrive. It is critical to provide humanitarian actions especially under conditions of forced displacement. Expectedly, humanitarian actions occur more in the first period compared to other types of actions. Still, we see a low mean value compared to the existing maximum value. On the other hand, mean value increases in the second period but decrease slightly in the third one. It is arguable that humanitarian actions increase over time but decrease eventually.

IVs

Structural Variables

Socioeconomic Development

The socioeconomic development of a locality can influence the actions of a municipality. For example, Kaufmann et al. (2022) investigate the impact of independent variables such as population size and GDP per capita on the outcomes of municipal-level immigration policies. They suggest that cities with higher economic and demographic capacity tend to have more accommodating policies. Additionally, the socioeconomic conditions of a locality, which lead to increased financial resources and capacity, may shape local governments' policy preferences to take action in accommodating immigrants (Huang & Liu, 2018; Scholten, 2013). In other words,

socioeconomic diversity can lead to variation among localities in how they approach immigration as a policy issue.

In this dissertation, I used the socioeconomic development index published by the Ministry of Industry and Technology in Turkey (Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı – STB) in Turkey (STB, 2024). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Ministry develops an index that measures socioeconomic development in each district and city. This index proved to be a useful indicator of socioeconomic development. While many relevant studies, as mentioned above, use GDP per capita as a measure of socioeconomic status, the index published by the Ministry offers the advantage of incorporating a diverse range of variables. The 2017 index is based on 32 variables related to demography, employment, education, health, economy, quality of life, and competition (STB, 2024).

As indicated in the Table 6, among municipalities included in the sample, the mean value for socioeconomic development score is 0.418. While the minimum score is -1.74, maximum score is 7.73. The distribution of municipalities' socioeconomic development scores is as indicated in the Figure 1. As shown in the figure, majority of municipalities are scattered between -2 and 2.

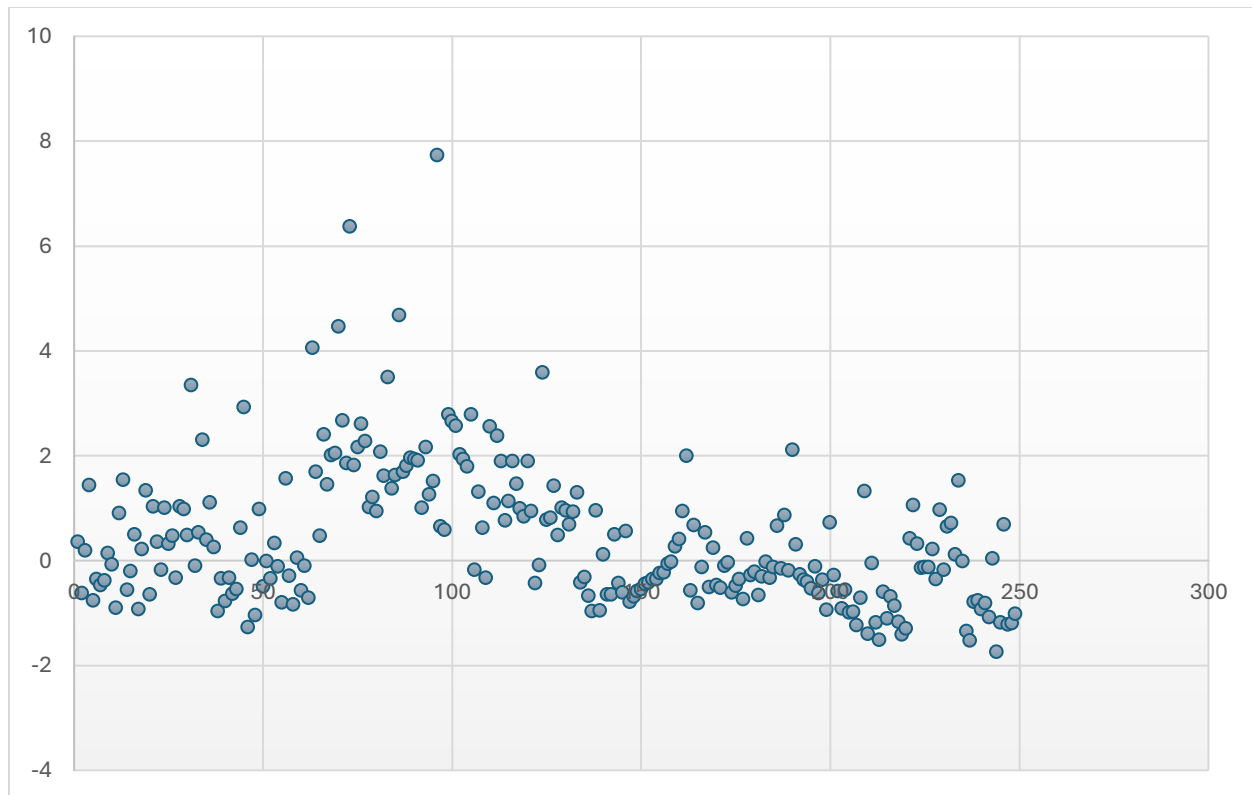


Figure 16: Socioeconomic Development Scores of Sampled Localities (STB, 2024)

Administrative Capacity

Administrative capacity is one of the most significant factors, briefly discussed in the literature review section, that affect local immigrant policies. Municipal administrative capacity is a determinant for local governments whether a municipality is able to overcome the administrative burden of an incoming population, increasing infrastructural needs, and capacity to employ intended actions to mitigate policy problems shaping around the phenomenon of migration.

In this study, I use municipal budgets as a proxy that indicates administrative capacity of a municipality. One problem that I encountered while collecting data on budgets of municipalities was the missing information on the district level municipal budgets. While city level budgets are publicly available, for many district municipalities, this data was missing in

public resources. Therefore, I depended on city or metropolitan municipal budgets to analyze the role of local capacity on which policy direction and approach municipalities take.

Host-Immigrant Ratio

Host-immigrant ratio in a locality may have an impact on the local policy preferences of a municipality (Alexander, 2007). Therefore, variation in the ratio of local and immigrant population may have an impact on local policy variation. Increasing number of immigrants in a locality may affect policy preferences in two distinct ways; increasing the administrative and infrastructural burden over a municipality and affecting host-immigrant relations in a locality.

In this chapter, I will use host-immigrant ratio as an independent variable to test its effect on the policy preferences at local level in Turkey. However, I encountered a similar problem to that of municipal budgets. As explained previously, district level immigrant population was not shared by the authorities in Turkey. Although the data is available for some cities like Istanbul and Izmir, it is not accessible for most of the districts in Turkey. Therefore, I used city level ratios for districts as well. Considering that city-wide ratios would indicate general presence of immigrants in urban areas, I preferred to use city-level ratios as a proxy for district level ratios.

Relational Variable

Cooperation with Third Parties

Cooperative relations, defined as municipalities' engagements with third-party actors such as NGOs, international organizations, and civil society groups, emerge as a significant independent variable in explaining variation in municipal immigrant policy. In contexts where administrative authority is highly centralized, such as Turkey, cooperation provides municipalities with critical resources – both material and institutional – that may compensate for

legal and budgetary constraints. These partnerships offer technical expertise, funding opportunities, and implementation support, enabling municipalities to initiate actions they might otherwise be unable or unwilling to do so independently. In other words, cooperation is expected to work as a capacity enhancer and in some cases amplifier of actions.

In this study, cooperative relations are measured using a variable that aims to indicate the number of partnerships or cooperative initiatives a municipality engaged in with third-party actors mentioned above in the field of migration and immigrant support. This variable is included to assess its effect on the likelihood and intensity of municipal immigrant actions and to demonstrate whether there is a divergence among activity types.

The variable is continuous, meaning that it reflects a count of cooperative engagements, rather than a binary indicator of whether any cooperation exists. This allows the analysis to capture not just whether a municipality collaborates, but to what extent it engages in such partnerships. Because the length of each period covered in this research, cooperative relations for each period indicates the mean value of cooperative relations formed across years covered in each period.

Political Indicators

Party Affiliation

As indicated in the literature, ideology and party affiliation are significant variables in municipalities' policy preferences. Immigration, as a politically salient issue, is a key policy area that is influenced by the party affiliation and ideological preferences of relevant actors. Research on local immigration policies also demonstrates that, in many cases, municipalities are affected by ideological and party affiliations (Alexander, 2007; Bazurli et al., 2022; Bazurli & De

Graauw, 2023; Caponio & Borkert, 2010; Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014; Kaufmann et al., 2022; Oomen & Baumgärtel, 2018; Ramakrishnan & Wong, 2010; Williamson, 2018).

Given its regular use as an independent variable in studies on immigrant policies, party affiliation emerged as an important factor to consider in this analysis. Rather than focusing on ideology, I chose to use party affiliation for two main reasons. First, as indicated in Table 8, the majority of municipalities in the sample are governed by Turkey's two dominant political parties, AKP and CHP. Second, the ideological positions of political parties are often open to interpretation, with the boundaries between these positions sometimes blurred. Therefore, I opted to use party affiliation as an indicator instead of ideology.

Table 6: Distribution of Political Party Affiliation by Municipalities in the Sample

<i>Political Party</i>	<i>2011-2014</i>	<i>2014-2019</i>	<i>2019-2021</i>
<i>AKP</i>	119	150	138
<i>CHP</i>	62	55	64
<i>HDP⁵</i>	9	13	7
<i>MHP</i>	35	29	35
<i>IYIP</i>	0	0	2
<i>SP</i>	4	1	0
<i>DSP</i>	1	0	0
<i>ANAP</i>	1	0	0
<i>ÖDP</i>	1	0	0
<i>Independent</i>	3	1	3

⁵ Formerly DTP

Electoral Competition

Electoral competition can be a significant independent variable influencing municipal-level service provision. The presence of an immigrant voter base may encourage local governments to adopt more accommodative policies for newcomers (Bazurli & De Graauw, 2023; Williamson, 2018). However, municipalities may also develop a negative stance toward immigration if it becomes a politically salient issue, especially if there is a close competitor capable of challenging the current ruling party in the upcoming electoral cycle. Therefore, electoral competition could be a key factor influencing local governments' policy preferences. In this dissertation, I used the winning margin of the leading political party in a locality, relative to the closest competitor.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent Variables – Number of Municipal Actions, by Period					
Integrationist Actions, 2011–2014	249	0.06	0.35	0	4
Integrationist Actions, 2014–2019	249	1.60	4.15	0	34
Integrationist Actions, 2019–2021	249	1.65	4.20	0	22
Isolationist Actions, 2011–2014	249	0.00	0.00	0	0
Isolationist Actions, 2014–2019	249	0.18	0.52	0	3
Isolationist Actions, 2019–2021	249	0.17	0.48	0	3
Right-Based Actions, 2011–2014	249	0.05	0.39	0	4
Right-Based Actions, 2014–2019	249	0.96	2.94	0	33
Right-Based Actions, 2019–2021	249	1.24	3.40	0	17
Humanitarian Actions, 2011–2014	249	0.22	1.44	0	21
Humanitarian Actions, 2014–2019	249	1.36	3.24	0	29
Humanitarian Actions, 2019–2021	249	1.05	2.60	0	16
Independent Variables					
Socioeconomic Development Score	249	0.42	1.33	–1.74	7.73
City Municipality Budget (TRY), 2014–2019	249	3,158,205	4,065,443	81,000	12,160,000
City Municipality Budget (TRY), 2019–2021	249	4,778,227	5,721,319	158,000	17,293,333
Host-Immigrant Ratio (%)	249	9.04	8.05	3.19	74.87
Cooperative Relations, 2014–2019	249	0.10	0.24	0.00	1.60
Cooperative Relations, 2019–2021	249	0.14	0.38	0.00	2.34
Winning Margin (%), 2014	249	16.89	15.21	0.05	74.46
Winning Margin (%), 2019	249	18.93	15.18	0.25	71.42

Note. N = 249 sampled municipalities for all variables. Periods correspond to local electoral cycles (2011–2014, 2014–2019, 2019–2021).

Budget values are in Turkish Lira (TRY), nominal prices (not inflation-adjusted), rounded to the nearest TRY.

Host-Immigrant Ratio and Winning Margin are expressed in percentage points. Party affiliation is a categorical variable and is reported as a frequency distribution in Table 6 rather than with mean and standard deviation.

Hypotheses

In this section, I will discuss my hypotheses and how they are tested with two-part models. From this point on, I list down my hypotheses and test them with two-part models to demonstrate that how each of the independent variables affect dependent variables.

Hypothesis 1: Municipalities running localities with high socioeconomic scores are more likely to demonstrate integrationist, right-based, and humanitarian actions.

Socioeconomic development is discussed as a potentially significant factor in the literature. Localities with higher socioeconomic development scores may have more means and resources – including human capital – to address immigration-related issues in a more integrationist and rights-oriented manner. Furthermore, considering the humanitarian dimension of the immigration wave to Turkey in the recent decade, socioeconomically more developed cities and districts would be better positioned to mobilise their resources to address a humanitarian problem.

Political factors play a critical role in shaping local immigrant policy preferences. Municipalities formulate their policies within a political climate, and since mayors and local governments are inherently political actors, they cannot ignore political developments or their own political power when crafting policies. To assess these dynamics, I examine three mayor-specific variables: electoral margin, party affiliation, and incumbency status. Given the strong influence of mayors in Turkey's municipal governance, their ideological and political positioning may significantly affect local immigration policy decisions.

Hypothesis 2: In localities with higher winning margin, i.e. mayors which are less challenged with less political competition, tend to provide integrationist and right-based services.

Mayors winning local elections with higher winning margins would expectedly have more political power to enact policies which local opposition would challenge. As discussed earlier in the literature review, immigration is a politically difficult policy area for policymakers. Through this hypothesis, I intend to investigate how the winning margin of a mayor is associated with the direction and approach of local immigrant policies. I will also test for isolationist and humanitarian actions to see how these types of actions are affected by political competition.

Hypothesis 3: While municipalities run by AKP affiliated mayors are more likely to provide integrationist, humanitarian and right-based actions, municipalities run by CHP affiliated mayors tend to employ more isolationist actions.

Based on the literature, left-leaning mayors are more likely to implement welcoming policies while right-leaning mayors tend to adopt more isolationist approaches. However, an opposite dynamic emerged during the period covered by this research. While AKP – the largest right-leaning party in Turkey and the governing party since 2003 – openly supports immigrants' presence in Turkey, CHP – as the largest left-leaning party and the main opposition party – has advocated for the return of immigrants. As other parties' presence within the sample remains almost marginal, I test the impact of party affiliation on the direction and approach of local immigrant policy.

Hypothesis 4: Cooperation with third parties increases the likelihood of employing integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions.

Cooperating with third parties is a way that local governments resort to for capacity building, finding new resources, and enhancing their knowledge of the field. Municipalities in Turkey enter into collaboration with CSOs, international organisations, universities, government agencies, and other municipalities to formulate and enact their local immigrant policy actions. Municipalities mostly cooperate with CSOs which have either experience in providing assistance to immigrants, or international organisations specialised in migration management. This is why I formulated the hypothesis that cooperation with third parties affects municipalities positively in taking integrationist, rights-based, and humanitarian actions while responding to the incoming population.

The ratio of the immigrant population in a community is, as indicated in the literature review, a significant factor that may directly impact the relationship between the host and immigrant communities, and expectedly, local immigrant policies would be influenced by the host-immigrant ratio. I test two hypotheses in this regard: while I expect a lower host-immigrant ratio to be positively associated with humanitarian, rights-based, and integrationist actions, a higher host-immigrant ratio would be significantly associated with more isolationist actions.

Hypothesis 5a: As host-immigrant ratio increases, municipalities are less likely to employ integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions.

A higher share of immigrants in the local population may generate pressure on public resources and heighten host community concerns about immigration, discouraging municipalities from pursuing integrationist, rights-based, or humanitarian responses. Conversely, a lower host-immigrant ratio may allow municipalities to adopt more welcoming approaches without significant political risk.

Hypothesis 5b: As host-immigrant ratio increases, municipalities are more likely to employ isolationist actions.

Higher host-immigrant ratios may drive municipalities toward isolationist approaches as local governments respond to the perceived social and economic pressures associated with a large immigrant population. A politically salient immigrant presence may incentivise restrictive policies as a way of managing host community tensions.

Hypothesis 6: Municipalities in cities which control larger budgets likely to implement integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions.

Administrative capacity of a municipality is a key factor for the implementation of formulated policies or intended actions. I included this hypothesis to test how the capacity of a municipality impacts the chosen approach and direction of action for local immigrant policies. As a proxy for administrative capacity, I use the budgets of city municipalities. Thus, this hypothesis aims to test how municipalities operating under cities with larger yearly budgets are associated with integrationist, humanitarian, and rights-based actions.

Based on the rationale explained above, I tested each hypothesis to investigate the dynamics that affecting the variation of immigrant policies.

Two-Part Model Test Results

Relying on the dependent and independent variables mentioned above, I ran two-part model tests on each of the dependent variables to see how they are affected by the independent variables. The results of the tests show how integrationist, isolationist, right-based and

humanitarian actions are affected by above-mentioned factors. I present the results in the following pages in four tables.

The tables demonstrate the combined results of the tests across independent variables and two periods. I omitted the results of the first period, 2011-2014, since none of the dependent variables demonstrate a significant relation with any independent variable. The reason behind that might be limited number of actions and active municipalities available during this period. As indicated above, most of the active municipalities initiated their actions in the second period, 2014-2019, and continued their efforts in the third period, 2019-2021.

Table 8: Integrationist Actions Test Results

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2014–2019										
<i>Binary Component (Logit)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.488*** (0.115)					0.464*** (0.128)				
Winning Margin		0.011 (0.009)					0.005 (0.009)			
Cooperation			12.198*** (2.242)					11.717*** (2.255)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					0.013 (0.016)					0.025 (0.017)
AKP Affiliation						1.324*** (0.479)	1.498*** (0.478)	1.437** (0.576)	1.217** (0.478)	1.598*** (0.475)
CHP Affiliation						0.647 (0.553)	1.160** (0.531)	1.254** (0.638)	0.345 (0.570)	1.330** (0.534)
Incumbent Mayor						0.367 (0.290)	0.552** (0.278)	0.636* (0.334)	0.138 (0.311)	0.611** (0.282)
Constant	-0.764*** (0.148)	-0.728*** (0.199)	-1.222*** (0.170)	-1.221*** (0.181)	-0.649*** (0.198)	-1.881*** (0.455)	-2.056*** (0.459)	-2.663*** (0.560)	-2.126*** (0.449)	-2.315*** (0.504)
<i>Count Component (GLM)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.086*** (0.032)					0.084** (0.034)				
Winning Margin		0.014*** (0.003)					0.013** (0.003)			
Cooperation			1.434*** (0.097)					1.630*** (0.111)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					-0.005 (0.005)					-0.004 (0.006)
AKP Affiliation						0.474* (0.258)	0.294 (0.264)	0.398 (0.259)	0.170 (0.263)	0.506** (0.257)
CHP Affiliation						0.410 (0.274)	0.358 (0.275)	0.225 (0.274)	-0.076 (0.284)	0.476* (0.274)
Incumbent Mayor						-0.029 (0.104)	-0.017 (0.103)	0.438*** (0.114)	-0.268** (0.110)	-0.004 (0.109)
Constant	1.377*** (0.062)	1.183*** (0.085)	0.940*** (0.071)	1.013*** (0.085)	1.508*** (0.069)	0.958*** (0.252)	0.911*** (0.253)	0.315 (0.258)	0.975*** (0.252)	1.032*** (0.265)
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2019–2021										
<i>Binary Component (Logit)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.440*** (0.115)					0.372*** (0.116)				
Winning Margin		0.000 (0.010)					0.001 (0.010)			
Cooperation			4.804*** (0.887)					4.915*** (0.934)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					0.028 (0.017)					0.039** (0.018)
AKP Affiliation						0.777 (0.523)	1.009** (0.513)	0.590 (0.558)	0.681 (0.528)	1.055** (0.516)
CHP Affiliation						1.265** (0.559)	1.650*** (0.542)	1.073* (0.609)	1.079* (0.566)	1.810*** (0.551)
Incumbent Mayor						0.278 (0.329)	0.234 (0.322)	0.528 (0.383)	0.187 (0.341)	0.258 (0.325)
Constant	-1.331*** (0.169)	-1.090*** (0.233)	-1.741*** (0.191)	-1.788*** (0.214)	-1.346*** (0.222)	-2.199*** (0.494)	-2.225*** (0.523)	-2.548*** (0.534)	-2.477*** (0.498)	-2.654*** (0.538)
<i>Count Component (GLM)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.119*** (0.038)					0.093** (0.038)				
Winning Margin		0.002 (0.003)					0.001 (0.003)			
Cooperation			0.748*** (0.069)					0.735*** (0.073)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					-0.022*** (0.006)					-0.019*** (0.006)
AKP Affiliation						1.828*** (0.454)	1.915*** (0.453)	1.681*** (0.453)	1.526*** (0.457)	1.879*** (0.452)
CHP Affiliation						1.867*** (0.455)	1.944*** (0.454)	1.459*** (0.459)	1.559*** (0.458)	1.870*** (0.455)
Incumbent Mayor						-0.211* (0.112)	-0.191* (0.112)	-0.224* (0.115)	-0.278** (0.113)	-0.204* (0.112)
Constant	1.742*** (0.067)	1.840*** (0.080)	1.382*** (0.076)	1.365*** (0.090)	2.085*** (0.071)	0.059 (0.449)	0.058 (0.451)	-0.073 (0.450)	0.017 (0.449)	0.311 (0.454)
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. Each model tests one substantive independent variable. Models 1–5 are bivariate; Models 6–10 add party-affiliation controls (AKP, MHP, and Incumbent Mayor). N = 249 municipalities per period. The 2011–2014 period is omitted: no dependent variable showed a statistically significant relationship with any independent variable during that period.

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$

Table 9: Isolationist Actions Test Results

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2014–2019										
<i>Binary Component (Logit)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.080 (0.133)					0.064 (0.141)				
Winning Margin		0.000 (0.012)					-0.001 (0.013)			
Cooperation			1.995*** (0.603)					2.051*** (0.610)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000 (0.000)					0.000 (0.000)	
Host-Immigrant Ratio					0.053** (0.021)					0.058*** (0.022)
AKP Affiliation						0.166 (0.541)	0.215 (0.545)	-0.021 (0.548)	0.087 (0.545)	0.262 (0.538)
CHP Affiliation						0.012 (0.651)	0.099 (0.637)	-0.172 (0.651)	-0.136 (0.657)	0.344 (0.638)
Incumbent Mayor						0.196 (0.391)	0.232 (0.382)	0.338 (0.396)	0.085 (0.404)	0.401 (0.395)
Constant	-1.916*** (0.200)	-1.879*** (0.280)	-2.157*** (0.218)	-2.082*** (0.245)	-2.415*** (0.298)	-2.091*** (0.491)	-2.104*** (0.503)	-2.253*** (0.496)	-2.139*** (0.486)	-2.858*** (0.572)
<i>Count Component (GLM)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	-0.016 (0.122)					0.024 (0.135)				
Winning Margin		-0.005 (0.010)					-0.006 (0.010)			
Cooperation			0.375 (0.332)					0.336 (0.345)		
Administrative Capacity				-0.000 (0.000)					-0.000 (0.000)	
Host-Immigrant Ratio					0.011 (0.009)					0.011 (0.010)
AKP Affiliation						-0.004 (0.423)	0.102 (0.452)	-0.028 (0.424)	0.052 (0.429)	-0.053 (0.426)
CHP Affiliation						-0.135 (0.529)	-0.036 (0.517)	-0.118 (0.505)	-0.032 (0.521)	-0.062 (0.507)
Incumbent Mayor						-0.226 (0.331)	-0.220 (0.312)	-0.130 (0.324)	-0.118 (0.344)	-0.083 (0.335)
Constant	0.319*** (0.162)	0.391* (0.213)	0.205 (0.182)	0.406** (0.186)	0.150 (0.201)	0.419 (0.394)	0.441 (0.396)	0.310 (0.409)	0.408 (0.395)	0.241 (0.430)
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2019–2021										
<i>Binary Component (Logit)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.215*					0.162				
	(0.124)					(0.133)				
Winning Margin		-0.004					-0.003			
		(0.013)					(0.013)			
Cooperation			1.498***					1.362***		
			(0.382)					(0.393)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000					0.000	
				(0.000)					(0.000)	
Host-Immigrant Ratio					0.036*					0.044**
					(0.020)					(0.020)
AKP Affiliation						0.162	0.284	0.049	0.241	0.291
						(0.601)	(0.592)	(0.600)	(0.597)	(0.595)
CHP Affiliation						0.889	1.073*	0.618	1.003	1.240**
						(0.625)	(0.606)	(0.636)	(0.629)	(0.615)
Incumbent Mayor						-0.284	-0.302	-0.312	-0.308	-0.268
						(0.440)	(0.438)	(0.456)	(0.439)	(0.442)
Constant	-1.999***	-1.802***	-2.211***	-2.032***	-2.238***	-2.261***	-2.223***	-2.313***	-2.308***	-2.791***
	(0.207)	(0.297)	(0.223)	(0.250)	(0.281)	(0.539)	(0.578)	(0.541)	(0.542)	(0.594)
<i>Count Component (GLM)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	-0.014					0.001				
	(0.114)					(0.118)				
Winning Margin		0.007					0.006			
		(0.013)					(0.013)			
Cooperation			-0.011					0.017		
			(0.269)					(0.293)		
Administrative Capacity				-0.000					0.000	
				(0.000)					(0.000)	
Host-Immigrant Ratio					0.006					0.006
					(0.017)					(0.019)
AKP Affiliation						-0.219	-0.193	-0.222	-0.258	-0.213
						(0.486)	(0.475)	(0.476)	(0.508)	(0.472)
CHP Affiliation						-0.158	-0.118	-0.167	-0.179	-0.117
						(0.479)	(0.480)	(0.500)	(0.482)	(0.488)
Incumbent Mayor						0.096	0.074	0.101	0.106	0.076
						(0.353)	(0.355)	(0.361)	(0.356)	(0.358)
Constant	0.252	0.111	0.246	0.241	0.167	0.380	0.243	0.378	0.371	0.292
	(0.178)	(0.291)	(0.191)	(0.209)	(0.262)	(0.419)	(0.517)	(0.422)	(0.421)	(0.498)
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249

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Note. Standard errors in parentheses. Each model tests one substantive independent variable. Models 1–5 are bivariate; Models 6–10 add party-affiliation controls (AKP, MHP, and Incumbent Mayor). N = 249 municipalities per period. The 2011–2014 period is omitted: no dependent variable showed a statistically significant relationship with any independent variable during that period.

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$

Table 10: Right-Based Actions Test Results

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2014–2019										
<i>Binary Component (Logit)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.315*** (0.109)					0.307** (0.119)				
Winning Margin		0.014 (0.009)					0.013 (0.010)			
Cooperation			7.159*** (1.209)					7.039*** (1.211)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					0.033* (0.018)					0.041** (0.019)
AKP Affiliation						0.288 (0.445)	0.362 (0.445)	-0.039 (0.495)	0.105 (0.449)	0.553 (0.440)
CHP Affiliation						-0.254 (0.540)	0.009 (0.525)	-0.340 (0.601)	-0.649 (0.563)	0.322 (0.525)
Incumbent Mayor						0.431 (0.310)	0.592** (0.302)	0.798** (0.361)	0.167 (0.335)	0.697** (0.308)
Constant	-1.273*** (0.164)	-1.355*** (0.225)	-1.833*** (0.201)	-1.715*** (0.206)	-1.419*** (0.226)	-1.567*** (0.407)	-1.804*** (0.418)	-2.084*** (0.454)	-1.742*** (0.402)	-2.193*** (0.475)
<i>Count Component (GLM)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.120** (0.050)					0.100** (0.050)				
Winning Margin		0.015*** (0.004)					0.012*** (0.004)			
Cooperation			1.117*** (0.128)					1.310*** (0.152)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					-0.004 (0.006)					-0.005 (0.006)
AKP Affiliation						0.765*** (0.272)	0.597** (0.284)	0.512* (0.274)	0.474* (0.283)	0.820*** (0.271)
CHP Affiliation						0.659** (0.301)	0.619** (0.302)	0.365 (0.306)	0.261 (0.315)	0.698** (0.302)
Incumbent Mayor						-0.044 (0.139)	-0.054 (0.139)	0.440*** (0.158)	-0.228 (0.147)	-0.054 (0.146)
Constant	1.234*** (0.084)	1.040*** (0.113)	0.883*** (0.095)	0.898*** (0.111)	1.395*** (0.090)	0.601** (0.264)	0.578** (0.264)	0.146 (0.273)	0.631** (0.262)	0.705** (0.279)
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2019–2021										
<i>Binary Component (Logit)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.377*** (0.115)					0.289*** (0.115)				
Winning Margin		0.010 (0.010)					0.011 (0.010)			
Cooperation			4.596*** (0.779)					4.529*** (0.813)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host-Immigrant Ratio					0.032* (0.018)					0.043** (0.019)
AKP Affiliation						1.603** (0.758)	1.772** (0.753)	1.380* (0.798)	1.488* (0.763)	1.839** (0.755)
CHP Affiliation						2.085*** (0.782)	2.401*** (0.773)	1.747** (0.843)	1.858** (0.789)	2.573*** (0.779)
Incumbent Mayor						-0.011 (0.359)	-0.024 (0.355)	0.169 (0.436)	-0.131 (0.373)	-0.019 (0.359)
Constant	-1.553*** (0.180)	-1.530*** (0.254)	-2.111*** (0.218)	-2.036*** (0.233)	-1.636*** (0.238)	-3.082*** (0.734)	-3.308*** (0.766)	-3.465*** (0.787)	-3.344*** (0.739)	-3.597*** (0.771)
<i>Count Component (GLM)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.205*** (0.038)					0.189*** (0.039)				
Winning Margin		-0.004 (0.004)					-0.004 (0.004)			
Cooperation			0.447*** (0.083)					0.465*** (0.087)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host-Immigrant Ratio					-0.024*** (0.007)					-0.025*** (0.007)
AKP Affiliation						0.712 (0.518)	1.129** (0.509)	0.911* (0.510)	0.459 (0.517)	1.001** (0.510)
CHP Affiliation						0.605 (0.517)	0.943* (0.515)	0.620 (0.516)	0.324 (0.518)	0.728 (0.515)
Incumbent Mayor						0.053 (0.126)	0.016 (0.125)	-0.021 (0.128)	0.041 (0.127)	0.032 (0.126)
Constant	1.529*** (0.079)	1.856*** (0.097)	1.476*** (0.086)	1.014*** (0.117)	2.008*** (0.079)	0.878* (0.501)	0.820 (0.519)	0.693 (0.500)	0.627 (0.500)	1.136** (0.513)
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249

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Note. Standard errors in parentheses. Each model tests one substantive independent variable. Models 1–5 are bivariate; Models 6–10 add party-affiliation controls (AKP, MHP, and Incumbent Mayor). N = 249 municipalities per period. The 2011–2014 period is omitted: no dependent variable showed a statistically significant relationship with any independent variable during that period.

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$

Table 11: Humanitarian Actions Test Results

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2014–2019										
<i>Binary Component (Logit)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.268*** (0.103)					0.275** (0.115)				
Winning Margin		0.015* (0.009)					0.012 (0.009)			
Cooperation			8.501*** (1.528)					8.027*** (1.493)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					0.024 (0.017)					0.029* (0.018)
AKP Affiliation						0.746* (0.418)	0.793* (0.419)	0.568 (0.460)	0.579 (0.420)	0.959** (0.415)
CHP Affiliation						-0.128 (0.513)	0.102 (0.498)	-0.169 (0.568)	-0.634 (0.546)	0.354 (0.498)
Incumbent Mayor						0.282 (0.289)	0.420 (0.282)	0.489 (0.328)	-0.007 (0.315)	0.489* (0.285)
Constant	-0.821*** (0.146)	-0.956*** (0.205)	-1.327*** (0.173)	-1.264*** (0.183)	-0.914*** (0.206)	-1.378*** (0.387)	-1.600*** (0.396)	-1.833*** (0.428)	-1.572*** (0.383)	-1.838*** (0.446)
<i>Count Component (GLM)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.065* (0.035)					0.040 (0.037)				
Winning Margin		0.005* (0.003)					0.005 (0.003)			
Cooperation			1.021*** (0.114)					1.130*** (0.127)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					0.000 (0.005)					0.005 (0.005)
AKP Affiliation						0.180 (0.204)	0.127 (0.211)	0.014 (0.205)	-0.044 (0.210)	0.196 (0.203)
CHP Affiliation						0.444* (0.227)	0.439* (0.227)	0.155 (0.229)	0.053 (0.239)	0.524** (0.225)
Incumbent Mayor						0.136 (0.114)	0.147 (0.113)	0.410*** (0.122)	-0.060 (0.122)	0.193* (0.117)
Constant	1.354*** (0.062)	1.300*** (0.086)	1.061*** (0.074)	1.035*** (0.087)	1.404*** (0.076)	1.098*** (0.191)	1.075*** (0.192)	0.791*** (0.196)	1.077*** (0.191)	1.024*** (0.205)
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2019–2021										
<i>Binary Component (Logit)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.261** (0.107)					0.229** (0.110)				
Winning Margin		0.006 (0.009)					0.005 (0.010)			
Cooperation			4.390*** (0.798)					4.418*** (0.795)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					0.011 (0.017)					0.014 (0.017)
AKP Affiliation						0.852* (0.483)	0.981** (0.477)	0.625 (0.505)	0.725 (0.489)	1.007** (0.477)
CHP Affiliation						0.634 (0.538)	0.888* (0.522)	-0.190 (0.634)	0.335 (0.552)	0.940* (0.527)
Incumbent Mayor						-0.122 (0.329)	-0.134 (0.326)	0.030 (0.386)	-0.217 (0.341)	-0.133 (0.327)
Constant	-1.240*** (0.162)	-1.212*** (0.237)	-1.739*** (0.191)	-1.663*** (0.209)	-1.205*** (0.219)	-1.851*** (0.451)	-1.962*** (0.485)	-2.102*** (0.477)	-2.097*** (0.457)	-2.025*** (0.489)
<i>Count Component (GLM)</i>										
Socioeconomic Dev. Score	0.136*** (0.043)					0.118*** (0.044)				
Winning Margin		-0.003 (0.004)					-0.003 (0.004)			
Cooperation			0.585*** (0.088)					0.462*** (0.096)		
Administrative Capacity				0.000*** (0.000)					0.000*** (0.000)	
Host–Immigrant Ratio					-0.008 (0.007)					-0.005 (0.007)
AKP Affiliation						1.013*** (0.364)	1.108*** (0.366)	0.876** (0.366)	0.753** (0.369)	1.082*** (0.363)
CHP Affiliation						1.475*** (0.369)	1.550*** (0.368)	1.110*** (0.382)	1.088*** (0.379)	1.530*** (0.368)
Incumbent Mayor						0.224* (0.135)	0.223* (0.135)	0.219 (0.138)	0.179 (0.137)	0.226* (0.135)
Constant	1.316*** (0.077)	1.503*** (0.098)	1.078*** (0.091)	0.913*** (0.109)	1.516*** (0.085)	0.156 (0.359)	0.242 (0.360)	0.184 (0.357)	0.126 (0.357)	0.249 (0.361)
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. Each model tests one substantive independent variable. Models 1–5 are bivariate; Models 6–10 add party-affiliation controls (AKP, MHP, and Incumbent Mayor). N = 249 municipalities per period. The 2011–2014 period is omitted: no dependent variable showed a statistically significant relationship with any independent variable during that period.

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$

To complement the two-part models presented above, I also estimated a panel regression model that tests all independent variables jointly against all four dependent variables in a single specification. While the two-part models examine each independent variable in isolation, allowing precise assessment of individual effects, the joint panel model provides an overview of which factors retain explanatory power when competing predictors are controlled for simultaneously.

The model is a pooled ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with municipality fixed effects and period fixed effects, estimated on a panel dataset of 747 municipality-period observations (249 municipalities across three electoral periods: 2011–2013, 2014–2018, and 2019–2021). Municipality fixed effects absorb all time-invariant characteristics of each municipality, controlling for unobserved heterogeneity across localities. Period fixed effects control for common time shocks that affect all municipalities equally within a given period. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level to account for within-municipality correlation across periods. City municipality budget, measured as the period average in millions of Turkish Lira, is included as a proxy for administrative capacity; district municipalities are assigned the budget of their respective city municipality, consistent with the approach used in the two-part models. The results are presented in Table 12.

Three variables reach statistical significance in the joint specification. Cooperative relations emerges as the strongest and most consistent predictor across all four action types, positive and significant at $p < 0.01$ for integrationist (5.408), right-based (3.200), and humanitarian (2.980) actions, and marginally significant for isolationist actions (0.293, $p < 0.10$). City budget is positively associated with integrationist (0.174, $p < 0.01$), right-based (0.204, $p <$

0.01), and humanitarian (0.098, $p < 0.05$) actions, confirming that administrative capacity matters for the implementation of active immigrant policy. CHP affiliation shows a negative marginal effect on humanitarian actions (-0.778 , $p < 0.10$), consistent with the party's position on immigration during the study period. Winning margin, AKP affiliation, and incumbent status do not reach conventional significance thresholds in the joint specification, suggesting that when structural and relational factors are controlled for, electoral and partisan dynamics contribute less independently to explaining the variation.

Two limitations of this specification are worth noting. First, the socioeconomic development score is time-invariant and is therefore absorbed by municipality fixed effects; its effect cannot be estimated here and should be interpreted through the two-part model results above. Second, the budget variable is measured at the city level and is identical for all district municipalities within the same city; identification therefore relies on cross-city variation in budget growth trajectories across periods rather than within-municipality variation. These limitations mean the panel model should be read alongside, not as a replacement for, the two-part models, which offer greater variable coverage and period-specific estimates.

Table 12: Panel Regression Results – Municipal Immigration Policy Actions (All Periods Combined)

	Integrationist	Isolationist	Right-Based	Humanitarian
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Cooperative Relations	5.408*** (1.212)	0.293* (0.156)	3.200*** (0.792)	2.980*** (0.716)
Winning Margin (%)	0.000 (0.010)	0.001 (0.002)	0.004 (0.007)	0.001 (0.006)
City Budget (million TRY)	0.174*** (0.065)	-0.001 (0.009)	0.204*** (0.064)	0.098** (0.039)
AKP Affiliation	0.474 (0.502)	-0.055 (0.167)	-0.128 (0.366)	-0.043 (0.304)
CHP Affiliation	0.127 (0.859)	0.013 (0.165)	-0.447 (0.530)	-0.778* (0.448)
Incumbent Mayor	0.392* (0.216)	0.008 (0.045)	0.213 (0.220)	0.218 (0.167)
R² (within)	0.306	0.032	0.263	0.204
N	747	747	747	747
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Period FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clustered SE (municipality)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note. OLS estimates with municipality and period fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level are in parentheses. Unit of observation is the municipality-period ($N = 249$ municipalities $\times$ 3 periods = 747 observations). Periods: 2011–2013, 2014–2018, 2019–2021.

City Budget is the annual average budget of the city (metropolitan) municipality for each period, in millions of Turkish Lira (nominal).

The socioeconomic development score (time-invariant) is absorbed by municipality fixed effects and therefore excluded. Host-immigrant ratio is not available in the current dataset and is excluded from this specification.

AKP and CHP Affiliation are binary indicators equal to 1 if the incumbent mayor belongs to the respective party; the reference category is all other parties. Incumbent Mayor equals 1 if the sitting mayor was re-elected in the preceding election. Winning Margin is the vote-share gap between the winning party and the closest competitor.

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$

Socioeconomic Score's Effect on Local Immigrant Policy

Hypothesis 1: Municipalities running localities with high socioeconomic scores are more likely to demonstrate integrationist, right-based, and humanitarian actions.

As indicated in the Table 8, during the period 2014-2019, socioeconomic development is positively associated with both the likelihood and frequency of integrationist actions. In the first part of the model, the coefficient of 0.488 ($p < 0.01$) indicates that higher levels of socioeconomic development significantly increase the probability of integrationist actions occurring. Similarly, in the second part, the coefficient of 0.086 ($p < 0.01$) suggests that a higher socioeconomic development score is associated with a larger number of integrationist efforts. This highlights the importance of economic and social infrastructure in promoting integrationist actions.

During the period of 2019-2021, socioeconomic development exhibits a robust positive association with both the likelihood and scale of integrationist actions. In the logit component, the coefficient of 0.440 ($p < 0.01$) indicates that higher levels of socioeconomic development significantly increase the probability of integrationist initiatives. Similarly, in the GLM component, the coefficient of 0.119 ($p < 0.01$) suggests that greater socioeconomic development is associated with larger-scale integrationist efforts. This underscores the importance of economic and social infrastructure in facilitating integrationist actions.

However, as for isolationist actions, during the same period, socioeconomic development did not significantly influenced municipalities to adopt isolationist actions. Socioeconomic development showed a mixed relationship with isolationism. In the initial logit model in the Table 8, socioeconomic development had a positive and marginally significant effect (coefficient = 0.215, $p < 0.1$), suggesting that higher levels of development may initially correlate with a greater likelihood of isolationism. However, this significance disappeared in subsequent models,

and the second part of the model consistently showed no statistically significant relationship.

This implies that while there may be a tentative link between development and isolationism, it is not a robust or consistent determinant across different model specifications.

Socioeconomic development demonstrates a significant and positive association with rights-based actions in both parts of the model, in the period of 2014-2019. In the logit component, the coefficients are positive and statistically significant in the initial specifications (e.g., 0.315, $p < 0.01$ in the first model), suggesting that higher levels of socioeconomic development increase the likelihood of rights-based actions. This relationship remains significant in the second part of the model, though with smaller coefficients (e.g., 0.120, $p < 0.05$), indicating a consistent linear association between development and rights-based actions. Even when controlling for party affiliations and incumbency, socioeconomic development remains a significant predictor.

For the period 2019–2021, socioeconomic development continues to show a significant and positive relationship with rights-based actions in both parts of the model. As indicated in Table 14, the coefficients remain positive and statistically significant (e.g., 0.377, $p < 0.01$ in the first model), suggesting that higher socioeconomic development scores increase the probability of rights-based actions. This significance is also observed in the second part of the model, where the coefficients remain positive and statistically significant (e.g., 0.205, $p < 0.01$), reinforcing a strong linear relationship between socioeconomic conditions and rights-based actions.

For the period of 2014-2019, socioeconomic development consistently demonstrates a significant positive association with humanitarian actions in both parts of the models. In the first parts, the coefficients are positive and statistically significant in the initial specifications (e.g., 0.268, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of socioeconomic development correspond to an

increased likelihood of humanitarian initiatives. This positive relationship persists in the second parts, albeit with smaller coefficients (e.g., 0.065, $p < 0.1$), suggesting a robust linear connection between socioeconomic development and humanitarian actions.

Socioeconomic development, between 2019 and 2021, exhibits a strong positive association with both the likelihood and scale of humanitarian actions. In the logit component, the coefficient of 0.261 ($p < 0.05$) indicates that higher levels of socioeconomic development increase the probability of humanitarian initiatives. Similarly, in the GLM part, the coefficient of 0.136 ($p < 0.01$) suggests that greater socioeconomic development is associated with larger-scale humanitarian efforts. This underscores the importance of economic and social infrastructure in facilitating humanitarian actions, likely through enhanced resource availability and institutional capacity.

Resultingly, this hypothesis is confirmed and showed that three types of actions are affected by the socioeconomic development of a locality. Furthermore, isolationist actions may be positively affected by socioeconomic development. Yet, this relationship is not a strong one.

Political Factors Effect on Local Immigrant Policy

Hypothesis 2: In localities with higher winning margin, i.e. mayors which are less challenged with less political competition, tend to provide integrationist and right-based services.

Mayors winning local elections with higher winning margins would expectedly have more political power to enact policies which local opposition would challenge. As discussed earlier in the literature review section, immigration is a politically difficult policy area for policymakers. Through this hypothesis, I intend to investigate how winning margin of a mayor is associated with the direction and approach of local immigrant policies. I will also test for

isolationist and humanitarian actions to see how these types of actions are affected by political competition.

For the period 2014-2019, winning margin shows a positive and statistically significant relationship with the number of integrationist actions in the GLM component (0.014, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that a higher electoral winning margin is associated with a larger number of integrationist actions, possibly reflecting greater political stability and less competition for implementing such initiatives.

For the period of 2019-2021, winning margin shows no statistically significant relationship with integrationist outcomes, as coefficients hover near zero (e.g., 0.002 in GLM). This suggests that the specific gap measured by this variable does not directly influence integrationist actions, with structural and collaborative factors playing a more decisive role. While it was significant previously – though less so than socioeconomic development and cooperation – the winning margin loses its significance completely during 2019-2021. This suggests that mayors may have become less reliant on their political power in their districts or cities, and regardless of the margin by which they won, it did not influence their decisions to take integrationist actions.

During the period from 2014 to 2019, local political competition did not significantly impact municipalities to adopt isolationist actions. The coefficients for winning margin were negative but statistically insignificant, indicating that electoral victory margins did not play a significant role in shaping isolationist tendencies. Similarly, for the period between 2019 and 2021, isolationist actions demonstrate no significant association with winning margin. Resultingly, it is possible to argue that while low political competition may help local

governments to take integrationist actions, higher political competition does not necessarily pressure local governments to take isolationist actions.

The winning margin in elections did not appear to significantly influence isolationism. In both the logit and GLM models, the coefficients for the winning margin were statistically insignificant, indicating that the margin of victory in electoral contests had no meaningful impact on the likelihood of adopting isolationist policies.

In the period of 2014-2019, winning margin also shows a significant and positive relationship with rights-based actions, particularly in the second part of the models. The coefficients are positive and statistically significant (e.g., 0.015, $p < 0.01$ when other political factors are not controlled), implying that a larger electoral victory margin is linked to an increase in rights-based actions. However, in the first part of the models, this relationship is not statistically significant. When political factors are controlled, the results remain similar, with incumbency emerging as a significant factor in the first part of the model, indicating that incumbents are more likely to initiate rights-based actions.

Winning margin, however, does not appear to significantly influence rights-based actions between 2014 and 2019. In both the logit and GLM models, the coefficients for winning margin remain statistically insignificant, suggesting that electoral victory margins do not meaningfully impact the likelihood of rights-based actions.

Winning margin also emerges as a significant positive predictor of humanitarian actions, particularly in the second parts of the models in 2014-2019. The coefficients are positive and statistically significant across most specifications (e.g., 0.005, $p < 0.1$), indicating that a larger electoral margin of victory correlates with higher levels of humanitarian activity. However, in the first parts, the coefficients are not statistically significant. Additionally, winning margin is not

statistically significant in any of the other models when controlled with other political factors and modeled with all variables.

Interestingly, winning margin shows no statistically significant relationship with humanitarian outcomes in the period of 2019-2021, as coefficients hover near zero (e.g., -0.003 in GLM). This suggests that the intensity of electoral competition may not directly influence humanitarian actions, with structural and that other factors may play a more decisive role.

Overall, this hypothesis is partially confirmed. While it is possible to see that political competition has an impact on local immigrant policy preferences, the period between 2019 and 2021 demonstrates that political competition is less and less salient in this policy area.

Hypothesis 3: While municipalities run by AKP affiliated mayors are more likely to provide integrationist, humanitarian and right-based actions, municipalities run by CHP affiliated mayors tend to employ more isolationist actions.

Based on the literature, we already know that left leaning mayors are more likely to implement welcoming policies while right leaning mayors tend to employ more isolationist actions. Additionally, immigrant rights are mostly problematized by left leaning mayors. However, based on the observation, an opposite perception on the immigrants emerged in the period of this research. While AKP, the largest right leaning party in Turkey and the governing party since 2003, openly supports immigrants' presence in Turkey, CHP, as the largest left leaning party and the main opposition party since 2003, defends for the return of the immigrants. As other parties' presence within the sample remains almost marginal, I tested the impact of party affiliation over local immigrant policy approach and direction.

In the period of 2014-2019, affiliation with the AKP shows a strong positive relationship with the likelihood of integrationist actions, as evidenced by the logit coefficient of 1.324 ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that AKP-affiliated actors are more likely to initiate integrationist initiatives compared to non-AKP actors. The GLM results further support this, with AKP affiliation associated with a 0.474 ($p < 0.1$) increase in the number of integrationist actions, though the effect varies slightly across models.

For CHP, the logit results show a positive relationship with the likelihood of integrationist actions (1.160, $p < 0.05$), indicating that CHP-affiliated mayors are also more likely to engage in integrationist efforts. However, the GLM coefficients exhibit mixed statistical significance (e.g., 0.358, $p > 0.1$), suggesting that while CHP participation correlates with initiating actions, its role in scaling them may depend on contextual factors not fully captured in the model.

During the period of 2019-2021 affiliation with AKP shows a strong positive relationship with the number of integrationist actions, as evidenced by the GLM coefficient of 1.828 ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that AKP-affiliated actors are associated with significantly larger-scale integrationist efforts compared to non-AKP actors. The logit results further support this, with AKP affiliation increasing the log-odds of integrationist action occurrence (1.009, $p < 0.05$), although the effect varies slightly across specifications.

For the CHP, the GLM results show a robust positive relationship with the scale of integrationist actions (1.867, $p < 0.01$), indicating that CHP-affiliated actors also engage in substantial integrationist efforts. The logit coefficients further support this, with CHP affiliation increasing the log-odds of integrationist action occurrence (1.265, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that CHP-affiliated actors are more likely to initiate integrationist initiatives compared to non-CHP actors.

Party affiliation is an inconsistently significant factor. In the 2014-2019 period, being a member of the AKP or CHP is a significant factor in the logit part (i.e., the first part of the model). However, in the 2019-2021 period, the significance shifts to the second part of the model. It is arguable that mayors affiliated with the AKP or CHP were more inclined to trigger action in the 2014-2019 period. Yet, the number of integrationist activities was not significantly associated with party affiliation. In the following period, the relationship reverses: while membership in the AKP or CHP does not significantly affect whether a municipality initiates integrationist actions, it is significantly associated with the number of actions taken. Therefore, in the 2019-2021 period, party affiliation loses its significance in initiating integrationist activity but positively influences the number of integrationist actions taken.

The coefficients for AKP and CHP dummies were statistically insignificant, suggesting that political party affiliation did not meaningfully influence the likelihood of isolationism. While the coefficients for incumbency were positive in the logit models and negative in the GLM models, they were not statistically significant, indicating that being an incumbent did not significantly affect isolationist policies.

As for the right-based actions between 2014 and 2019, in the second part of the models, AKP affiliation is associated with a higher likelihood of rights-based actions, as indicated by positive and statistically significant coefficients (e.g., 0.765, $p < 0.01$ in the first model). However, this significance is not consistently observed in the first part. For CHP, the coefficients are positive and statistically significant, but slightly lower than AKP's, in some of the second parts (e.g., 0.659, $p < 0.05$) but not in the first parts, suggesting a less robust relationship. Therefore, for this period, AKP or CHP affiliation does not significantly trigger right-based actions. However,

among active municipalities both parties may show positive relationship with right-based actions.

During 2019-2021 period, political affiliations again produce mixed results. In the first part, AKP affiliation is positively and statistically significantly associated with rights-based actions in some specifications (e.g., 1.603, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that AKP-affiliated municipalities are more likely to engage in such actions. However, this significance is not consistent across all models. For CHP, the coefficients are positive and statistically significant in some logit models (e.g., 2.085, $p < 0.01$), but not in the second parts, indicating a weaker overall relationship.

Humanitarian actions and party affiliation, in 2014-2019, yield mixed results as well. In the logit models, the AKP variable demonstrates positive and statistically significant coefficients in some specifications (e.g., 0.746, $p < 0.1$ in the first model), suggesting that AKP affiliation is associated with a higher probability of humanitarian actions. However, this significance is not consistently observed across all models. For CHP, positive and statistically significant coefficients appear in some GLM models (e.g., 0.444, $p < 0.1$ in the first model) but are absent in the logit models, indicating that CHP affiliation influences the number of humanitarian actions but not necessarily their initiation.

Political affiliations (membership in AKP and CHP) showed limited explanatory power. While CHP affiliation showed a marginally significant positive effect in one logit model (coefficient = 1.073, $p < 0.1$), this result was not consistent across all specifications. The coefficients for AKP were statistically insignificant in both parts of the models, suggesting that these political factors did not play a significant role in shaping isolationist tendencies.

Affiliation with AKP, between 2014-2019, shows a strong positive relationship with the number of humanitarian actions, as evidenced by the second-part coefficient of 1.108 ($p < 0.01$).

This suggests that AKP-affiliated actors, likely benefiting from their governing position, can implement larger-scale humanitarian initiatives compared to non-AKP actors. The logit results further support this, with AKP affiliation increasing the log-odds of humanitarian action occurrence (0.981, $p < 0.05$), though the effect varies slightly across specifications.

For CHP during the same period, the GLM results show a robust positive relationship with the scale of humanitarian actions (1.550, $p < 0.01$), indicating that CHP-affiliated actors also engage in substantial humanitarian efforts. However, the logit coefficients exhibit mixed statistical significance (e.g., 0.888, $p < 0.1$), suggesting that while CHP participation correlates with larger-scale initiatives once an action is taken, its role in initiating actions may depend on contextual factors not fully captured in the model.

Consequently, the test on the party affiliation and its impact on the types of actions shows mixed results. Political party affiliation was expected to demonstrate a divergence in local immigrant policies. However, both AKP and CHP affiliated mayors engage in integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions. Therefore, this hypothesis is partially confirmed that AKP affiliated municipalities actively engaging in local immigrant policies. Yet, CHP affiliated municipalities also show engagement with this policy area enacting integrationist, humanitarian, and right-based actions.

Hypothesis 4: Cooperation with third parties increases the likelihood of employing integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions.

The logit coefficient of 12.198 ($p < 0.01$) and the GLM coefficient of 1.434 ($p < 0.01$), in 2014-2019, indicate that collaborative efforts significantly enhance both the occurrence and intensity of integrationist actions. This finding aligns with theoretical expectations that

partnerships and cooperative networks enhance resource mobilization and operational efficiency, enabling more substantial integrationist responses.

For the period of 2019-2021, cooperation emerges as the most influential predictor in the model. The logit coefficient of 4.804 ($p < 0.01$) and the GLM coefficient of 0.748 ($p < 0.01$) indicate that collaborative efforts significantly enhance both the occurrence and intensity of integrationist actions. This finding aligns with theoretical expectations that partnerships and cooperative networks amplify resource mobilization and institutional capacity, thereby enabling more substantial integrationist responses.

For the period from 2014 to 2019, cooperation was the most statistically significant predictor of isolationism in the first part of the models. Across all relevant models, higher levels of cooperation were strongly associated with an increased likelihood of isolationism (e.g., coefficient = 1.995, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that localities relying on cooperation are more likely to adopt isolationist actions. However, in the second parts of the models, this relationship did not persist, with coefficients for cooperation being insignificant.

Among the continuous variables, in 2014-2019, only cooperation exhibited a significant positive relationship with isolationist actions. This was an unexpected result. However, this positive relationship was evident only in the logit part of the two-part models. In other words, the GLM components did not show any significant correlation with cooperation. In the 2019-2021 period, similar results were found in Table 8. Isolationist actions showed a significant relationship with cooperation only in the first part of each model.

For the period of 2019-2021, cooperation emerged as the most robust and statistically significant predictor of isolationism in the logit models. Across all specifications, higher levels of cooperation were strongly associated with an increased likelihood of isolationism (e.g.,

coefficient = 1.498, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that entities or regions exhibiting greater cooperation are more likely to initiate isolationist actions. However, this relationship did not hold in the second part of the model, where the coefficients for cooperation were statistically insignificant, indicating that the number of actions may be better predicted with other factors.

Cooperation stands out as the most significant predictor of rights-based actions across all models in 2014-2019. The coefficients are consistently positive and statistically significant (e.g., 7.159, $p < 0.01$ in the first part and 1.117, $p < 0.01$ in the second part), demonstrating that higher levels of cooperation strongly correlate with an increased likelihood of rights-based actions. This underscores the critical role of cooperative efforts in fostering rights-based initiatives.

Cooperation continues to be a highly significant predictor of rights-based actions in both parts of the model in 2019-2021. The coefficients remain consistently positive and statistically significant across all specifications (e.g., 4.596, $p < 0.01$ in the first part and 0.447, $p < 0.01$ in the second part), indicating that higher levels of cooperation strongly correlate with an increased likelihood of rights-based actions. These findings highlight the crucial role of cooperative efforts in facilitating rights-based policies.

In 2014-2019, cooperation stands out as a particularly strong determinant of humanitarian actions across all models. The coefficients remain positive and statistically significant in all specifications (e.g., 8.501, $p < 0.01$ in the first part and 1.021, $p < 0.01$ in the second part), stressing the critical role of cooperative relations in promoting humanitarian initiatives.

Cooperation emerges as the most influential predictor for the humanitarian actions in 2019-2021. The logit coefficient of 4.390 ($p < 0.01$) and the GLM coefficient of 0.585 ($p < 0.01$) indicate that collaborative efforts significantly enhance both the occurrence and intensity of humanitarian actions. This finding aligns with theoretical expectations that partnerships and

cooperative networks amplify resource mobilization and operational efficiency, thereby enabling more substantial humanitarian responses.

Therefore, this hypothesis is partially confirmed. Cooperation with third parties is a significant indicator of humanitarian, right-based and integrationist actions. However, the test results show that municipalities in cooperation with third parties also initiate isolationist actions and there is a significant association in this respect. This might be a result of counter-intuitive result of that the same municipality might take isolationist and integrationist actions in parallel.

Host-immigrant Ratio's Effect on Local Immigrant Policy

Hypothesis 5a: As host-immigrant ratio increases, municipalities are less likely to employ integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions.

Higher host-immigrant ratio may indicate that municipalities would be less willing to resort to integrationist actions. Between 2014-2019, there is no significant relation between host immigrant ratio and integrationist actions. Neither occurrence nor the number of this type of actions are affected by the host-immigrant ratio during this period. However, between 2019 and 2021, we start to see that there is a negative association between host-immigrant ratio and integrationist actions. Cities with higher host-immigrant ratio are less likely to show higher number of integrationist actions compared to cities with lower host-immigrant ratio in the sample.

Controlled with political factors, host-immigrant ratio reveals a significant negative relationship with the number of integrationist action (-0.019 to -0.022) alongside positive occurrence effects (0.039) in the logit model. This paradox may indicate targeted but limited interventions in high-immigration areas, potentially indicating political constraints.

For right-based actions, host-immigrant ratio shows a significant positive relationship with occurrence of right-based actions (0.033, $p < 0.1$ and 0.041, $p < 0.05$) but no effect on the number of actions, suggesting targeted but limited responses to demographic pressures.

In the period of 2019-2021, host-immigrant ratio maintains its paradoxical pattern from 2014-2019, with positive occurrence effects (0.032, $p < 0.1$ and 0.043) contrasting with negative magnitude coefficients (-0.024, $p < 0.1$ and -0.025, $p < 0.01$). Particularly when controlled with political factors, a negative significant relationship occurs. The strengthened negative number of actions may reflect growing political constraints in cities drawing more immigration than others.

As for the humanitarian actions, in the period of 2014-2019, humanitarian actions demonstrate minimal effects, with only one significant occurrence coefficient (0.029, $p < 0.1$) and no number of action related relationships, challenging assumptions about the host-immigrant ratio might affect the occurrence or number of humanitarian actions in a locality.

Host-immigrant ratios show no significant relationships with humanitarian actions between 2019 and 2021, continuing the pattern observed in 2014-2019. Therefore, it is arguable that host-immigrant ratio has almost no effect on humanitarian actions.

As a result, this hypothesis is partially confirmed. Higher host-immigrant ratio has a negative effect on integrationist actions only after 2019. The same trend is confirmed when the model controlled with political factors as well. However, for the same period, it is also possible to see that higher host-immigrant ratio may trigger occurrence of integrationist actions. This paradoxical relationship may indicate a counter intuitive and complex dynamic behind local immigrant policies when demographical factors involved. Additionally, right-based actions demonstrate a partially similar trend. This type of actions are also likely to occur with higher

host-immigrant ratio but not affected in terms of the number of actions taken. As for the humanitarian actions, there is no significant relationship in occurrence or number of actions.

Hypothesis 5b: Municipalities in localities higher host-immigrant ratio tend to employ isolationist actions.

As for isolationist actions, host-immigrant ratio demonstrates a small but consistent positive relationship with the occurrence of isolationist actions (0.053 and 0.058, $p < 0.05$), only significant when controlled with political factors, but in GLM model no effect on the number of actions taken among active municipalities, suggesting targeted but limited responses in cities attracting more immigrants.

Host immigrant ratio and isolations actions indicate a small positive relationship with policy adoption (0.036, $p < 0.1$ and 0.044, $p < 0.05$). However, this factor has no significant relationship with the number of actions taken by active municipalities, indicating areas with higher immigrant ratios were slightly more likely to adopt isolationist measures.

Based on these results, this hypothesis is only partially confirmed. Although isolationist actions are potentially triggered in cities with higher host-immigrant ratios, among active municipalities higher host-immigrant ratio does not necessarily indicate higher isolationist activity.

Administrative Capacity's Effect on Local Immigrant Policies

Hypothesis 6: Municipalities in cities which control larger budgets likely to implement integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions

Administrative capacity of a municipality is a key factor for implementation of formulated policies or intended actions. I included this hypothesis to test how capacity of a municipality impacts the chosen approach and direction of action for local immigrant policies. As a proxy for administrative capacity, I resorted budgets of city municipalities. Thus, this hypothesis aims to test how municipalities operating under cities which control large yearly budgets are associated with integrationist, humanitarian and right-based actions.

For integrationist, right-based, and humanitarian actions, municipalities with potentially higher administrative capacity are likely to initiate these types of actions. Additionally, the second parts of each test across two periods demonstrates that number of actions are also more likely to be higher as administrative capacity increases. This trend does not change when controlled with political factors or across periods. There is a consistently significant positive relationship between integrationist, right-based and humanitarian actions, and administrative capacity of municipalities. Additionally, isolationist actions show no significant relationship with administrative capacity in neither occurrence nor the number of actions. However, this hypothesis needs to be tested depending on the individual budgets and other administrative indicators such as number of municipal workers.

Conclusion & Discussion

This chapter set out to explore the variation in municipal immigrant policies in Turkey by examining not only whether municipalities act in response to immigration but also what kind of actions they take and under which conditions. Building upon the typology developed earlier in the dissertation, municipal actions were categorized into four types – integrationist, isolationist, humanitarian, and right-based – each representing a distinct approach or direction in addressing immigration-related challenges at the local level.

To understand the drivers behind these diverse policy orientations, I tested a set of hypotheses rooted in political, structural, and relational explanations. Using a two-part model, the chapter examined both the probability of municipalities taking any action and the intensity of these actions once they were taken. The empirical analysis was based on a dataset of 249 municipalities over three periods: 2011–2014, 2014–2019, and 2019–2021.

Analyzing the problem areas and characteristics of municipal actions reveals multiple insights. In the previous chapter, we saw that municipalities operate to address multiple problem areas to mitigate issues around immigration. As problem areas vary, so do the solutions. Municipalities adopt solutions along two dimensions: integrationist vs. isolationist and humanitarian vs. right-based. These four approaches and directions shape how municipalities address challenges related to newly arrived populations.

Examining these problem areas and solutions across three periods reveals both converging and diverging trends in municipal actions.

Structural Factors and Cooperation as Primary Determinants

Structural factors, such as socioeconomic development and administrative capacity, and cooperation emerge as the primary determinants of municipal actions. Localities with higher socioeconomic development scores and municipalities that cultivate cooperative relationships are significantly more likely to implement integrationist, humanitarian, and rights-based initiatives. One of the key challenges municipalities faces in responding to immigration is accessing resources and developing expertise on the issue (Kale & Erdoğan, 2019; Polat & Lowndes, 2022). Socioeconomic development facilitates access to resources, while cooperation with third parties helps municipalities overcome resource and knowledge constraints. Administrative capacity also proves to be a significant factor facilitating occurrence and increasing number of

actions, except isolationist ones. When it comes to isolationism, administrative capacity has no predictive power. This result might be so because municipalities do not need further capacity than they already have to implement isolationist measures to isolate immigrants. For example, banning signboards in an immigrant language and implementing this measure is a doable action for a municipality without mobilizing extra resources or increasing capacity of the municipality. It only requires taking the decision and mobilize the existing municipal police force. Therefore, in such actions, municipalities may need less resources to take action. Thus, it is unsurprising that these three factors are the strongest predictors of integrationist, humanitarian, and rights-based approaches, but isolationist one. Moreover, across all three periods, socioeconomic development shows no significant relationship with isolationist policies.

The Declining Influence of Political Factors

Political factors – such as incumbency, winning margin, and party affiliation – demonstrate mixed results regarding their significance for municipal actions. Overall, their predictive power declines over time. While political differences among municipalities played a more significant role in earlier periods, these differences became less relevant in the 2019-2021 period. It is important to note that this study examines only a short span of municipal policy activity, yet the findings still suggest that conditional variations may occur.

Although AKP has gradually adopted more nationalist policies, its overall stance in favor of immigrants remaining in Turkey has remained unchanged – apart from occasional shifts in discourse, particularly around elections. Despite the rapid increase in the immigrant population since 2011, immigration rarely emerged as a prominent electoral issue until the 2019 local elections. This election marked a turning point, bringing AKP and CHP's positions on immigration closer than at any point since 2011. While the AKP's rhetoric shifted from positive

to neutral, the CHP moved from a negative to a more neutral stance (Balta et al., 2023).

Eventually, the AKP returned to a more positive tone, whereas the CHP maintained its neutrality.

This shift may have altered the impact of partisanship after 2019.

Following the 2019 elections, CHP-affiliated municipalities increased their integrationist actions compared to the 2014–2019 period. In contrast, AKP-affiliated municipalities exhibited a decline in such actions. Additionally, the winning margin lost its significance as a predictor of municipal action.

Decreasing significance of political factors may indicate several results. Municipalities may turn to a more pragmatic approach than a partisan and ideologically loaded one. As the situation gets protracted, municipalities are forced to take measures leaving aside their political positions. Over time, immigration and presence of immigrants in local communities becomes an issue that local governments cannot ignore. Still, we do not see an increase in the number of municipalities taking actions related to immigration. However, those gaining experience in this policy area intensifying their actions.

Fluctuating political positions of political parties do not necessarily affect local government response as indicated above. Furthermore, we see that political factors gradually lose their significance from the period of 2014-2019 to 2019-2021. Of course, further research is required to support this argument. We are still unaware if there will be fluctuations in the impact of political factors over the municipal actions. To test this, we need to investigate a longer period and see how established the trends demonstrated in this chapter. Yet, this chapter shows that municipalities tend to employ more pragmatic perspective towards immigration.

Additionally, winning margins' loss of significance may suggest two potential results related to relatively decreasing cost of local immigrant policy activity. Firstly, municipal mayors

start to take risk by developing actions despite local political competition. Like the case of decaying partisan concerns, potential local contestation of policy actions may be preferable to byproducts of not taking any action. Secondly, it is possible that taking action for immigrants might become normal for some localities and local actions might indicate no loss of popular support, in other words political cost.

The Critical Role of Cooperation

Cooperation remains a strong predictor of municipal actions, significantly influencing both the likelihood and frequency of initiatives. This result is unsurprising, given the longstanding challenges municipalities in Turkey have faced in accommodating incoming populations since 2011. Central government involvement and support for local governments have been limited, with opposition-affiliated municipalities often receiving little to no assistance in terms of funding or information sharing. In response, many municipalities turned to third parties – such as international organizations, NGOs, and other municipalities – to organize their efforts and acquire expertise on immigrant accommodation.

The lack of centralized data-sharing mechanisms meant that municipalities often struggled to track the number of immigrants residing in their districts or cities. Without basic demographic information, municipalities relied on partnerships to gain access to material resources and knowledge. As a result, cooperation played a crucial role in enabling municipalities to implement effective responses, which is reflected in its strong and consistent statistical significance across all policy directions and approaches.

The Growing Importance of Socioeconomic Development

By the 2019–2021 period, socioeconomic development had become a significant predictor for all policy directions and approaches. In earlier periods, its influence was less

consistent – it was primarily a predictor of integrationist initiatives between 2014 and 2019, but not for other policy types. However, by 2019–2021, its role had expanded, emerging as a key structural factor shaping municipal action.

Comparing these findings with the declining influence of party affiliation and incumbency, it becomes clear that socioeconomic development has taken precedence as a driver of municipal policy choices. Over time, party affiliation has become less relevant, while municipalities have increasingly adopted integrationist and rights-based approaches, with isolationist and humanitarian actions declining. This suggests a broader trend toward convergence in municipal immigrant policies.

In summary, this chapter shows that variation in municipal responses to immigration in Turkey is best explained by a combination of structural and relational factors, rather than political ones alone. Municipalities with stronger socioeconomic foundations and extensive cooperative networks are more likely to adopt comprehensive and rights-oriented policies, while those operating under constrained conditions may resort to fragmented or even contradictory approaches. The results point toward a growing professionalization of local immigrant policy, where practical considerations and resource-based logics take precedence over party ideology.

These findings have important implications not only for the study of local governance and migration policy in Turkey but also for broader debates on the role of municipalities in multilevel governance settings. They highlight the need for future research to examine why and how municipalities combine contradictory action types, and how immigrant agency, political pressure, and policy learning shape local policy trajectories. As Turkey continues to navigate the long-term implications of mass immigration, understanding the local drivers of policy variation will remain central to building inclusive and sustainable frameworks of urban governance.

Chapter 8: Municipal Responses to Syrian Immigration in Istanbul and Izmir

Introduction

This chapter aims to delve into two cases, Istanbul and Izmir, to further explore the factors that contribute to variation among municipalities in their approaches and actions related to immigrant policy. Thus far, I have discussed various factors identified in the literature on local governments and immigration, examining how these factors drive variation and in what direction. Additionally, I have investigated the policy problems municipalities prioritize when addressing immigrant-related issues. Using an original dataset, I analyzed 18 cities with an immigrant population of at least 3%. From this point forward, my research focuses on municipalities in Istanbul and Izmir to test the hypotheses developed in the previous chapter and uncover complementary factors.

Although I briefly mentioned the selection of these cities for further investigation in earlier chapters, I did not provide detailed insights into the case selection process. However, the case selection procedure constitutes a critical aspect of this research. Therefore, the first section of this chapter explains the rationale and methodology behind selecting Istanbul and Izmir from the sampled cities.

The second section of the chapter examines each case separately, offering an overview of their contexts and immigration backgrounds. It also revisits the hypotheses discussed in Chapter

5, analyzing their applicability in the field. To achieve this, I utilized the dataset, external sources, and findings from my fieldwork.

In the third section, I present results from the two cases, focusing on specific issues encountered during the fieldwork. As outlined in the case selection section, these two cases were chosen to refine and understand the nuances between cities. Beyond testing the hypotheses from Chapter 5, this section aims to highlight additional insights that extend beyond the dataset. In the final section, I discuss three major factors identified in these two cities that drive variation: mayors as policy entrepreneurs, information as a trigger for change, and municipal capacity.

Case Selection Procedure

Based on the analysis of the dataset, I selected two cases to deepen our understanding of local immigrant policies in Turkey and to identify the factors driving variation in this field. The case selection strategy for this research operates at two levels: cities and districts. To maximize the exploratory potential of the study, I employed a mixed selection strategy that allows for examining policy outcomes at the local level. This involved a gradual selection process for municipalities at both levels.

Initially, I sampled cities in Turkey based on their host-immigrant ratio, setting a minimum threshold of 3%. According to 2020 data, 18 cities met this criterion: Adana, Adıyaman, Burdur, Bursa, Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, Izmir, Kahramanmaraş, Kayseri, Kilis, Konya, Malatya, Mardin, Mersin, Nevşehir, Osmaniye, and Şanlıurfa. From this sample, I selected two cities based on a set of parameters designed to identify similarities and differences. By choosing cities with significant similarities, I aimed to conduct exploratory research that

could uncover underlying factors and dynamics influencing local immigrant policies beyond the most apparent causes. Furthermore, by including the criterion of an active metropolitan municipality, I sought to select cities where intergovernmental competition in the field of immigration might be present.

Ideally, the most similar case selection strategy involves choosing cases with differing outcomes but similar contributing variables. For a study aiming to demonstrate variation and explore its causes at the local level, this method offers a particularly valuable approach.

To identify similar cities, I utilized a set of criteria designed to align with the objectives of the research: host-immigrant ratio, proximity to borders, presence of an active metropolitan municipality, and local political party composition. These parameters helped control for potential explanatory variables. In contexts of mass immigration, the host-immigrant ratio carries greater significance than in cases of slower, more gradual immigration.

According to Ramakrishnan and Wong (2010), the number of immigrants in a community does not significantly influence attitudes toward immigrants. However, their study does not account for the pace of immigration. A rapid influx of immigrants, as opposed to a gradual change, may provoke nativist and anti-immigrant sentiments (Wilson et al., 2022). In Turkey, the pace of immigration surged exponentially following the influx of asylum seekers from Syria, particularly during the Syrian Civil War. While Turkey has historically hosted immigrants, the visibility of immigrants in daily life reached unprecedented levels by 2015. As Hopkins (2010) suggests, a sudden increase in immigrant numbers, combined with anti-immigrant national rhetoric, can amplify negative attitudes. Although the governing party initially supported the arrival of Syrians with an open-door policy, societal anti-immigrant

sentiment found expression through opposition parties. Acar (2021) further demonstrates that the proportion of Syrians in urban areas of Turkey correlates with increased hostility toward the immigrant population. Referring to the contact hypothesis, he argues that individuals in direct contact with immigrant groups exhibit less prejudice and reduced negative attitudes. However, this effect is limited to cities with a relatively low host-immigrant ratio. In cities where immigrants comprise more than 10% of the population, public attitudes toward immigrants tend to worsen.

Thus, the percentage of the immigrant population likely plays a significant role, especially in the context of a sudden and substantial influx. For this reason, one of the selection criteria for the cases was similarity in the host-immigrant ratio. Given the exponential growth of the immigrant population over the past decade, it is reasonable to assume that both the speed and scale of immigration can trigger anti-immigrant sentiments.

The two cities selected for fieldwork needed to have similar host-immigrant ratios. During the early years of the Syrian Civil War, immigrant registration posed significant challenges. State officials initially neglected the issue, and the process itself was inherently complex. As a result, early immigration records lack credibility. Turkey either had limited control over its eastern borders or adopted an open-door policy without an established registration procedure for incoming immigrants. Consequently, relying on early records of immigrant numbers in cities is problematic. However, after 2015, the government introduced measures to encourage registration, particularly for Syrians. Therefore, this research depends on data from a period of more stable records, up until 2020. Although the host-immigrant ratio does not directly reflect the speed of immigration, it provides valuable insight into the scale of the

immigrant population. If scale impacts municipal dynamics, this effect should be comparable across cities, considering the majority of immigration occurred within the last decade.

The arrival of a large immigrant population within a short timeframe has a dual impact on municipalities: it strains their capacity to provide services and challenges their ability to maintain the consent of the host community for these services. Since the central government historically funded services exclusively for Turkish citizens registered in a city or district, the rapid influx of immigrants placed additional pressure on municipalities. This strain potentially led to diminished service quality and reduced municipal capacity, which, in turn, could foster discontent among the host community. Given the significance of the host-immigrant ratio, selecting two cities with similar ratios was essential for this study.

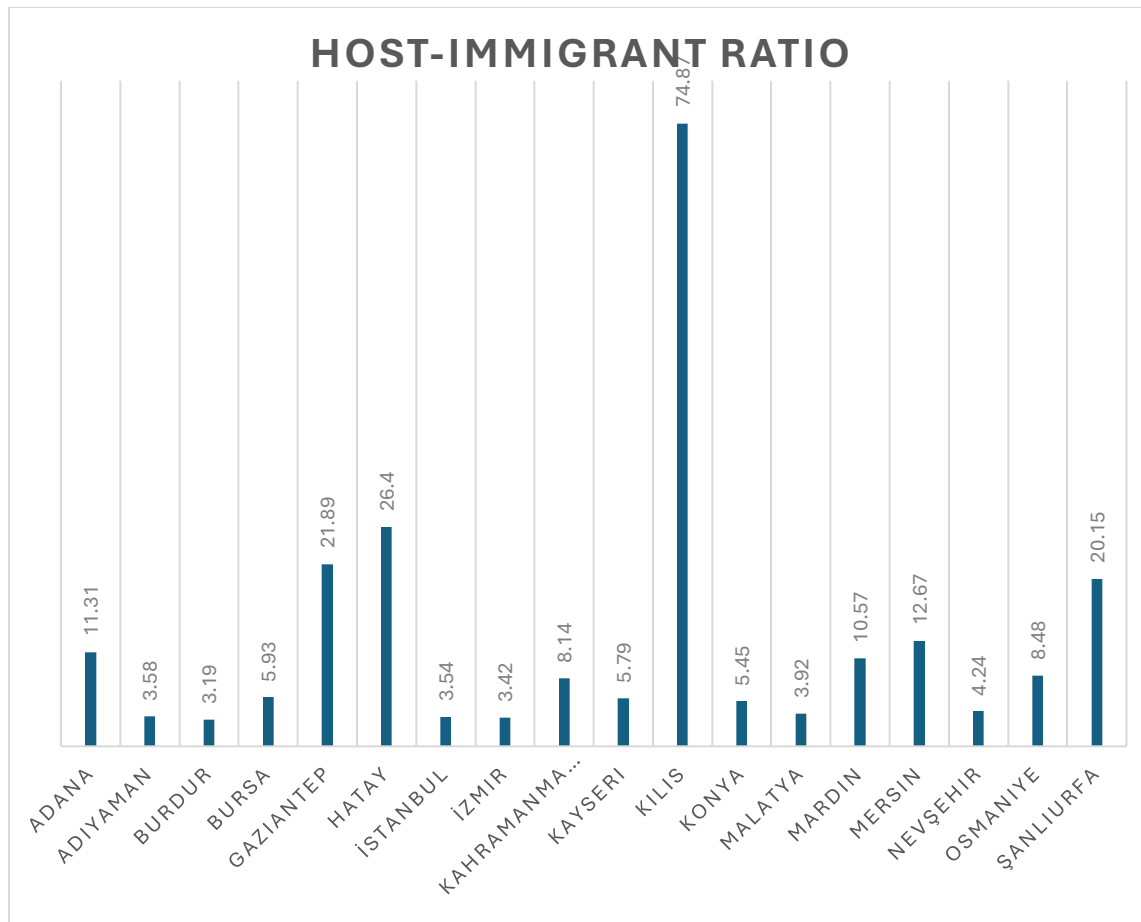


Figure 17: Host-immigrant ratio in sampled cities in 2021

Based on the plot above, the sample can be divided into three groups: low, medium, and high-percentage cities. The low-percentage group includes Adıyaman, Burdur, Bursa, İstanbul, İzmir, Kayseri, Konya, Malatya, and Nevşehir. The medium-percentage group consists of Adana, Kahramanmaraş, Mardin, Mersin, and Osmaniye. Finally, the high-percentage group comprises Gaziantep, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa. Kilis stands out as an exception with an almost 75% host-immigrant ratio. Considering these groups, additional criteria are needed to select two cities within the groups for further investigation.

While the host-immigrant ratio significantly influences local policymaking, national politics and the ripple effects of national political discussions also exert pressure on local actors

and play a crucial role in policy outcomes. For instance, the policy preferences of national-level party elites may influence voter expectations and local party elites' actions, and vice versa. Moreover, the dominant political parties in a locality and their balance of power can lead to differing policy preferences and problem framings. *Local political party composition*, therefore, has a substantial impact on policy outcomes, contributing to variation across district and metropolitan municipalities.

Several studies confirm that the level of popular support for political parties and their ideological positions can shape how municipalities formulate their immigrant policies (Campomori & Caponio, 2017). Issue framing is a fundamental component of policymaking (e.g. Bacchi, 2009), and ideology plays a pivotal role in determining how problems are conceptualized and framed. Thus, the dominant ideology within a local community, as well as the ideological affiliations of mayors and leading political parties, directly influence local policy decisions. In other words, actors with varying political orientations frame immigration as a policy issue in diverse ways.

In Turkey, the AKP and CHP have been the dominant political parties in national politics since 2002. Alongside them, two ultra-nationalist parties, the MHP and İP, have gained popularity. The HDP also holds significant sway, particularly in metropolitan centers in western Turkey. However, these three parties – HDP, MHP, and İP – either exhibit regional dominance (HDP) or have constituents scattered across the country (MHP and İP). None of them come close to competing with the AKP and CHP at the national level. Each of these political parties holds distinct, albeit sometimes vague, positions on immigration.

AKP and HDP generally support the arrival and residence of refugees from Syria, while the İP openly opposes hosting immigrants. CHP and MHP, on the other hand, have demonstrated mixed stances on immigration. Since forming an alliance with the AKP in 2015, the MHP has made concessions in its immigration policy, opting for silence on the issue with occasional exceptions, despite potential pressure from its ultra-nationalist voter base. Meanwhile, CHP elites exhibit ambiguous positions: while some openly support hosting immigrants, others advocate for discriminatory policies aimed at encouraging or even forcing immigrants to return. This ambiguity makes CHP the most difficult party to categorize in terms of immigration policy.

To identify the major ideological trends at the city level, the cities in the sample are categorized based on the dominant political parties that have prevailed in elections over the past decade. Based on these results, I selected cities with similar dominant parties. However, similarity in dominant parties does not necessarily equate to similarity in issue framing. Divergences in how immigration is problematized as a policy area may arise due to intersecting factors. Should such divergences emerge, I will investigate these differences and nuances through field observations and a detailed analysis of individual cities.

The location of a city is a critical determinant in policy outcomes. Particularly in local immigrant policy, a city's proximity to borders – and the specific borders in question – can help predict the general attitudes of policymakers and the public within that city. In Turkey's case, geographical proximity to the southeastern borders (Iran, Iraq, and specifically Syria) often correlates with more negative attitudes. Acar (2021) argues that cities closer to these borders tend to exhibit stronger negative sentiments toward Syrians compared to the national average.

At the onset of the Syrian Civil War, many asylum seekers fled to border cities or those near the border region. As the violence escalated, the flow of people into Turkey – and particularly into these border regions – increased. This trend can be attributed to several factors, such as the lower cost of reaching these cities and longstanding connections fostered by cross-border trade and interactions. Consequently, border cities often became the first points of destination. However, over time, immigrant populations began gradually moving toward western cities, driven by factors like aspirations to reach Europe or access better economic opportunities. This gradual westward migration differs significantly from the initial mass influx of Syrians into border regions.

Among the sampled cities, Izmir, Istanbul, Bursa, and Burdur are situated on the western side of Turkey, farthest from the eastern borders. Based on the location criterion, my options were divided into two subsamples: cities far from the eastern border and cities close to it, particularly the Syrian border. I chose cities far from the border to avoid the compounded effects of significantly higher host-immigrant ratios and the greater scale and speed of immigration characteristic of border regions. These factors often intensify local anti-immigrant sentiments, which can hinder local governments from implementing integration-oriented policies. This is not to say that anti-immigrant sentiment is absent in western cities; rather, in these locations, such sentiments are more likely to be shaped by locally specific factors rather than the sheer characteristics of immigration itself.

Municipal activity forms a cornerstone of this research. Understanding how and why municipalities have chosen to be active in addressing immigrant populations – despite lacking legal obligations to do so – is a central discussion in this dissertation. While some municipalities

have remained silent or indifferent, others have taken proactive initiatives. Active municipalities employ various strategies to manage the arrival of immigrants as a new population. Some react to immediate challenges, while others plan their actions more systematically. Since this research focuses on the factors influencing municipalities' choice of actions, the fieldwork needed to be conducted in areas where such activity exists. At the city level, prospective field sites are expected to exhibit municipal activity in addressing immigration, preferably with varying levels of activity over time.

Municipal activity, unlike other criteria, can be examined at two levels: metropolitan and district. Thanks to the availability of data, I considered municipal activity at both levels. To satisfy this criterion, selected cities needed to meet two conditions: an active metropolitan municipality during at least one of the time periods and a significant percentage of active municipalities within the city. For the first condition, I sought similarity, while for the second, I aimed to identify differences.

The immigrant policy domain can serve as a ground for either collaboration or conflict between metropolitan and district municipalities. Depending on the nature of their relationship, each level of administration may formulate distinct policies or adjust existing ones in response to changes in the other. To examine the intra-city interaction between these two levels of governance and its impact on policy outcomes, it is essential to select field sites with active metropolitan municipalities.

Based on these criteria, Istanbul and Izmir emerge as the most suitable cities due to their shared characteristics and differences in outcomes. Both cities are located far from Turkey's eastern borders, sparing them the intense pressures faced by cities closer to the border regions.

Furthermore, their host-immigrant ratios are among the lowest in the sample and are closely aligned: Istanbul's ratio stands at 3.54%, while Izmir's is 3.42%.

The two cities are also similar in their political party composition. Izmir has been a stronghold of the Republican People's Party (CHP), governed by social democratic mayors since the late 1990s. Most districts in Izmir elect social democratic mayors, and CHP has dominated parliamentary elections in the city for the past six election cycles, two of which were early elections. In contrast, Istanbul has historically been dominated by the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Since its establishment in 2001, AKP-affiliated candidates won most mayoral positions, including the metropolitan mayorship, as well as the majority of general elections. While CHP has been AKP's primary competitor in Istanbul, the reverse is true in Izmir. Notably, in the 2019 local elections, Ekrem Imamoğlu, a CHP candidate supported by an alliance of opposition parties, won the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. However, the AKP and its ally, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), still hold the majority in the city assembly. Overall, both AKP and CHP are the dominant political forces in these cities.

Additionally, both Istanbul and Izmir have active metropolitan municipalities, distinguishing them from other cities like Bursa, which also has a low host-immigrant ratio but lacks any observable metropolitan-level activity. Until 2019, the metropolitan municipalities in Istanbul and Izmir showed minimal engagement with immigration, while district municipalities were more active. Post-2019, metropolitan municipalities in both cities increased their involvement, but this did not diminish the activity of district municipalities, which remained dynamic and even expanded their initiatives. This dual engagement of metropolitan and district municipalities sets Istanbul and Izmir apart from other cities in the sample, where activity is

typically dominated by one level of administration. The contrasting patterns in these two cities may reflect either conflicts or coordination between metropolitan and district actors, making them ideal for exploring variations and changes in municipal activities over time.

As for their differences, Istanbul and Izmir fulfill the required conditions. Istanbul demonstrates a higher overall service score than Izmir. However, the two cities differ in three key aspects: the change in service scores across periods, the overall service scores, and the percentage of active district municipalities. Between the periods 2014-2018 and 2019-2021, Izmir doubled its service score, whereas Istanbul showed only a slight increase. Despite this, Istanbul's combined service score across both periods is almost seven times higher than Izmir's. This discrepancy exists despite the two cities having nearly identical host-immigrant ratios.

Istanbul and Izmir also differ significantly in the proportion of active municipalities. Across all periods, 65% of municipalities in Istanbul were active by the end of 2021, compared to only 25% in Izmir. These differences in activity levels, combined with the cities' shared and divergent characteristics, make Istanbul and Izmir the best-fitting cases for this research.

District Level

After selecting the two cities for fieldwork, the next task was to choose the districts to focus on. Collecting information at the district level concerning immigration is challenging. As mentioned earlier, the central government is reluctant to share immigration-related information at the district level, making the host-immigrant ratio an inapplicable criterion.

An obvious criterion for selecting the districts was to focus on active district municipalities that could capture variation in local government activity. Additionally, these

municipalities were potentially resourceful, mobilizing their resources to shape local immigrant policies. Given that the central government does not provide direct funding for municipalities to host and provide services for immigrants, these municipalities must either create their own funding within their limited budgets or form partnerships with other actors in the field.

For Istanbul, I selected Küçükçekmece and Zeytinburnu. They were among the most active municipalities in the city, demonstrating activity in at least two periods. Küçükçekmece had been run by the same mayor, Kemal Çebi, affiliated with CHP throughout the time span of this research, except for the 2009-2014 period. Zeytinburnu, on the other hand, had AKP-affiliated mayors changing from one electoral cycle to another. Both districts grew due to migration waves to Istanbul since the 1950s. Küçükçekmece's population notably increased during the 1990s because of forced migration waves within Turkey and also the immigration of Balkan Muslims. Zeytinburnu, while demonstrating a gradual increase in population, still had a rich history of immigration, populated by migrants from other parts of Anatolia working in the growing textile, particularly leather, industry, and immigrants of Kazak and Uyghur origins. After the Syrian Civil War, Zeytinburnu had already become a district welcoming immigrants with an active municipality. Küçükçekmece, on the other hand, only became active in the immigration policy area after the arrival of Syrians, which creates a divergence in their reactions to immigration.

In Izmir, the history of immigration response within the given time period is shorter, so the districts do not have as much experience in responding to immigration as those in Istanbul. Additionally, local bureaucrats and elected officials might consider Syrians' and other immigrant

groups' presence in Izmir as temporary, seeing the city as a transit route to Europe via sea. Only further investigation in the field may uncover underlying causes.

Despite the general inactivity of district municipalities, some started to act in the field starting from 2014. The changes in Izmir seem even more dramatic than in Istanbul. Konak and Karabağlar were two districts that demonstrated coherent activity in two periods, from 2014-2019 and 2019-2021. They are the only district municipalities showing activity in both periods. However, they differ in the direction of change. Konak doubled its activity points from 2014-2018 to 2019-2021, whereas Karabağlar's activity decreased in the same period. Both districts were run by CHP-affiliated mayors in both periods. However, while Konak's mayors changed from 2014-2019 to 2019-2021, Karabağlar had the same mayor throughout both periods.

Caveats of the Case Selection Procedure

As mentioned above, a most-similar design under ideal conditions seeks similarity in a range of factors. The more similar the cases, the better. However, Istanbul and Izmir, leaving aside their local immigration histories, proximity to borders, dramatic changes in services, and the dominance of political parties in both cities, exhibit more divergence than convergence in numerous areas. Istanbul is a much denser and more vibrant city compared to Izmir. Their population sizes are significantly different; while Istanbul has over 16 million residents, Izmir is home to almost 4.5 million. Due to the economic disparities between these cities, it is expected that Istanbul has a higher capacity to initiate responses than Izmir. As shown in Chapter 5 and this chapter, capacity is a crucial factor that facilitates action and causes variation. Each of these factors was considered during the fieldwork and subsequent analysis.

Another important caveat in this case selection is its dependence on media coverage. Political, economic, and social conditions can easily influence media narratives. During preliminary interviews with local bureaucrats in both Izmir and Istanbul, interviewees mentioned that municipalities sometimes sought to keep certain services for immigrants, particularly Syrians, out of the public eye due to concerns about backlash in upcoming elections. Because the dataset heavily relies on media coverage, some services provided for immigrants do not appear in the media. To address this, I turned to academic research, reports from governmental and non-governmental sources, and reports produced by municipalities.

One of the most obvious criteria for selecting districts would be to include the local-immigrant ratio at the district level. However, as mentioned above, this information is not publicly available, and municipalities do not share it either. The Ministry of Interior Affairs does not release the number of registered immigrants at the district level. Based on my exploratory interviews and the literature, the Ministry pursues a policy of non-disclosure with civil actors and municipalities. For this research, I petitioned to access district-level immigration data but, exploiting a legal gap, the Ministry and the General Directorate of Migration Management denied releasing this information. As a result, using the host-immigrant ratio was not feasible. Instead, I focused on the changing activity of municipalities over time.

Another caveat is the lack of information on the composition of immigrants in cities when selecting cases. Demographic data such as age, level of education, ethnic and religious background, employment, and distribution of different immigrant groups across cities and districts would explain how the characteristics of local immigrant groups could impact local policy choices.

All in all, Istanbul and Izmir were the best-fitting cases for the criteria of differences and similarities despite these caveats, due to the design and unavailable data. Differences in outcomes and similarities in certain characteristics of these cities were useful in investigating the underlying reasons for variation among these two cases.

How do these cases relate to the main research question of this study? A reminder of the research question this study focuses on: why and how do municipalities in Turkey vary in their responses? Through this question, I aim to identify the local conditions that trigger variation. In Chapter 5, I tried to answer the same question through an analysis of the dataset using two-part modeling and factor analysis. Based on these analytical methods, I investigated the relationships between varying local policies and five different potential factors affecting policy choices: party affiliation, incumbency, cooperation, socioeconomic development, and administrative capacity. Each of these variables was revisited with the selected cities in this chapter using qualitative data collected on two cases: Istanbul and Izmir. Additionally, two districts in each city were scrutinized to investigate how these variables function.

Fieldwork

Following the selection of the field sites, I began working on the fieldwork. For this part of the dissertation, I focused on two cases: Istanbul and Izmir. In Istanbul, I examined the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and two district municipalities: Küçükçekmece and Zeytinburnu. In Izmir, I looked at the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, as well as Karabağlar Municipality and Konak Municipality.

This fieldwork's aim is to conduct a closer examination of the field in terms of the impact of the main factors that cause variation across localities, but mainly to find out if there are other factors that trigger various policy choices. Although my focus was specifically on municipalities, my goal was to capture a broader picture of immigrant policymaking and implementation in these two cities.

As described in Chapter 4, I conducted twenty-seven semi-structured interviews between January and June 2023, fifteen in Istanbul and twelve in Izmir, with municipal officers, civil society representatives, and street-level bureaucrats. Interviews were conducted either in person or remotely, and full anonymity was guaranteed to all interviewees.

Regarding immigrants, I contacted them via CSOs established by immigrants. Understanding the perspectives of immigrants, the recipients of immigrant policy, can indicate indicators of immigrant agency in the policy process.

Contextual Background

As of 2024, the number of immigrants in Istanbul and Izmir was as indicated in the table below.

Table 13: Number of Immigrants in Istanbul, Izmir and Turkey (PMM, 2024)

	<i>Istanbul</i>	<i>Izmir</i>	<i>Turkey</i>
<i>Population</i>	15.655.924	4.479.525	85.330.170
<i>Immigrants with Residence Permits</i>	500.715	26.040	1.025.750
<i>Immigrants under Temporary Protection</i>	511.393	115.402	2.939.252

Istanbul currently hosts the largest number of immigrants compared to other cities in Turkey. As shown in **Table 1**, Istanbul hosts half of the immigrants with residence permits and roughly one-fourth of the immigrants under temporary protection, the majority of whom are of Syrian origin. According to Ekrem İmamoğlu, mayor of Istanbul since 2019, the city hosted approximately 2.5 million refugees⁶ (Eren, 2021). The Presidency of Migration Management responded to İmamoğlu's statement, reporting that the number of immigrants, including both temporary protection and residence permit holders, was approximately 1.6 million in 2021 (PMM, 2021). The discrepancy between these two statements is significant, but in either case, Istanbul hosts a large number of immigrants.

⁶ Although "refugee" is a specific and well-defined legal status, in many cases from media sources to municipal officials, refugee became a generic name attributed to all immigrants except those staying in Turkey with a residence permit. Throughout this chapter refugee was used interchangeably with other immigrant status.

Izmir, on the other hand, hosts a modest number of immigrants compared to Istanbul. According to Tunç Soyer, the then-Mayor of Izmir, the city hosted approximately 160,000 refugees (Duvar, 2021). While Soyer's estimate aligns more closely with the numbers provided by the Presidency of Migration Management, İmamoğlu estimates a much larger number of immigrants in Istanbul. Nevertheless, the difference between the two cities is undeniably large. Although, depending on the official numbers, the percentage of refugees in the host population is similar in both cities, it is possible to argue that mayors had a different perception than the official numbers suggest.

As we will see in more detail, each city's municipalities approach immigration differently over the years in terms of both perception and actions. After providing some details on the immigrant population in these cities, I will continue with city-specific responses to immigration between 2011 and 2021.

Municipal Responses to Syrian Immigration

Istanbul

Key Trends in Istanbul

Although I touched upon the political conditions in both cities when discussing the case selection, I will briefly outline the differences between them throughout the time frame of this research. Istanbul has been governed by mayors affiliated with the AKP since 2004. In 2004, Kadir Topbaş was elected as the Mayor of Istanbul, serving until his retirement in 2017. Following his retirement, another AKP-affiliated mayor, Mevlüt Uysal, was appointed by the

metropolitan assembly. He continued his tenure until 2019, when the current mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu, took office.

In terms of socioeconomic development, Istanbul is the most developed city in Turkey, followed by Ankara and Izmir, respectively (Acar et al., 2019). As indicated in Figure 2, the most socioeconomically developed districts in Istanbul are Şişli, Beşiktaş, Kadıköy, Bakırköy, and Fatih. Conversely, the least developed districts include Arnavutköy, Sultangazi, Sultanbeyli, Esenler, Çatalca, Sancaktepe, Çekmeköy. Interestingly, some of these least developed districts are among the most active in terms of local immigrant policies.

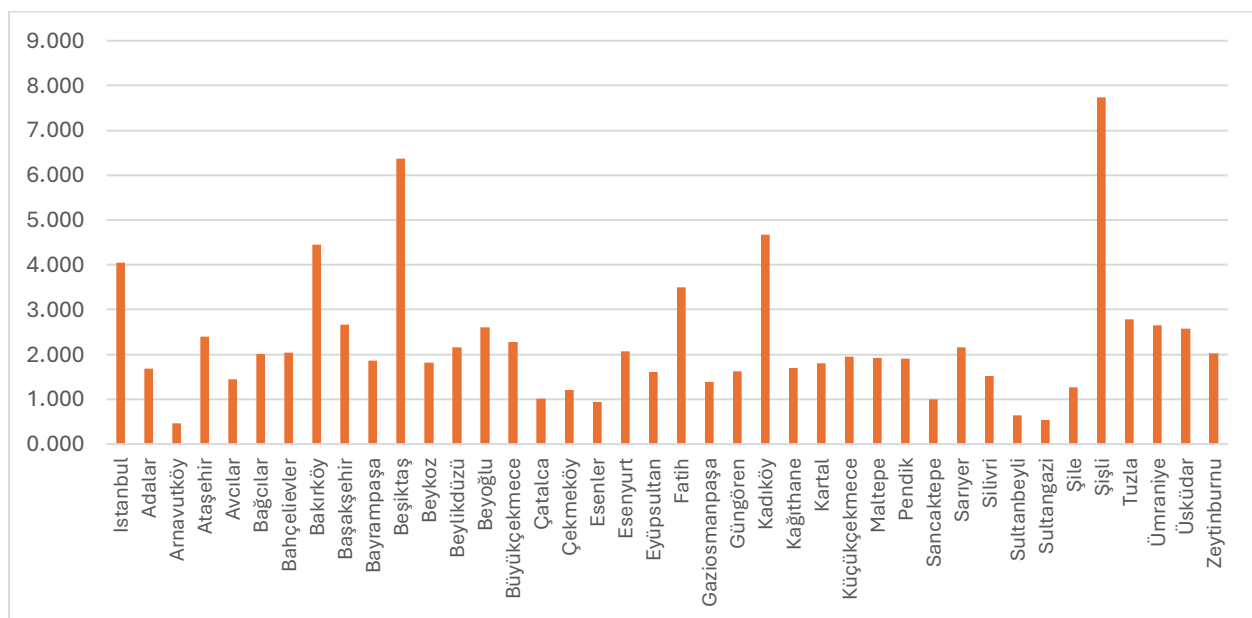


Figure 18: Socioeconomic development scores in Istanbul

The problem areas addressed by Istanbul municipalities expanded over the years. While 2011 and 2012 were relatively inactive, municipalities began focusing on a broader range of issues starting in 2013. Between 2013 and 2018, resilience-building emerged as the primary focus of municipal actions. In 2018, for instance, 27 municipal initiatives were dedicated to

addressing resilience-related issues. However, from 2018 onward, orientation-related activities became the dominant focus of municipal actions. By this period, orientation had firmly taken the lead as the main area of municipal engagement in Istanbul.

Sultanbeyli (27 actions), Şişli (22 actions), Kağıthane (20 actions), Küçükçekmece (20 actions), and Pendik (20 actions) emerged as the most active municipalities in orientation-related initiatives between 2011 and 2021.

Resilience-building follows orientation as the second most prominent problem area. Among Istanbul's municipalities, resilience-building was also the earliest area of focus, reflecting its foundational importance. As shown in Figure 3, resilience has remained a consistent element in municipal efforts, although its share in overall activities has diminished over time.

Beyond resilience, needs management and institutional adaptation have also been significant areas of focus. These two problem areas gained prominence early on and have remained important aspects of municipal activities in Istanbul.

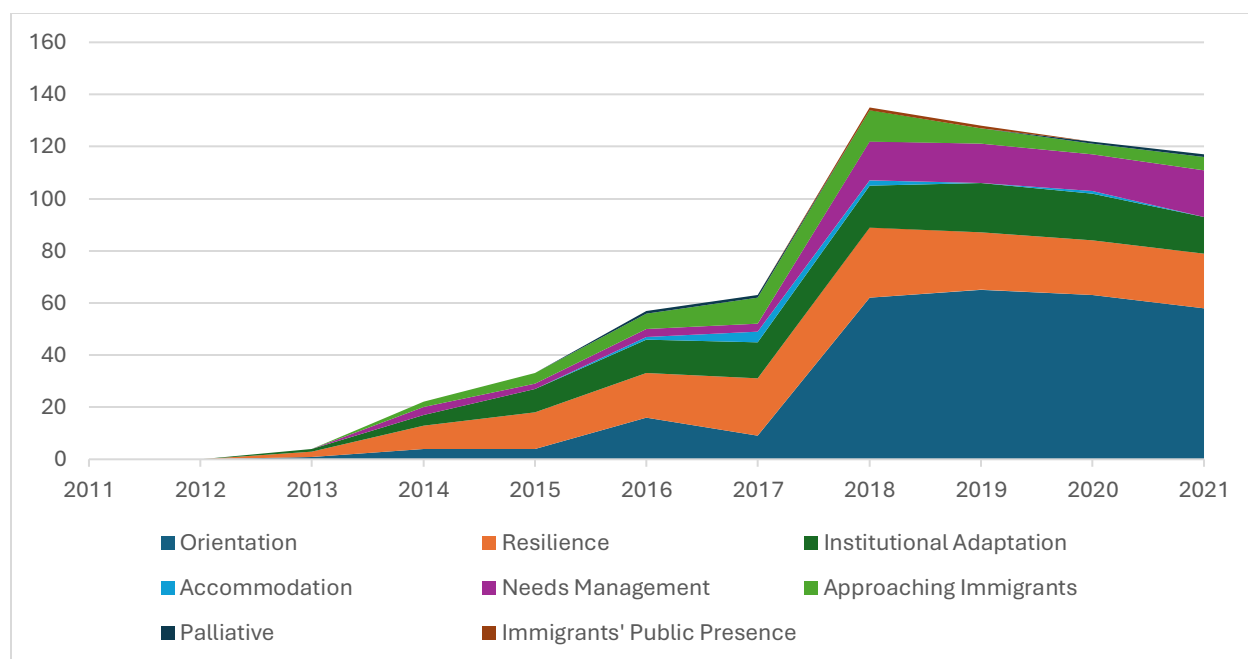


Figure 19: Problem areas that municipalities focus by year in Istanbul

Over the years, while Istanbul municipalities maintained a balanced focus on the designated problem areas, orientation began to dominate from 2018 onwards. Consequently, it can be argued that Istanbul municipalities overwhelmingly concentrated their efforts on orientation-related issues during this period.

Before delving into the general activity trends in Istanbul and the variations across districts and cities, I would like to revisit the rationale behind the periodization used in this study. As explained in the previous chapter, the broader timeframe of 2011-2021 was divided into three asymmetrical periods based on local electoral cycles. During the study period, two local elections were held in Turkey – on March 30, 2014, and March 31, 2019. Accordingly, I divided the research timeline into the following periods: 2011–2014 (Period 1), 2014–2019 (Period 2), and 2019–2021 (Period 3). Since both elections occurred in March, activities up to March 30, 2014, and March 31, 2019, were categorized as part of Period 1 and Period 2, respectively.

Regarding municipal activity, there was a clear increase in frequency across the three periods from 2011 to 2021. As illustrated in Figure 4, very limited activity was recorded in a few districts during Period 1. The majority of actions in this period were humanitarian in nature. Most municipalities exhibited only one type of activity, with the exception of Esenyurt, which demonstrated a more balanced set of actions characterized by an integrationist direction and a mix of humanitarian and rights-based approaches. Notably, no isolationist actions were recorded during this period in Istanbul.

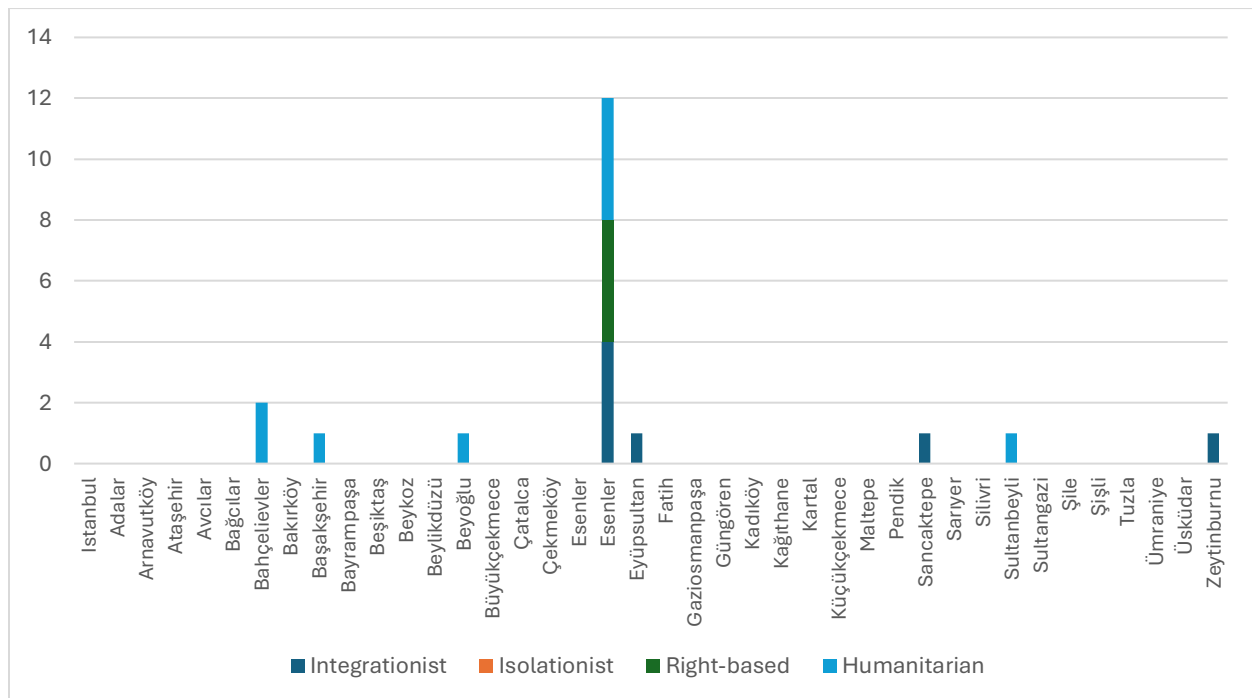


Figure 20: Municipal actions in Istanbul between 2011 and 2014 (Period 1)

As shown in Figure 5, municipalities became significantly more active during this period, reflecting a general trend across the sample. In Period 2, while most previously active municipalities maintained their levels of activity, new municipalities also joined the ranks of active participants. Furthermore, although a limited number of isolationist actions were observed,

most municipalities displayed a balanced approach, engaging in both humanitarian and rights-based actions.

Notably, 29 out of 40 municipalities in Istanbul demonstrated an integrationist orientation. While there was a marked increase in municipal activities across different approaches, the majority of these actions were geared toward integrating the immigrant population. However, 9 out of the 40 municipalities also exhibited isolationist tendencies.

Avcılar, Bağcılar, Beylikdüzü, Esenyurt, Gaziosmanpaşa, Kağıthane, Küçükçekmece, Pendik, Sancaktepe, Sultanbeyli, Şişli, Tuzla, and Zeytinburnu emerged as the most active municipalities during Period 2. Among these, only three were governed by CHP-affiliated mayors, while the remaining municipalities were under the leadership of AKP-affiliated mayors.

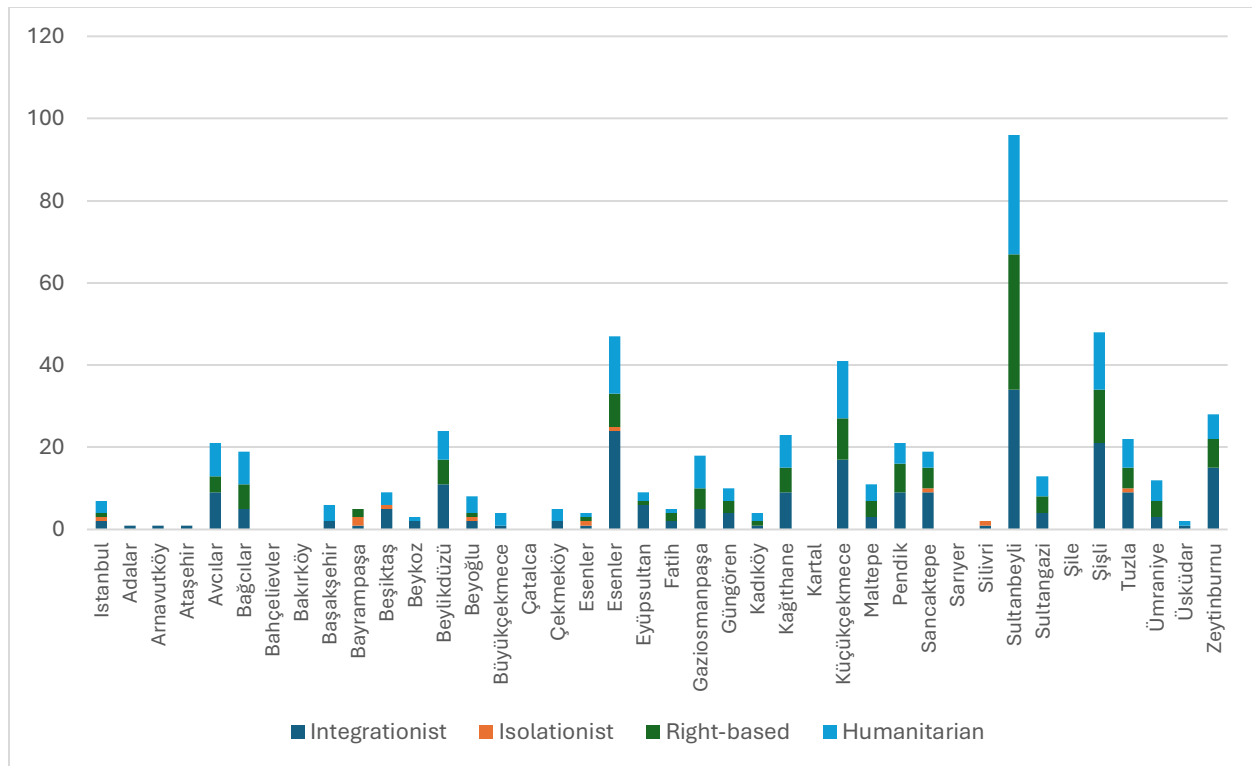


Figure 21: Municipal Actions in Istanbul between 2014 and 2019 (Period 2)

In Period 3, the number of active municipalities decreased from 34 to 28. However, active municipalities showed more diverse and frequent activity in this period. As Figure 6 demonstrates, many previously active municipalities increased their activity. In Period 3, there were lesser number of municipalities showing isolationist actions. However, two municipalities' policy direction turned towards isolationist. Although they were not isolationist in the Period 2, in Period 3 Esenler and Fatih municipalities became isolationist. Rest of the active municipalities took an integrationist approach. Another change since the Period 2 was a changing weight of right-based actions rather than humanitarian ones.

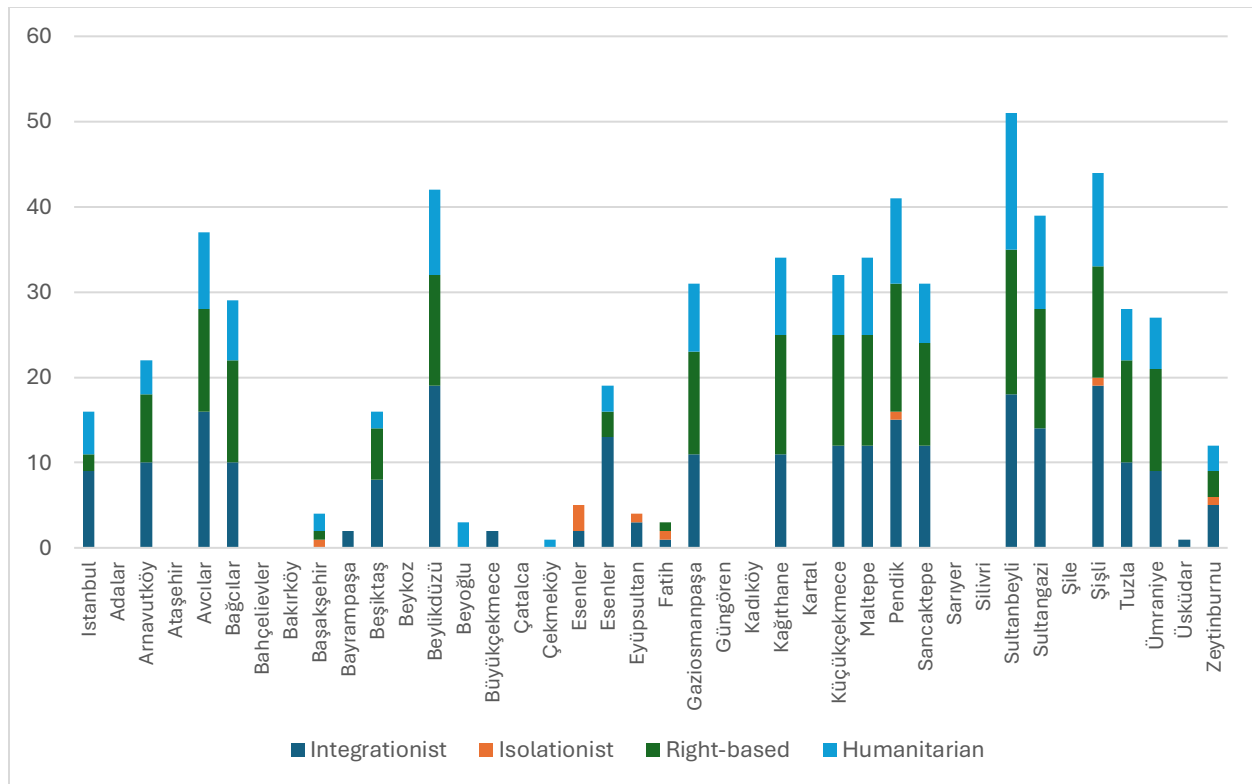


Figure 22: Directions of Municipal Actions in Istanbul between 2019 and 2021 (Period 3)

Party affiliation was a significant factor in explaining local policy approaches and directions. While party affiliation was a significant factor, it lost its significance over the periods of interest in this study. In terms of distribution of mayors' party affiliation, there was not a dramatic change over three electoral cycles. As demonstrated in the Figure 7, the change was in favor of CHP but did not change the political balance in the city until 2019, when a social democrat mayor was elected first time since the local elections in 1989. Even though it did not change the overall number of municipalities run by CHP from Period 2 to Period 3, a CHP affiliated mayor running Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality probably shifted the political balance in favor of CHP over the years.

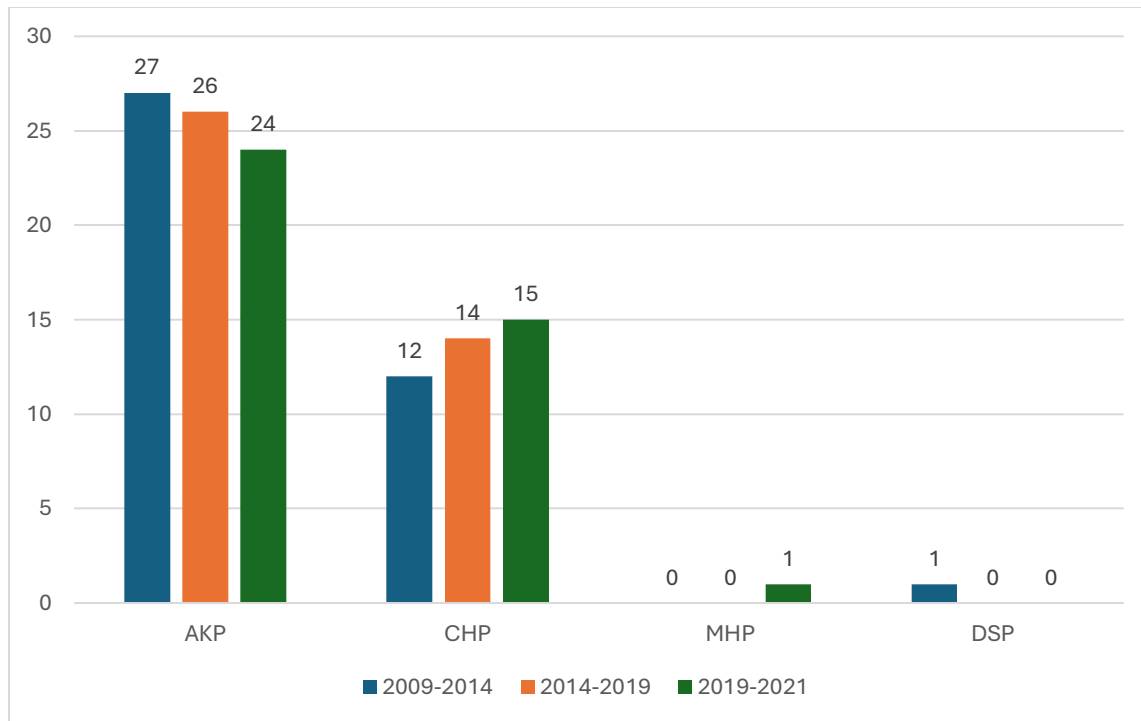


Figure 23: Distribution of Mayors' Party Affiliation in Istanbul

Izmir

Key Trends in Izmir

As for Izmir, as mentioned while explaining case selection strategy, it is possible to observe a clear and almost uncontested dominance of CHP in the near history of the city. Since 1999, Izmir had been run by social democrat mayors. During the period investigated in this study, two mayors were in power, Aziz Kocaoğlu and Tunç Soyer. Between 2011-2014, Aziz Kocaoğlu was the mayor. He was first elected by the metropolitan assembly in 2004 after sudden death of then mayor Ahmet Priştina. After that, Kocaoglu remained in the seat of the mayor for three consecutive periods and ruled for 15 years until he decided to retire in 2019. In the local election in 2019, former mayor of Seferihisar, Tunç Soyer, was nominated and elected for the role of metropolitan mayor. He won the election by getting 58.1 % of the votes with a strong majority in the metropolitan assembly. Additionally, for almost all district municipalities, CHP

affiliated mayors were elected. Therefore, we see a clear political dominance of CHP affiliated mayors in Izmir.

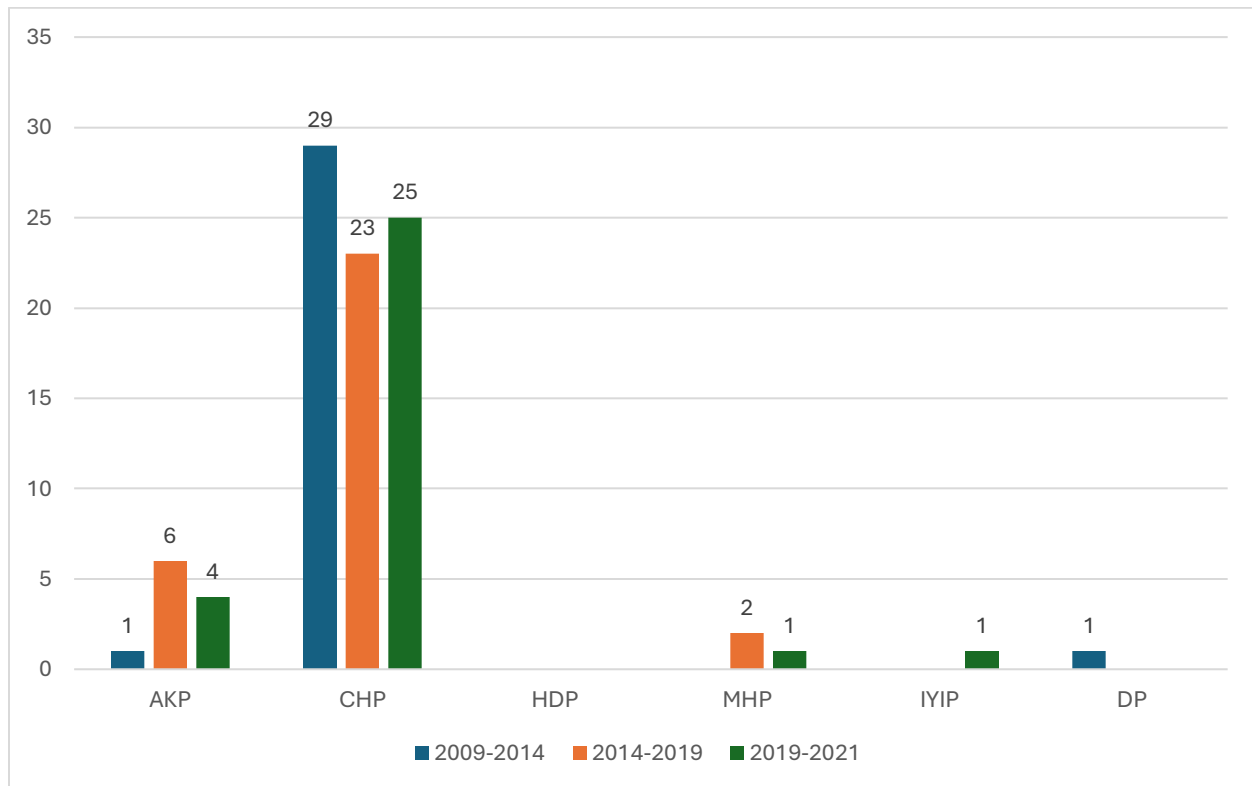


Figure 24: Winning Political Parties in Izmir and its Districts

In Izmir, Konak and Menderes have the highest socio-economic development score. On the other hand, Bayındır, Beydağ, Kınık and Kiraz have the least score among others. It is possible to observe a trend like Istanbul. As can be seen below, most socio-economically developed districts were not the most active or most integrationist. On the contrary, except for Konak, most integrationist and active municipalities, such as Bornova, Karabağlar, Seferihisar, and Torbalı are mostly mediocre compared to other districts.

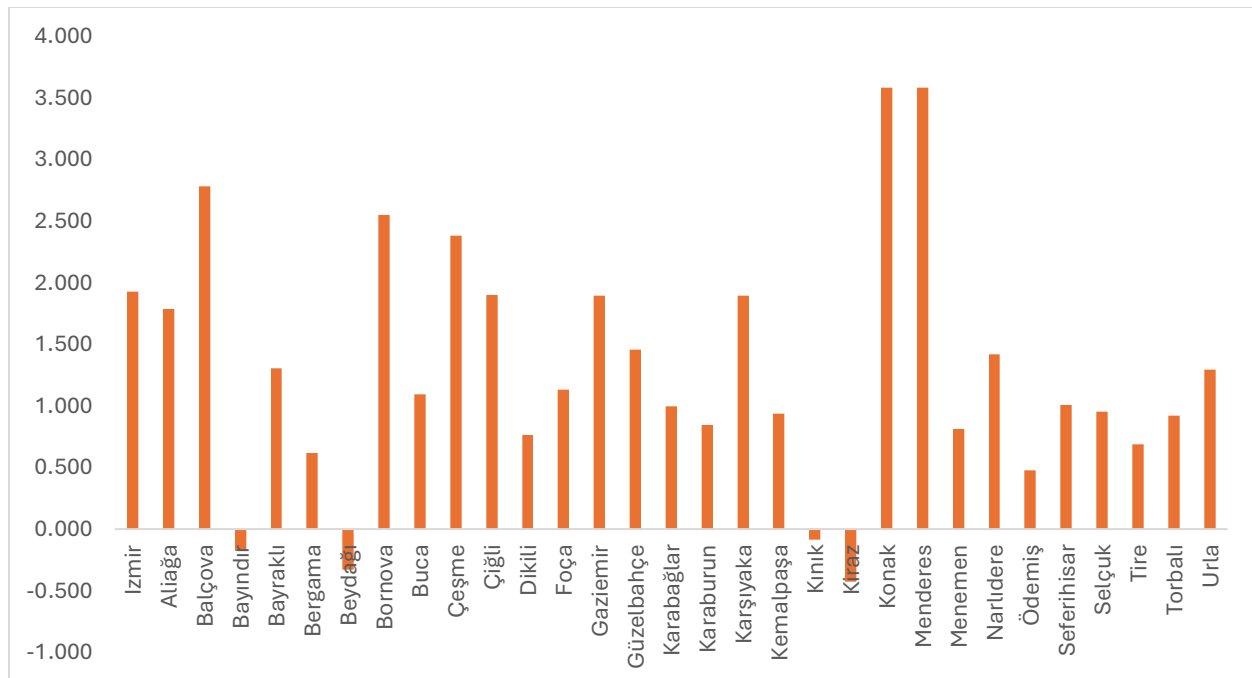


Figure 25: Socioeconomic Development Score of Districts in Izmir

Izmir municipalities were mostly inactive for a long while. Between 2011 and 2014, only two municipalities were active. Dikili, which is a remote coastal district and Konak, which is the district at the historical center of the city. Both municipalities take humanitarian actions with respect to immigrants. Otherwise, there is no activity in the city until 2014.

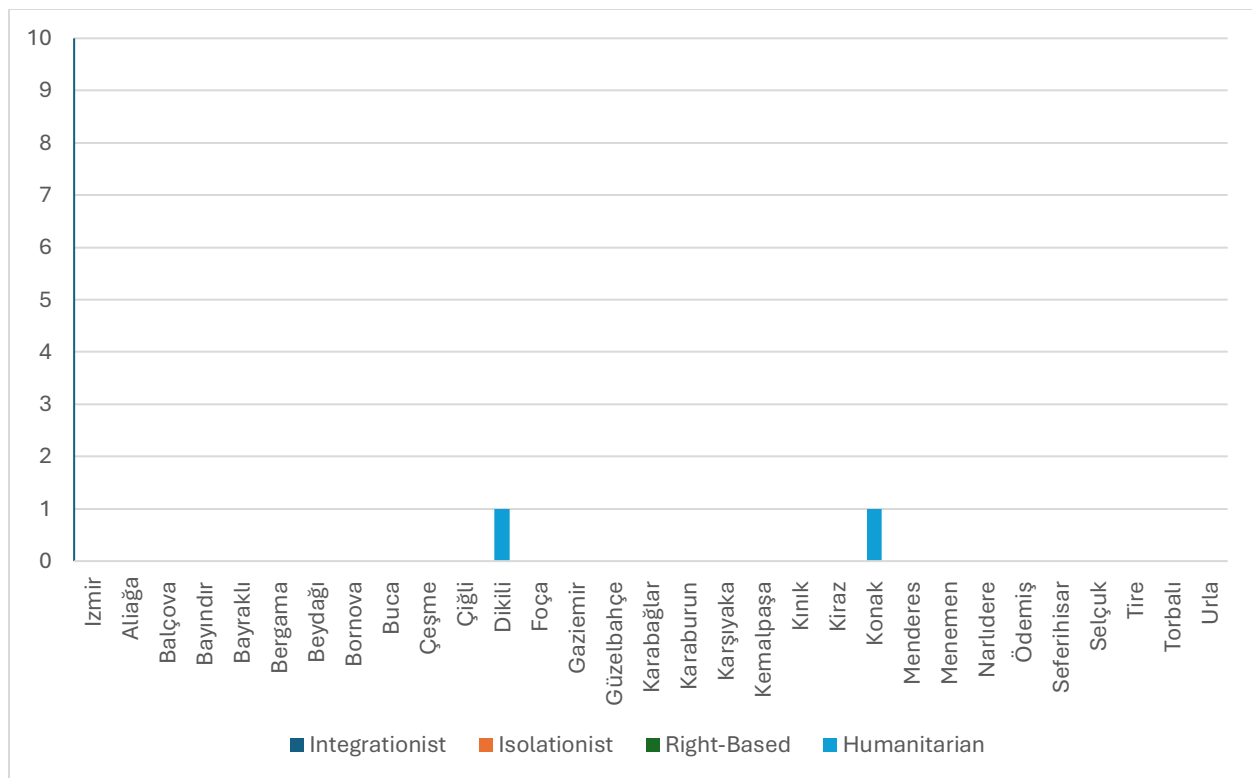


Figure 26: Municipal Actions in Izmir between 2011-2014

Between 2014 and 2019, the municipalities of Izmir became more active compared to 2011-2014. Seven out of thirty-one municipalities demonstrate different types of actions in this period. As well as activity, variation in tone of actions increase. During this period, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality became active. Yet, the most active municipalities were Karabağlar and Seferihisar. Konak and Torbalı followed them. These most active municipalities took an integrationist approach towards the immigrants by investing in social cohesion. Among all, Karabağlar showed higher right-based approach in their local immigrant policy. Yet, other active municipalities mostly take integrationist humanitarian approach in their immigrant policy. Konak, on the other hand, also take one isolationist action. This action was organization of an event only open to immigrants. Otherwise, there was no openly isolationist action.

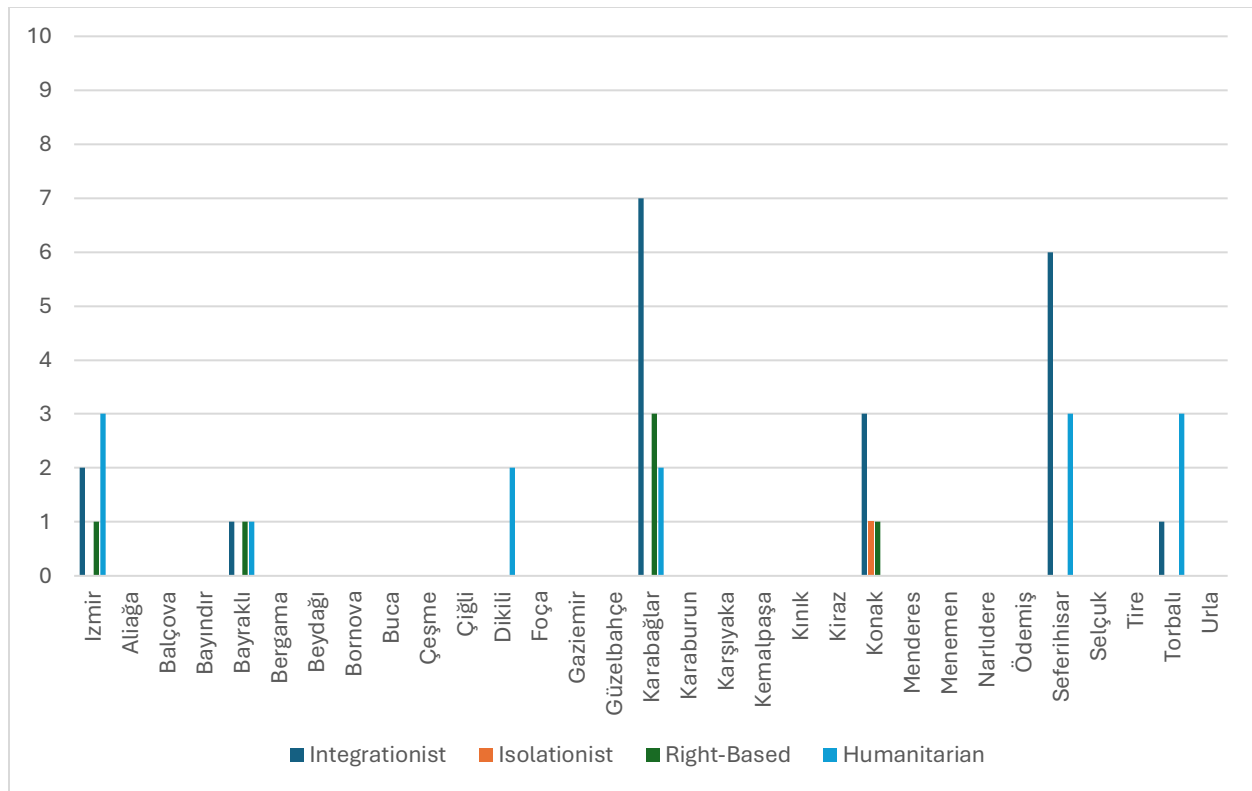


Figure 27: Municipal Actions in Izmir between 2014-2019

In the Figure 12, 2019-2021 period, we see decrease in the number of active municipalities. Buca and Bornova municipalities became active during this period. Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Karabağlar, Konak and Torbalı municipalities were municipalities which were active during the previous period. Each active municipality in this period demonstrated at least one isolationist action. Most of the isolationist actions were banning signboards in an immigrant language or targeted investigations against immigrant businesses.

Izmir Metropolitan Municipality increases its actions and changes its approach towards the local immigrant policy from humanitarian to right-based while keeping its actions integrationist direction. Yet, the number of integrationist actions increases, as well. While there was increase in metropolitan level activity in the immigrant policy field, it is possible to observe that district municipalities' activity narrows down to full inactivity or decreasing number of

actions instead of a change in the direction or approach in the local immigrant policy. Only major change at district level was increasing number of isolationist actions.

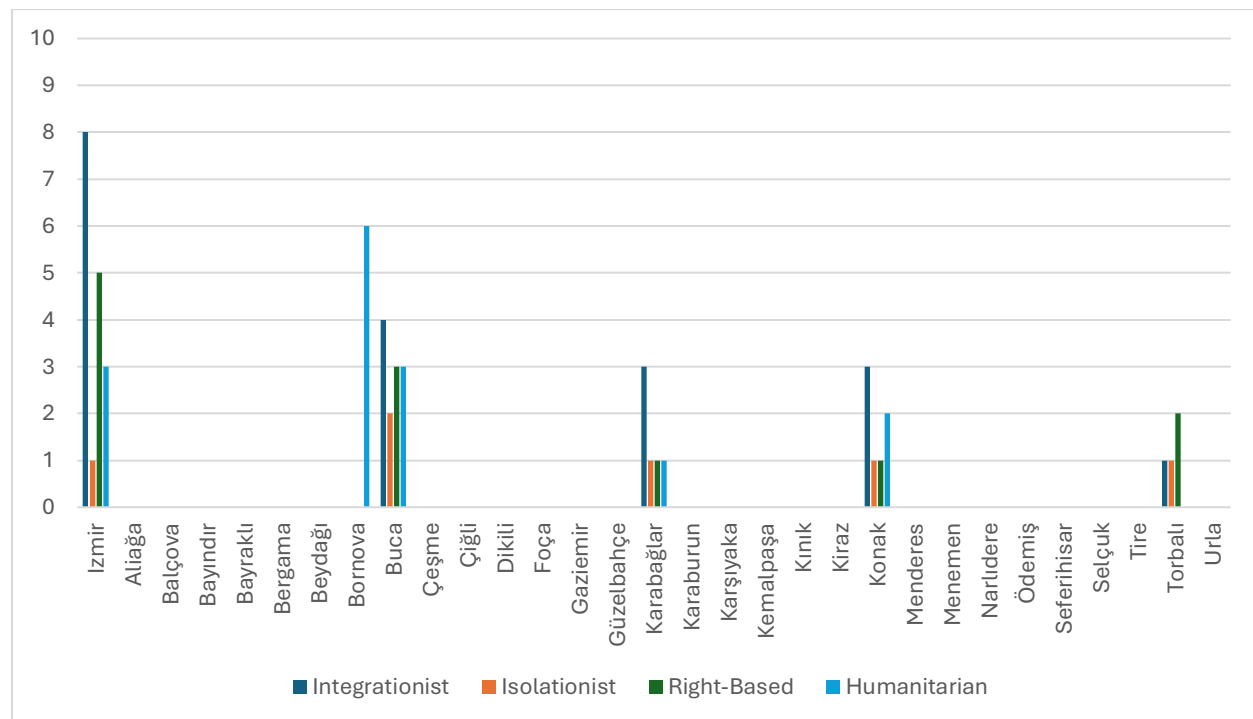


Figure 28: Municipal Actions in Izmir between 2019-2021

Majority of the municipalities in Izmir were inactive throughout the three periods. The period of 2014-2019 witnessed the highest number of active municipalities in Izmir. However, in the period 2019-2021, we only see Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Karabağlar Municipality and Konak Municipality which continuously active for two consecutive periods.

As for the problem areas, overall, municipalities demonstrate action in every problem area. However, the focus of municipalities has changed over the years. Except in 2021, there was a rough balance among focused problem areas. Yet, in 2021, orientation was a more visited problem area by the municipalities. Some problem areas were only briefly visited by the municipalities, such as immigrants' public presence. Additionally, needs management had been an issue in brief periods. Accommodation remains as the least visited problem area for the

municipalities in Izmir. Still, different from the distribution of actions into problem areas in Istanbul, in Izmir the municipalities mostly follow a fluctuating trend in terms of focused problem areas. It seems like 2019 is a critical year in terms of a changing trend.

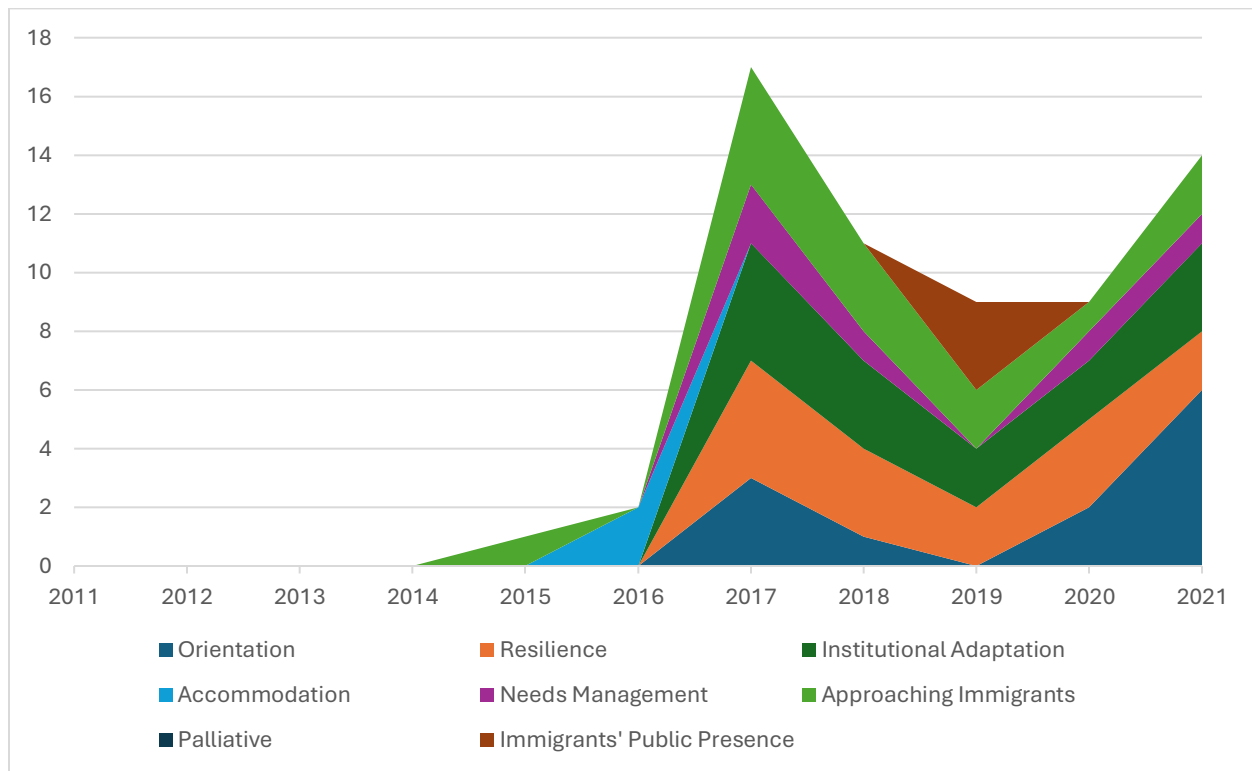


Figure 29: Problem Areas that the municipalities focus across years in Izmir

Hypotheses

The cases and fieldwork in the selected cases helped to delve into further about the hypotheses tested in the Chapter 7. The fieldwork revealed three main issues with respect to immigrant policymaking: mayors as policy entrepreneurs, immigrants' framing and their needs, and municipal capacity's role. While investigating the main hypotheses of the quantitative part of the study, these factors came forward triggering variation and affect local governments'

immigrant policy preferences. Under each factor, I explained how they were connected to the hypotheses tested in the previous chapter.

Findings from the Fieldwork

Findings from the fieldwork brought forward three significant factor that cause policy variation and change: mayors as policy entrepreneurs, information as a policy change trigger and municipal capacity as factor in policy choice. These three factors were mentioned by different stakeholders and policy actors in the field. Each factor helps to explain variation in these cities complementary to the factors discussed in the Chapter 5.

1- Mayors as Policy Entrepreneurs

One crucial factor that came forward in local policy variation was mayors as policy entrepreneurs. John Kingdon suggests that policy entrepreneurs “could be in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organizations. But their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return” (Kingdon, 2014, p. 122). Mintrom takes this definition one step further and adds a critical feature to policy entrepreneurs: “Policy entrepreneurs reveal themselves through their attempts to transform policy ideas into policy innovations and, hence, disrupt status quo policy arrangements” (Mintrom, 2019, p. 307). Therefore, policy entrepreneurs can be defined as agents of change, who mobilize various forms of social, political, economic and administrative resources to impact via policy arrangements.

Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul since 2019, and Tunç Soyer, the mayor of Izmir between 2019 and 2024, acted as policy entrepreneurs in the field of immigrant policy after assuming office. During his candidacy, İmamoğlu repeatedly underscored the importance of establishing a clear policy and structured response to the presence of refugees in Istanbul. For instance, in one speech, he criticized the metropolitan mayor of Istanbul for failing to act or articulate a coherent local immigrant policy (Euronews, 2019). In the same speech, he signaled a potentially accommodating approach to the refugees in Istanbul, while also referencing a future expectation of repatriating Syrians should peace be restored in Syria.

As indicated in Figures 4 and 5, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality was largely inactive regarding the presence of immigrants in the city before İmamoğlu's tenure, apart from occasional positive statements by the metropolitan mayor. A civil society organization (CSO) worker who, at the time of our interview, collaborated closely with multiple municipalities in Istanbul argued that the previous mayor perceived the issue as primarily the responsibility of district municipalities.⁷ Similarly, an interviewee from a district municipality noted that district-level authorities expected the metropolitan municipality to take a more proactive role and assume coordination responsibilities.⁸

Consequently, before the change in the metropolitan mayor's office, the local immigrant policy landscape was characterized by the active involvement of most district municipalities, contrasted with the near-absence of significant initiatives from the metropolitan municipality. This was reflected in both the inventory of municipal actions and the interviews conducted during my fieldwork. Between 2014 and 2019, 33 out of 39 district municipalities were active.

⁷ Interview on February 22 2023, Istanbul

⁸ Interview on March 2 2023, Istanbul

However, there was no evidence of coordination efforts led by the metropolitan municipality. District municipalities anticipated a more active metropolitan role to organize a city-wide response to immigration challenges. Against this backdrop, İmamoğlu, who had criticized his predecessors for inaction and silence on immigrant issues, was elected metropolitan mayor.

İmamoğlu was elected as a candidate of the Nation Alliance, an opposition coalition formed against Erdoğan's government. The Nation Alliance included the CHP (Republican People's Party) and the İYİP (Good Party), along with several minor political parties spanning various ideological orientations in Turkey. Both CHP and İYİP, the two major parties backing İmamoğlu's candidacy, expressed openly negative stances towards the presence of refugees in Turkey (Balta et al., 2023). While İmamoğlu acknowledged the prospect of refugees returning to their home countries, he also advocated for a clear local immigrant policy. His stance was supported by a strong record of immigrant policy development in his previous role as mayor of Beylikdüzü, a district of Istanbul.

During his tenure as mayor of Beylikdüzü, İmamoğlu led a municipality that implemented 11 integrationist actions, without any isolationist actions, and maintained a balanced approach with seven humanitarian and six rights-based actions. Between 2014 and 2019, Beylikdüzü Municipality emerged as one of the most active district municipalities in Istanbul in this regard. Thus, it is arguable that İmamoğlu's position as metropolitan mayor represented a contradiction with the anti-refugee sentiment of the Nation Alliance, which had nominated him for the role.

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represented a contradiction with the anti-refugee sentiment of the Nation Alliance, which had nominated him for the role.

After his election in 2019, the new mayor initiated a process of institutional capacity building to enable the metropolitan municipality to take a more proactive role in the immigrant policy field. A new unit, titled the *Migration and Adaptation Unit*, was established. Additionally, the municipality prepared a dedicated planning document focused on migration and adaptation, emphasizing the importance of coordination and collaboration among municipalities.

In 2020, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality launched an assessment study involving district municipalities to develop a more effective coordinating mechanism – not only for immigrant policies but also across other policy areas. As noted earlier, district municipalities had expressed dissatisfaction with the metropolitan municipality’s previous reluctance to act as a coordinator in the realm of immigrant policy before 2019.

To carry out the assessment, professional third-party researchers were hired. These researchers spent nearly six months visiting district municipalities to explore their perspectives on immigrant policies and the projects they were implementing. One of the researchers involved in this initiative remarked:

We visited each district municipality for a couple of days to work with them and find out what has been done so far and what these municipalities need. The metropolitan municipality initiated this project to make a field assessment and better coordinate the efforts by district municipalities. I can say that there was a clear prejudice against our intention to run this project. Almost every time I visited an AKP [affiliated] municipality, I was almost treated as a spy searching for hidden secrets in these municipalities or an unwelcomed supervisor

imposed by the metropolitan municipality. Sometimes, we managed to work out and partially break these prejudices. I wouldn't say that they were rude. But they tried not to communicate and collaborate. They were almost afraid of collaborating with people from the metropolitan municipality. We were almost treated like CHP agents not municipal employees.⁹

Although this assessment was not specifically designed to coordinate immigrant policy, it revealed how several district municipalities reacted to a change in mayoral office. Some municipalities that had previously sought collaboration, requesting metropolitan coordination, experience sharing, and communication among municipalities, suddenly became uncooperative. The interviewee was certain that this was due to the change from an AKP-affiliated mayor to a CHP-affiliated one. Ideological competition led some district municipalities to alter their policy preferences and expectations. While they had once expected specific actions from the metropolitan municipality, some AKP-affiliated municipalities grew suspicious of any collaborative or coordinating efforts. In this case, the difference in party affiliation significantly impacted the policy preference for city-wide coordination. Therefore, it's possible to argue that the metropolitan municipality had to navigate a challenging environment with widespread uncooperativeness across the city.

This situation also introduces a new layer with respect to one of the hypotheses tested in Chapter 5. As previously tested, local choices of action had a significant relationship with political party affiliation. However, in this case, party affiliation influenced the prospects of cooperation in the field. While the Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor was affiliated with the AKP, AKP-affiliated mayors still requested the metropolitan mayor's coordination efforts. Yet, the

⁹ Interview on January 12 2023, Istanbul

climate for cooperation dissipated after a mayor with a different affiliation took over. Rather than party affiliation affecting ideological action choices, partisanship redefined relations between municipalities. Additionally, counterintuitively, the CHP-affiliated mayor sought and implemented a structured local immigrant policy. This may indicate that pragmatic policies took precedence over ideological preferences.

In terms of the focused problem areas, between 2019 and 2021, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality began focusing on resilience building, institutional adaptation, accommodation, and engagement with immigrant communities – areas that were previously not addressed by the municipality.

Ideologically and institutionally, Imamoglu's election as metropolitan mayor significantly affected the local immigrant policy environment. Ideologically, several potential and willing actors took a partisan stance and changed their attitude towards the metropolitan municipality. Institutionally, a proactive approach was adopted rather than remaining reactive or silent. The level of activity, types of actions, and the problem areas addressed all shifted with the new mayor. This change also occurred in a political climate where some actors were politically motivated not to collaborate with the new mayor, and the political alliance behind the mayor's election exhibited anti-immigrant sentiments at a discursive level.

In Izmir, a new mayor elected in 2019 also played a similar policy entrepreneur role. Tunç Soyer, who was elected as the new metropolitan mayor of Izmir in 2019, took over the post from his fellow party member Aziz Kocaoglu, who held the office for three consecutive terms from 2004 until 2019. Before 2019, according to the dataset, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality demonstrated a limited number of activities. During Kocaoglu's tenure, two noteworthy actions

were taken: an attempt to investigate the overall cost of Syrian refugees to municipalities in Izmir by collecting relevant data from other municipalities, and establishing the “Center for Immigrant Solidarity, Information, and Social Cohesion,” funded by IOM and the Embassy of Switzerland in Turkey. Although these were significant moves towards institutional adaptation, intermunicipal coordination, and social cohesion between refugees and the host community, the metropolitan municipality remained mostly inactive until 2019.

Since AKP’s rise to power in 2002, Izmir has become a stronghold for the opposition in Turkey. Municipal mayors’ posts and parliamentary seats in Izmir have been dominated by CHP members. In each electoral cycle, only a minority of municipalities were taken over by AKP-affiliated candidates. CHP candidates for the metropolitan municipality were elected with landslide victories. In the districts, however, AKP was mostly a close competitor to CHP candidates. Therefore, while AKP challenged CHP as a competitor, there was a CHP dominance across the years.

Under Soyer’s tenure, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality became a significant actor. Mayor Soyer openly declared that “we live together with refugees [in Izmir], everyone should accept this [fact]” (Duvar, 2021). Soyer’s track record when he was a municipal mayor in one of Izmir’s districts, Seferihisar, also proved his attention to the issue. Under his mayorship, Seferihisar Municipality was one of the most active municipalities in Izmir. Although it was a remote coastal district in Izmir, Seferihisar became an integrationist-humanitarian municipality between 2014 and 2019. However, following Soyer’s switch from Mayor of Seferihisar to Metropolitan Mayor of Izmir, Seferihisar became entirely inactive.

A municipal employee working for the “Refugee Desk” under Izmir Metropolitan Municipality said:

We can’t ignore Mayor Soyer’s impact. Our unit was formed after his election. But more importantly, he appointed people who have experience in CSOs with a right-based approach. Head of our unit is one of them. She also brought in people like me. As a result, the municipality built a right and equality-oriented approach to immigrants. Previous mayor pretended there was no refugees in Izmir. Back then, I was working for a CSO. We started late at metropolitan level [to work on local immigrant policy]. But I’m happy that we are able to focus on equality and rights of immigrants instead of only distributing aid. Don’t get me wrong. Social aid is essential. It should continue. However, it is not enough after the first shock. We try to help people build a life in Izmir as fellow city dwellers (*hemşehri*).¹⁰

During Soyer’s term, the metropolitan municipality initiated several projects and collaborated with multiple stakeholders to provide services and encourage social cohesion in Izmir. In 2019, the municipality extended the “Süt Kuzusu” Project to include refugee children as well. This project aimed to distribute 8 liters of milk to children aged 1 to 5 years old. Prior to Soyer’s term, the project was limited to Turkish citizens only. In 2020, the municipality began providing psycho-social support for refugees in Izmir. The same year, the municipality established a “Refugee Desk” with UNHCR’s support to identify refugees’ needs and develop and implement projects to address those needs. In addition to the Refugee Desk, as part of the institutional transformation to prepare the municipality to accommodate immigrants in the city, the municipality established an “Urban Justice and Equality Branch” under the Department of Social Services. In 2021, the municipality initiated a process of employee training on how to approach immigrants. A 62-page manual was written to guide municipal employees in their

¹⁰ Interview on June 20 2023, Izmir

interactions with immigrants in Izmir. In the manual's preface, signed by Soyer, it was clearly stated that "We believe that working to ensure that refugees living in İzmir, like all residents of the city, benefit from urban rights, is one of our fundamental responsibilities, both in terms of universal human rights and within the framework of Municipal Law No. 5393." This overtly frames equal access to services as a direct responsibility of the municipality, even for refugees. Previously, according to Çamur (2017), the metropolitan municipality also collaborated with multiple CSOs to build capacity and provide services to refugees.

One of the problems that Soyer had to face was backlash from the host community. Saraçoğlu and Belanger (2019) demonstrate that Izmir suffered from anti-Syrian xenophobia due to the social, economic, and ideological conditions in the city. The precarious economic conditions, as well as social and political contradictions, fueled anti-immigrant sentiment in urban settings across Turkey, including Izmir. According to one of the interviewees from a CSO advocating immigrant and refugee rights, Izmir also had a special condition that would exacerbate the anti-immigrant sentiment (Interview, April 29 2023):

"People of Izmir was always xenophobic. But because they see that AKP is behind this [refugee] problem. It makes them vocal about their complaints about refugees. Also, they see refugees as automatic AKP supporters... People's hatred of AKP is fused with anti-refugee sentiment in Izmir."

Whether such overlapping was at work or not, people in Izmir were vocal about their anti-immigrant sentiments to municipal workers as well. People's anti-immigrant attitude reached to the level that frightened municipal officials to openly declare what they do because people's attitude may cause political concerns.

An interviewee who works for Izmir Metropolitan Municipality stated that the political concerns over the local people in Izmir prevents them publicize some of the services they provide. She also provided an example:

“We initiated a tele-health line during the [COVID-19] pandemic. It was for everyone. Our unit asked if it’s possible to provide the line in multiple languages. We thought at least adding Arabic would help Syrian refugees who may not have access to any health service. Our request was accepted. I’m working in a separate department. After the initiation of the service, it was a week or so, I came across with a friend from the department which runs this call service. She said, “you wouldn’t believe how many calls we receive because of the Arabic option in the telehealth line. Some even call us traitors for including Arabic as an option.” Can you believe that? I could imagine that people in Izmir might not be happy about this. But this was more than I expected. A tele-health service in Arabic can disturb people in Izmir. This is only one example. We don’t stop services because of such complaints but I know that people act more carefully and try not to publicize our services for refugees.¹¹

The interviewee mentioned that similar incidents occur in district municipalities as well. Interviewees from CSOs and district municipalities in Izmir confirmed that publicizing services for immigrants may cause political backlash. In contrast, I did not hear such harsh stories from Istanbul. However, worsening economic conditions over the years could potentially lead to similar incidents. It is clear that local population backlash made municipal officials more cautious about their actions. An interviewee working in a CSO that collaborates with Izmir

¹¹ Interview on April 28 2023, remote

Metropolitan Municipality on several projects argued that one reason the previous mayor almost ignored immigration as a policy issue was the fear of losing votes in the future.¹²

When asked if similar concerns were applicable in municipalities in Istanbul, most interviewees mentioned no significant incidents but noted that as time passes and immigrants become more visible and economically better off, host communities have become less accepting than before. In Küçükçekmece, a CSO worker noted that the local population was more accepting previously because they viewed immigrants as needy.¹³ However, over the years, immigrants started businesses in the district. The more visible immigrants became, the less sympathy they received from the host community in Küçükçekmece. There is also an ethnic dimension to the issue. Many immigrants who choose Küçükçekmece as their residence were Syrians of Kurdish origin. The same CSO worker mentioned that the shared ethnic background sometimes eased reconciliation when local conflicts arose. On the other hand, the newly arrived individuals unknowingly carried the burden of ethnic conflicts in the district prior to their arrival.

Despite local discontent, some municipalities continue to provide services, as we see in Izmir. How do mayors resist potential backlash from their constituents? A municipal official from Izmir Metropolitan Municipality argues that the election of the new metropolitan mayor, Tunç Soyer, enabled the municipality to take action on immigration and continue providing services despite host community discontent.¹⁴ According to a CSO worker, on the other hand, the mayor introduced a rights-based approach that he brought from his previous post in Seferihisar to immigrant-related issues in the metropolitan municipality. Most interviewees in the context of

¹² Interview on June 12 2023, Izmir

¹³ Interview on March 9 2023, Istanbul

¹⁴ Interview on April 28 2023, remote

Izmir Metropolitan Municipality referred to Mayor Soyer as spearheading change in local immigrant policy with an integrationist and welcoming perspective.¹⁵

In the cases of Istanbul and Izmir's metropolitan municipalities, it was possible to see that metropolitan mayors played a key role in transforming local immigrant policies from almost inactive to active, giving the policy an integrationist direction despite the political and institutional challenges. Thanks to their administrative power, these actors managed to transfer their practices from their previous posts and implement actions to initiate similar policies. Such actors' efforts eventually deliver different policies across various localities.

2- Information as a policy change trigger

Information about the immigrant population was a key element to develop policies. During the interviews, municipal officials stated that understanding immigrants' needs was a significant factor to determine what sort of services to provide. Several factors shape immigrants' needs. For how long an immigrant reside in a locality is a determining factor for the immigrants' needs. Zeytinburnu is a district which hosts immigrants even before Syrians' arrival. An official¹⁶ told:

It is important to know what to do when people arrive. They need so many things. When they first arrive, people needed houses and food, yes. But they also don't know how to live among the local people. They don't speak the language. They don't know what to do when they get sick. This is why we founded a "School of Harmony." These schools aimed specifically children to help them learn Turkish. Teaching the language makes things easier for them...

¹⁵ In future years, as another local election cycle closed by, Soyer's tone changed and he signaled in several speeches that the time to return for refugees had come (Atkoşar, 2023).

¹⁶ Interview on April 25, Istanbul

Teaching children Turkish is a practical method. They learn quickly and start helping their parents, mainly, their mother and elderly in their family.

Many municipalities also focus on material help at the early stages of immigrants' arrival. This is mostly a result of the assumption that immigrants are deprived of resources, particularly in the case of Syrians. However, experience in encountering immigrants reveals that early needs are not limited to material assistance. The language barrier is also a significant obstacle to immigrants' self-reliance. While perceptions of immigrants play a key role in developing local immigrant policy, information that may change perceptions also becomes a triggering factor for policy change and variation across localities and over time.

Attributing temporariness to refugees' stay in Turkey was one of the critical assumptions that determined the actions taken by municipalities. For example, in the case of Izmir, according to many of my respondents – municipal officials and CSO workers from Izmir – the delayed response by municipalities in Izmir was a result of the assumption that immigrants' stay in Izmir was temporary. An official from Konak Municipality stated that a needs assessment study in collaboration with UNHCR had a revelatory impact on the municipality's approach. As a result of the needs assessment, municipal officials realized that most immigrants intended to remain in Izmir. The interviewee said:

At that moment we were struck by the reality. Almost 85% of the refugees and other immigrants did not plan to leave Izmir. Until this research, we assumed that most desire to flee to Europe, and they were here only for a brief while, until they catch their breath to continue the journey. We had to change our approach. We needed to learn how to live together.

Therefore, the information on local immigrant community and their expectations and perception of the locality may change policymakers' perception on the issue.

Municipalities also approach differently to immigrant policy and which actions to include in it. A dichotomy that I kept hearing was that of humanitarian and rights-based approaches by municipalities and CSOs in the field. A respondent from Izmir Metropolitan Municipality said: "We, as the metropolitan municipality, started to do something about refugees very late. But we have an advantage which makes me happy. Our unit and the metropolitan municipality focus on equality and rights of the immigrants. Our priority is to set the conditions for refugees to live in this city as fellow city residents (*hemşehri*), as equals."¹⁷ She also mentioned that they try to convince other municipalities to approach from this angle as well.

A CSO worker in Istanbul said that most of the municipalities at the beginning of the mass inflow resorted to more humanitarian actions for multiple reasons:

Many thought this was a temporary thing. Some of us thought so, too. Solving the immediate needs of refugees was a good start for everyone. However, the situation changed over time. More people came and didn't show a sign that they would leave, and everybody knew that refugees wouldn't leave soon. But some municipalities continued distributing food, hygiene kits, and clothing etc... They (municipalities) collaborated with CSOs from the beginning but some CSOs focused their activities on these charitable activities and these partnerships continued to do what they know best. I think they also believe that it is the best way to help people. But this causes a relationship of dependency between the giver and receiver of help."¹⁸

¹⁷ Interview on April 28, 2023, remote

¹⁸ Interview on April 5, 2023, Istanbul.

Municipalities' and their partners' perspective to the policy problem at hand impacts the resulting preference of actions.

Collaboration in the field was a must for municipalities in many cases. Municipalities neither had the capacity nor the know-how of how to deal with a massive population originating from another country and not speaking Turkish. As a result, many municipalities had resorted to collaborating with other actors in the field; CSOs, international organizations, universities, the central government, and other municipalities. Particularly collaboration with CSOs, international organizations and the central government was key to facilitate information flow to the municipalities.

CSOs and IOs played a key role in local immigrant policy development. One interviewee working for a CSO said: "It was not an ongoing crisis. The municipality didn't know what to do but wanted to do something about the refugees. Therefore, we contributed with our knowledge of refugees. Cooperating with the municipality, we could bring in funding and information we had regarding such situations" (Interview in July 2024). I will touch upon more on the role of CSOs as partners for capacity building. For this section, I mainly focused on their role as an agent of information for the municipalities.

Municipal Capacity's Role in Action Preference

Municipal capacity also plays a significant role in the variation of immigrant policy across different localities. Since the arrival of Syrians, municipalities have faced several capacity-related challenges. These challenges manifest in two ways: operational capacity – budget, staff, infrastructure, etc. – and expertise. For some municipalities, expertise has been an issue from the outset and remains so today. Although some officials had expertise in immigration and post-immigration processes, municipalities did not develop institutional expertise over the

years. As one interviewee from a CSO in Izmir noted, “Municipalities were caught unprepared for the arrival of Syrians. They didn’t see people coming in as an issue to intervene. Probably, some waited for the central government to take an action. Many felt like the immigration flow happened suddenly. Actually, they didn’t want to see what was coming and later wanted to believe that refugees would leave soon.”¹⁹

Therefore, many municipalities resorted to what they already knew when they first had to take action: addressing the most immediate subsistence-related problems. Distributing food packages, blankets, hygiene kits, and providing shelter have been common practices in immigrant reception among municipalities. Before the Syrian Civil War, engaging in social services and distributing social aid started to become a prevalent practice to fight poverty among Turkish municipalities. With the legal changes in local administration in 2004 and 2005, municipalities gained a significant role in urban infrastructure and social policy (Savaşkan, 2017). From this point on, municipalities became critical actors in providing social assistance (Erder, 2015). Including refugees in the existing social aid structures was the quickest method to tackle the urban side of the refugee issue.

However, moving beyond extending basic social aid measures to immigrants was economically unlikely for many municipalities. CSOs and international organizations were among the best options for municipalities to mobilize resources. In addition to financial assistance, these organizations were experienced in offering guidance on how to enhance municipal capacity to respond to immigration. They played a capacity-building role in their relationship with municipalities.

¹⁹ Interview on June 23, 2023, Izmir

The financial need of municipalities was exacerbated by their reliance on funding allocated from the national budget. A large proportion of municipalities' income is transferred by the central government, primarily based on the population for which a municipality is responsible. However, this population is calculated based on registered Turkish citizens in a city or district. As a result, the central government disregards immigrants when allocating local governments' shares from tax income. This situation had not been a problem for local governments before the Syrian Civil War, when the non-citizen immigrant population in Turkey was considerably lower. As of 2023, the estimated immigrant population in Turkey is around 5 million, approximately 4% of the total population. Consequently, municipalities faced increased pressure due to an increasing population that was not accounted for in income distribution. Given that some cities and districts were more populated with immigrants than the national average ratio, the burden on these municipalities is higher than others. Yet, there has been no action by the central government to address the lack of funding.

A municipal official in Küçükçekmece confirmed this by saying that the incoming population became an additional burden on the municipalities' budgets due to infrastructural costs. The immigrants' addition to the overall populations of cities increased costs such as waste and water management. Municipal strategic plans needed to include the infrastructural burden of the immigrant population. Therefore, the arrival of immigrants created an economic constraint for municipalities – a constraint that local governments could hardly solve with municipal resources.

In addition to the economic burden, new personnel were required to manage the increased workload in departments dealing with immigration-related issues. Some municipalities

established new units or departments, as seen in the sample of this study. For example, in neighborhood houses (*semt evleri*), municipalities needed to meet the new demand for their services. Neighborhood houses existed before the arrival of Syrians as public venues that functioned as meeting places for local people. In addition, municipalities used these places as distribution points for social aid and to organize social activities for locals. In Karabağlar, municipal officials directed incoming immigrants to receive social aid from the municipality. Later, neighborhood houses were also used as venues to host events for immigrants and vocational training sessions. Although the existence of these facilities eased some of the infrastructural problems, managing and maintaining them required additional staff.

The municipalities needed to increase their operational capacity to accommodate the newly added population. However, this new population required a different approach than the host community. Increasing operational capacity was not just a matter of quantity but also quality. Municipalities had to learn how to address a population with partially different needs than their conventional target population. Expertise in immigration, immigrants, and immigrant integration became imperative for municipalities. They faced new problems, some of which were almost alien to local governments in Turkey. A basic issue was the immediate need for staff who could interpret Arabic to provide regular services for immigrants.

Another important example of building capacity through collaboration is Konak Municipality in Izmir. Konak Municipality partnered with CSOs and international organizations like UNHCR and IOM to increase the amount of material aid provided to immigrants. As part of the municipality's partnership with UNHCR, the two conducted a needs assessment in 2018 to identify immigrants' needs. According to the interviewee, the results were useful for the

municipality in diagnosing the urgency of the needs. Additionally, the assessment helped the municipality identify potential areas for service expansion to better meet the needs of immigrants. Furthermore, Konak Municipality formed a “Refugee Assembly” with the participation of 40 CSOs to establish a formal channel with immigrants and organizations working on immigration-related issues. A CSO worker stated:

Even though Refugee Assembly was only an advisory board and no power of implementation, it facilitated our communication with the municipality. Via this channel, we can bring forward our expectations in the field and the municipality can hear the realities of immigrants. Establishing this assembly, the municipality grew a more right-based approach to the immigrant issues.²⁰

Therefore, it can be argued that the collaboration process contributed to Konak Municipality’s efforts to provide social aid, but it also transformed the approach. The interviewees’ descriptions of Konak Municipality and its journey in developing its immigrant policy align with my findings in the dataset. Konak Municipality initially started with basic social aid and social activities for immigrants, adopting a humanitarian approach. Over time, it is possible to observe a more systematic transformation towards a rights-based approach in immigrant policy, as municipal capacity increased alongside local and international cooperation.

While a district municipality in Izmir struggled with such capacity constraints, having to muddle through and enhance its capacity to provide services, another district municipality in Istanbul, Zeytinburnu Municipality, was able to approach the issue differently from the beginning. As mentioned above, Zeytinburnu has been a destination for immigration for a longer

²⁰ Interview on June 15 2023, Izmir

period of time. Immigrant networks formed before the Syrian Civil War facilitated immigration from Syria to the district. Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis, and immigrants of many other origins had resided in the district before. Therefore, Zeytinburnu has a longer history and more extensive experience with handling immigration in its own unique way. A CSO worker mentioned that they had connections with Zeytinburnu Municipality even before the 2010s. Another interviewee who worked with the municipality argued that the municipal staff was already experienced in immigration.²¹ The experience, apparently, helped the municipality to develop response from the start.

After the arrival of Afghan and Iraqi refugees in 2000s, Zeytinburnu Municipality experienced a similar period of search and learn like other municipalities which had to think about developing immigrant policy first time after Syrians' arrival. In 2007, Zeytinburnu Municipality founded AKDEM (Center of Disabled and, Supporting Family and Women) to piece its efforts of social policy together. Additionally, they linked their services for immigrants to the Center. The City Adaptation Unit was founded in 2009 under the Center to engage in immigrant integration to the urban life. Therefore, when Syrians arrived in the district, the municipality had a specialized unit on immigration related issues. A municipal official said:

“AKDEM made things easier for us. We knew what to do and with whom to get in touch. We knew what refugees needed. I can even say that we foresaw the mass immigration to Turkey. That's why we made preparations to increase capacity of AKDEM. Of course, it was beyond our estimations. I mean the number of people coming here. We knew what to do but the real problem was the numbers.”²²

²¹ Interview on June 7 2023, Istanbul

²² Interview on April 25 2023, Istanbul

Thanks to the expertise that the Center had, Turkish language courses for children and women were one of the first actions taken by the municipality. The capacity developed over the years prepared Zeytinburnu Municipality for a larger population fleeing from the devastation of a war. Therefore, they employed a more nuanced repertoire of actions than just providing material aid when the Syrians arrived in the district. A municipality's capacity for immigrant reception can significantly impact the policy it adopts. In this case, Zeytinburnu Municipality had a trained staff, knowledge on immigration and immigrants' needs, and operational capacity even before the inflow started.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, several key insights emerge about the variation in immigrant policy across Turkish municipalities. Firstly, metropolitan mayors emerged as key policy entrepreneurs in shaping immigrant policies across different localities. In cities like Izmir and Istanbul, mayors such as Tunç Soyer and Ekrem Imamoğlu have played crucial roles in advocating for more proactive and integration-focused policies. Their leadership and administrative authority allowed them to drive significant changes, moving from basic service provision or inactivity to a more structured, rights-based approach to immigrant integration. Soyer's tenure in Izmir, for instance, was marked by a shift towards a more comprehensive strategy, including extending social aid programs and creating new institutions like the Refugee Desk and the Urban Justice and Equality Branch. These metropolitan mayors have utilized their positions to facilitate collaboration with international organizations and civil society, fostering an environment where policy innovation and adaptation could take place despite economic and institutional constraints.

Secondly, the political context plays a crucial role, with partisan affiliation often influencing municipal policies. In Istanbul, for instance, the change in metropolitan mayoral office from an AKP-affiliated to a CHP-affiliated mayor resulted in a shift towards a more integrationist approach to immigrant policy. Districts like Küçükçekmece and Zeytinburnu exhibited different levels of acceptance and capacity for immigrant integration based on their historical immigrant populations and political dynamics.

Thirdly, municipal capacity, both in terms of expertise and operational infrastructure, has been a critical factor. Many municipalities initially struggled with the influx of Syrian refugees due to a lack of preparedness and expertise. Additionally, economic constraints significantly influence how municipalities respond to immigration, affecting their operational capacity and willingness to implement comprehensive services. The reliance on central government funding and the lack of financial resources challenge municipalities in addressing immigrant needs effectively. However, municipalities like Konak and Zeytinburnu adapted over time, developing targeted policies and collaborating with civil society organizations to enhance their capacity and provide tailored services. The establishment of new departments, Turkish language courses, and rights-based approaches in immigrant policy highlight a trend towards more comprehensive and systematic integration strategies as municipal capacity grows.

Lastly, the perception of immigrants, shaped by local and international factors, influences policy development. While earlier municipal responses were often humanitarian and focused on basic subsistence needs, over time, a shift towards a rights-based approach became apparent, particularly in municipalities with higher levels of international cooperation and capacity. This

evolution reflects a broader trend towards more inclusive and pragmatic approaches to immigrant integration.

Overall, these findings underscore the complexity of immigrant policy in Turkey, where economic, political, and institutional factors interplay to shape local responses. The evolution of municipal policy from reactive measures to more proactive and rights-oriented strategies indicates a progressive shift in addressing immigration challenges.

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

The findings presented in this dissertation capture some of the key factors shaping municipal responses to immigration in Turkey, emphasizing the complex interplay of local, national, and institutional dynamics. Drawing upon both quantitative and qualitative analyses, this study contributes to the understanding of how municipalities navigate their roles in the evolving landscape of immigration policy, particularly in a context as ambiguous as Turkey's. By focusing on variations in municipal actions, their underlying determinants, and the policy orientations they adopt, this research seeks to advance the literature on local policymaking and migration studies. This concluding chapter synthesizes the key insights, highlights their theoretical and practical implications, and identifies directions for future research.

Key Findings

This dissertation explores how Turkish municipalities have responded to immigration over an eleven-year period marked by significant demographic shifts due to the arrival of Syrian and other immigrant groups. The findings underscore notable variations in municipal actions, shaped by a constellation of factors, including political (local political competition, partisanship, incumbency), structural (socioeconomic development, administrative capacity, host-immigrant ratio), and relational (cooperation with third parties).

In addition to these factors, this research recognizes the role of key actors, such as municipal mayors, information and municipal capacity in shaping policy decisions. These factors illuminate how municipalities prioritize immigrant-related issues, adopt distinct policy approaches, and exhibit varying levels of activity.

Patterns of Municipal Activity

Municipal responses to immigration were neither uniform nor static. The trajectory of these responses evolved across three distinct periods: 2011–2014, 2014–2019, and 2019–2021. Early actions were characterized by limited humanitarian interventions, reflecting the emergent nature of the mass refugee arrival. Over time, municipalities expanded their scope of engagement, incorporating integrationist and legalist measures aimed at fostering social cohesion and addressing immigrants' rights. However, a subset of municipalities demonstrated isolationist tendencies, seeking to limit the visibility or integration of immigrant populations. This variation reflects the divergent priorities and capacities of local governments in navigating the challenges posed by immigration.

Factors Driving Variation

This dissertation identified several key drivers of variation in municipal actions: political conditions, socioeconomic context, cooperative relations, mayors as policy entrepreneur, information as a action trigger and municipal capacity.

Political Conditions: Initially, political conditons like local poltical competition, incumbency and partisanship have impact on municipalities decision to act or the magnitude of actions they plan. However, political conditions' impact started to diminish in the period of 2019-2021. Political factors became less significant for the development of policies.

Structural Conditions: Socioeconomic development of a locality almost exclusively affects policy preferences and action initiation at local level. Municipalities in socioeconomically more developed areas tend to take action to respond immigration. Additionally, administrative

capacity of a municipality facilitates actions to be taken. Demographic challenges of host-immigrant ratio also indicates a significant factor that shape the local policy preferences.

Cooperative Relations: Collaboration with national and international actors, including NGOs and IOs, catalyzed municipal actions by providing financial resources, technical expertise, and capacity-building opportunities. Cooperation also facilitated the diffusion of practices. Municipal capacity is a key issue in responding immigration related matters. In contexts like Turkey where the central government tutelage over municipalities is strong, municipalities are dependent on central governments' budgetary decisions. Because central government in Turkey does not support municipalities financially to accommodate immigrants, municipalities resorted to third parties to enable policy actions and expand their options.

Mayors as Policy Entrepreneurs: Mayors played a key role in spearheading for change in policy across time and affecting the political environment in their cities. Mayors' involvement in the policies demonstrated that there was variation not only within a defined space but also time which shifts policies of municipalities. In the cases investigated for this dissertation, metropolitan municipal mayors acted as entrepreneurs to initiate change in policy activity in their locality despite counterproductive factors like their party's and the constituents' stance.

Information as a policy change trigger: Information is a critical factor in policy development. Municipal policy actions to accommodate immigrants is no exception. Based on the fieldwork conducted for this dissertation, it is possible to suggest that informational gaps or introduction of new information played a key role in municipal action development.

Theoretical Contributions

This dissertation contributes to the literature on local policymaking and migration studies by highlighting the agency of municipalities in shaping immigrant policies and influencing broader immigration governance. It challenges the perception of local governments as mere implementers of national directives, demonstrating their proactive and, at times, divergent roles. Furthermore, municipalities either reach or takes transformative actions to shape their communities and actively target an incoming population to solve their problems or formulate innovative measures to integrate them into their communities. Although municipalities are increasingly recognized as key actors, their role remains under-researched, particularly in administratively centralized contexts like Turkey.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Turkish central government tends to perceive municipalities as extensions of national authority, using them as auxiliary institutions during crises. This was particularly evident in the early stages of the Syrian refugee crisis. However, this dissertation demonstrates that municipalities have been able to develop their own policy actions and carve out distinct roles even within administratively and legally ambiguous environments. Municipalities have shown resilience by adapting administratively, financially, and politically to evolving circumstances.

To better understand municipal actions, this dissertation develops a typology of municipal immigrant policies – spanning integrationist, isolationist, humanitarian, and rights-based orientations – offering a framework for analyzing local responses in other national contexts. This typology also facilitates a deeper investigation into the influence of political, structural, and relational factors on municipal policies in Turkey. While this typology emerged

inductively, it is supported by existing literature and remains broad enough to comprehensively categorize municipal actions.

Formulation of this typology and investigation of problem areas proved that local immigrant policies are far from being affected by a single factor but on the contrary a conglomeration of factors should be considered to better understand how policies are shaped at local level. Although political factors are significant in many cases, they are not solely explanatory in which direction or approach a municipality will respond immigration. Furthermore, municipal responses may change over time but these changes are not mere results of political changes in the society. On the contrary, as this dissertation shows, municipalities responds to structural changes and formulate their policies, in the long term, for more transformative measures that would enable local communities to embrace a newly coming population.

Additionally, this dissertation contributes to municipal immigrant policy discussions by initiating a systematic categorization of municipal actions in Turkey. While similar classifications exist in European and North American migration studies, Turkey's case has lacked such an attempt. Despite its limitations, this research aims to stimulate further scholarly discussion and encourage additional typological analyses in future studies. Although there are several approaches to how to categorize local government actions, for example cultural, political, economical, ethnic, etc. I tried to develop a policy oriented perspective to create a typology and categories of actions to map out what conditions create such typology and how local government response change over time.

Finally, the findings highlight the importance of examining temporal dynamics in policy responses, as mentioned multiple times even in this conclusion. The gradual convergence of municipal actions toward integrationist and rights-based approaches suggests that prolonged exposure to immigration fosters policy normalization and innovation, regardless of political factors. This also means that municipalities lean towards transformative rather than reactive actions. By being transformative, municipalities mobilize their resources and demonstrate their agency of how potentially influential they could be on the community life. Although reactive actions are more expected to occur in the earlier periods of a time of change as it had happened since mass arrivals to Turkey. However, municipalities, for now, seems to embrace their transformative agency and take measures to prepare their communities for potential changes. The transformative stance also reveals itself in how municipalities may turn pragmatic, as widely defined in the literature, rather than partisan.

This study's dataset reveals a trend in which municipalities, initially influenced by political considerations, increasingly adopt pragmatic approaches over time. While political factors lose significance over time, municipalities got more interested in the problem itself rather than political conditions that surrounds the policy problem. Of course, to demonstrate more crystally clear how political conditions may affect policy preferences, it is required to investigate a longer period rather than a short period of time. Yet, this dissertation was able to create a typology that would help understand other cases rapid and vast immigrations to unprepared countries, which, unfortunately might be the case in near future.

A final contribution of this dissertation is the creation of a dataset on municipal actions, a rare endeavor even in broader migration literature. Systematically collected data on municipal-

level policy actions remain scarce. By assembling this dataset, this research addresses a critical gap and provides a foundation for future studies on local governance and migration.

Policy Implications

The study's insights hold practical relevance for policymakers and practitioners. First, enhancing the capacity of municipalities, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, is essential for equitable and effective local policy actions. Targeted investments in institutional resources can enable municipalities to address complex policy challenges more comprehensively.

Second, fostering intergovernmental and cross-sectoral collaboration can amplify the impact of municipal actions. By creating platforms for knowledge exchange and joint problem-solving, national and international actors can support local governments in developing sustainable and context-sensitive immigrant policies.

Finally, the findings underscore the need for a balanced approach to immigrant integration that accounts for the perspectives of both immigrant and host communities. Municipalities should prioritize policies that promote social cohesion and address underlying socioeconomic disparities to mitigate tensions and foster inclusive urban environments.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this dissertation provides a detailed account of municipal actions in Turkey, it is not without limitations. The reliance on publicly available data introduces potential biases, as some municipal actions may be underreported or omitted due to political sensitivities.

Additionally, the absence of demographic data on immigrant populations, particularly at district level, limits the ability to assess how specific characteristics; such as ethnicity, education level, or employment status; influence local policy choices. Even the number of immigrants registered for each district is not available. Therefore, the analysis done for this research lacks demographics as a potentially significant independent variable. Another missing part in the picture is immigrant agency. The role of immigrant agency in shaping municipal actions also remains underexplored in this research.

Future research could address these limitations by incorporating field studies, ethnographic methods, and more data sources. Comparative analyses across different national contexts would also enrich our understanding of the conditions under which local governments adopt specific immigrant policy actions and types. Furthermore, exploring the role of immigrant agency in shaping municipal policies offers a promising avenue for research, highlighting the reciprocal dynamics between policy beneficiaries and implementers.

The findings of this dissertation underscore the resilience and adaptability of municipalities in Turkey in responding to the challenges and opportunities posed by immigration. While national narratives often dominate discussions on immigration, this research demonstrates the pivotal role of local governments in shaping the lived experiences of immigrants and host communities alike. By embracing their roles as policy innovators and mediators, municipalities have the potential to transform immigration from a source of contention into an opportunity to build inclusive urban conditions.

In conclusion, the variation in municipal responses to immigration in Turkey reflects broader tensions and opportunities inherent in local governance. As cities worldwide grapple

with the complexities of migration, the insights from this research offer valuable lessons for fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable urban life for all.

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