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Why bother? Local bureaucrats' motivations for providing social assistance for refugees

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ABSTRACT

What motivates bureaucrats to integrate refugees into welfare services even when they do not have any legal obligation to do so? How do they decide which services to include refugees and which not? Based on 61 semi-structured interviews with local municipal bureaucrats in Istanbul, and representatives of humanitarian agencies that collaborate with local municipalities I find that bureaucrats choose to cater different types of services to refugees depending on their motivation for extending services. Most municipal bureaucrats initiate cash, food, and in-kind goods transfers to refugees with extrinsic motivations – with the aspiration of appeasing the voters in their locality and protecting the mayor from a possible electoral backlash. Contrastingly, bureaucrats with professional motivations conduct needs assessments and initiate service and program development efforts in response to the specific needs of refugees in their municipalities. These findings are significant as they illustrate that local bureaucrats' motivations for service extension play a great role in explaining the variation in types of services that refugees can access and terms and conditions of access. They also demonstrate that inclusive distributive behavior toward refugees does not always emanate from bureaucrats' motivations of helping and benefiting refugee populations but can be instigated by extrinsic motivations.

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Introduction

In the past years, we witnessed many mayors from across the world taking pro-refugee stances and actions against anti-immigration rulings and decisions made at the national level. Although most of the media spotlight focuses exclusively on mayors when they stand with refugees in their jurisprudence, in the background of the mayors' appearances, there is always a team of bureaucrats who make decisions on what needs to be done, when, and how. As Lewis and Ramakrishnan (2007) say, in practice, local issues about immigrants and refugees can rarely rise to the notice of elected officials such as mayors, and many decisions about which refugees get what and how are left to the

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discretion of local public servants and bureaucrats. Especially in places where legal regulations on refugees' integration into social welfare structures are absent, or where there are loopholes, local bureaucrats are found to make the first move to integrate refugees and immigrants into existing welfare services despite refugee communities' lack of legal status and political rights and partisan contention over the issue (Gleeson 2014; Jones-Correa 2008; Lewis and Ramakrishnan 2007; Marrow 2009; Williamson 2018).

Deriving from these local practices this paper asks: What kinds of motivations do bureaucrats have behind their effort to deliver services to an out-group such as refugees? And how do different kinds of motivations shape bureaucrats' decisions they set about conditions of refugees' access to services – what services are made available to refugees and how? The available research that studies bureaucracies' effect on immigration and integration outcomes at the local level suggests that street-level bureaucrats' commitment to professional values relating to public service drives their positive responses toward refugees (Jones-Correa 2008; Lewis and Ramakrishnan 2007; Marrow 2009; Swinkels and van Meijl 2020). Yet, these studies provide a very limited perspective on the puzzle in question because, first, they fall short of explaining how different motivations for public service lead to different sets of decisions that bureaucrats make daily about the types of services they cater and eligibility. Second, this literature is based mainly on experiences in Europe and North America where bureaucrat impartiality is a widely respected norm and political control whether put forth by elected officials, political parties, and the public over bureaucratic decisions for including and excluding newcomers is relatively weak or absent.

The potential impact of bureaucracies on migration outcomes in the Global South is mostly discarded as bureaucracies in the non-Western world are found to lack qualities associated with Western bureaucracies such as impartiality, bipartisanship, and professionalism. They are often considered party apparatuses filled with partisan appointments and patronage hires and therefore presumed to distribute mainly via clientelist networks (Colonnelli, Prem, and Teso 2020; Oliveros and Schuster 2018). For this very reason, bureaucracies in the Global South are not expected to develop unique responses to immigrants and refugees outside the political parties' influence. This creates a critical gap in the literature because the generalizability of the findings of these studies originating from the West to the developing world where 74 percent of the 103 million forcibly displaced people worldwide¹ live is questionable given the differences in the bureaucratic structures (Grindle 2012; Toral 2019).

This paper aims to fill in this gap by focusing on how local municipal bureaucrats' public service motivations shape types of and eligibility for municipal services catered to Syrian refugees living in Istanbul where more than 1.5 million refugees are estimated to live scattered across the province's districts.² Turkey has a top-down approach to migration governance (Danış and Nazlı 2019). The legal framework about refugees delegates little to no roles for local actors of governance. In fact, most of the refugees in Istanbul live in extreme poverty (Cuevas et al. 2019) and many rely on social assistance and support provided by the district-level local municipalities to meet their basic needs (Erdogan 2020). In the absence of legal regulations and standards, the decisions about what types of social assistance are provided by municipalities for which group of refugees are often made on a discretionary basis by local municipal bureaucrats, most of whom are partisan and patronage hires and do not have a formal education in migration or even social work (Balcioğlu 2021).

Based on 61 semi-structured interviews with municipal bureaucrats and representatives of international and non-governmental humanitarian organizations that partner with local municipalities, in this paper, I find that bureaucrats choose to cater the different types of services to refugees depending on their motivation for extending services. The interview data demonstrates that most municipal bureaucrats initiate cash, food, and in-kind goods transfers to refugees with extrinsic motivations – with the aspiration of appeasing the voters in their locality and protecting the mayor from a possible electoral backlash. Through these transfers, they claim to help refugees with paying for their basic needs such as rent, prevent them from becoming homeless, and take up street work such as begging, and eventually render refugees less visible (or completely invisible) to the host population so that the voters are not disturbed by refugees' presence. Contrastingly, bureaucrats with professional motivations conduct needs assessments and initiate service and program development efforts in response to the specific needs of refugees in their municipalities. I discovered that most of the bureaucrats with professional motivations had been working closely with humanitarian staff from international and non-governmental organizations since the early days of refugees' arrival in their districts.

This paper aims to make three main contributions to the interdisciplinary studies of migration. First, it connects works of literature from different disciplines by bridging literature on intergroup helping from social psychology, public service motivation from public administration, and bureaucratic incorporation of migrants and refugees from political science and sociology. Building on this interdisciplinary theoretical foundation, I examine and present findings about the relationship between bureaucrats' motivations for service provision to refugees and their choices of services. Motivations matter because they play a major role in the adoption of different discretionary practices including policies of care and control (Perna 2019), and such differences in policy and service preferences yield different integration outcomes. Therefore, understanding the motivations behind bureaucrats' preferences for one service over another is crucial to discerning the methods to tap into the motivations that lead to the set of policies with the most effective integration outcomes for both refugees and host communities.

Second, findings present a nuanced view of positive distributive responses that bureaucracies initiate for refugees. They illustrate that bureaucrats do not always extend welfare services to help and benefit the refugee communities. Bureaucrats have complex, multifaceted, and sometimes conflicting motivations that reflect their ties to different networks, ideologies, and formal and informal institutional arrangements. Hence, their motivation for extending services can also be extrinsic – aiming to primarily benefit the mayor, themselves, and the host community.

Third, and last, by focusing on a non-Western context, this paper attempts to put the spotlight on a variable whose role is understudied in contexts like Turkey where due to excessively dominant national rhetoric on refugees, highly centralized state and bureaucratic structures, and political control over bureaucracies the role of local bureaucratic actors in migration governance is underestimated. All in all, I contend that the findings presented in this paper have implications for the refugee-hosting countries in the Global South where partisan control on bureaucracies is high, policies regarding migration and asylum are made and implemented in a top-down manner, and settlement of refugees is relatively recent.

Motivational bases of service provision for refugees

Motivations are psychological forces that drive willingness to act (Esteve and Schuster 2019; Park and Word 2012). Motivational bases of public service are studied across disciplines including political science, sociology, public administration, and social psychology. These studies at large focus on the implications of bureaucrats' motivations for public service provision in terms of service quality, target groups, attraction to policy-making, and accountability (Cammatt and Şaşmaz 2022; Deci and Ryan 2002; Kearney and Sinha 1988; Lewis and Ramakrishnan 2007; Marrow 2009; Perry and Wise 1990; van Leeuwen and Täuber 2011). In all four disciplines, motivations are examined under two main groups: intrinsic motivations driven by internal fulfillment and rewards such as a sense of accomplishment and duty of a public employee, and extrinsic motivations driven by external aspirations and rewards such as pay raise, job security, promotion, etc.

The conventional public administration literature defines public service motivation as an intrinsic motivation rooted in individuals' desire to serve the public and discusses the concept as reliance on internal rewards (Perry and Wise 1990). They focus on intrinsic and pro-social motivations and reveal that public service employees provide more 'effort out of concern for the impact of that effort on a valued social service' compared to employees in the private sector (Francois 2000). Public servants' inclination for social service is also observed to be driven by adherence to professional norms and values³, which encompasses a commitment to accountability, fairness, and legal compliance; and concern for the well-being of clients and stakeholders (Bøgh Andersen and Holm Pedersen 2012; French and Emerson 2014; Kearney and Sinha 1988; Park and Rainey 2012). It is suggested that professionalism in the public sector increases bureaucratic responsiveness as professional officials possess the skills to respond to conflicting interests competently and neutrally (Kearney and Sinha 1988). However, in contrast to the studies of intrinsic motivations, implications of extrinsic motivations in the public sector are seldom studied except for a limited number of studies that examine external rewards' crowding out effect on intrinsic motivations of public sector employees (Kroll and Porumbescu 2019).

Whether and how different types of motivations influence bureaucrats' decisions for catering to out-groups such as refugees and immigrants? In the past two decades, a good number of scholarly works that study different forms of formal and informal bureaucratic arrangements and actions that enable the incorporation of newcomers into available social and public services despite the absence of political arrangements and will has emerged (Lewis and Ramakrishnan 2007; Marrow 2009; Swinkels and van Meijl 2020). These works provide supportive evidence of the positive role of intrinsic motivations particularly professional work ethic in local enforcement of inclusive policies towards refugees and immigrants. They illustrate that street-level bureaucrats across sectors such as teachers and police officers demonstrate professional ethos when developing positive creative responses to newcomers. Extrinsic motivations, on the other hand, are mostly conferred concerning negative bureaucratic responses toward refugees and immigrants (Ambrosini 2013; Ambrosini and Caneva 2012; Ataç 2019; Mourad 2020). Local officials are observed to exclude immigrants and refugees or restrict their access to

services in response to public demand, protect general interest, maintain public safety and security, and obtain media attention to their locality.

From a different vein, in their recent study of health professionals in Lebanon, Cammett and Şaşmaz (2022) illustrate that Lebanese doctors provide equal and sometimes superior quality health care to Syrians out of extrinsic motivations as they want to maintain good terms with international humanitarian organizations because first, these organizations provide financial and operational resources for their health centers and second, they seek to contain the spread of contagious diseases among the host population. They root their argument in social psychology literature, which argues that extrinsic motivations can also provoke helping behavior because people's motivations for helping out-groups are in general different from why they help in-groups (van Leeuwen and Täuber 2011). Often inter-group helping signifies great social inequalities, and it benefits the providing group more than the receiving group. According to Nadler and Halabi (2006), the act of helping sets a power dynamic between the provider and the receiver, and providers are typically observed to act with extrinsic motivations – presuming that the act of giving will benefit the provider group as much as (or more than) the receiver group. Following this line of argument, this paper's findings also indicate that the majority of the local municipal bureaucrats in Istanbul act with extrinsic motivations when they start distributing assistance to refugees. They seek appeasement of the electorate through the social assistance they provide to refugees.

In addition, and more importantly, this paper illustrates bureaucrats' motivations for extending welfare services and goods also shape what and how services and goods are made available to refugees. As briefly mentioned earlier the forced migration literature associates intrinsic motivations with positive distributive behavior and extrinsic motivations with restrictive responses for refugees. In contrast, the findings presented in this paper demonstrate that the relationship between service provider motivations and service preferences is more nuanced. Depending on the type of services and goods provided, the conditions for, and the method of provision, welfare provision may consist of policies of care or control (Perna 2019). Therefore, examining and understanding the motivations behind service providers' efforts to include refugees in welfare services is pivotal for demystifying and preventing adverse integration outcomes.

Methodology and data collection

This paper draws on larger research that investigates the variation in local municipal responses to refugees in urban settings. From September 2018 to May 2019, to map municipal services catered to Syrian refugees in different districts in Istanbul and understand the factors that incentivize and hinder municipalities' decision to cater to refugees, I conducted extensive fieldwork involving all 39 district-level local municipalities in Istanbul. The data set employed in this paper consists of 61 semi-structured interviews of which 51 are with municipal bureaucrats (local bureaucrats including deputy mayors, department heads, department staff, and frontline workers), 10 are with representatives of international and non-governmental organizations from the humanitarian sector that collaborate with local municipalities, notes from various meetings and workshops I participated in, and observations collected at municipalities. Six out of 61 interviews are phone interviews. All the remaining interviews were conducted face-to-face.

The data analysis was conducted in two main steps, which allowed for identifying the overlaps between the motivations for service provision. In the first phase, the data was coded to map municipalities' services for Syrian refugees. At the time of the data collection for this paper, no ready-to-use data sets with information on the amount and scope of such services were available. Hence, I first-handedly visited 33 out of 39 district municipalities and had phone interviews with the representatives from the remaining six municipalities to map out all the services related to assistance and support that were made available to refugees by the local municipalities. Except for four municipalities where it was very explicitly conveyed to me that there was no social assistance available to refugees, I observed a great level of variation in the types of social assistance delivered to refugees at 35 municipalities. I categorized these services into two: distributive and orientation/integration services. Distributive services consist of the redistribution of cash, food, and other in-kind goods such as clothes, household items, etc. Orientation/integration services on the other hand include services that target refugees, such as language courses, vocational classes, legal consultation services, help desks, etc. I additionally divided both categories into two: one-shot and regular services (See [Figures 1 and 2](#)). In this step I also coded different types of partnerships local municipalities have with the IOs and (I)NGOs of the humanitarian sector. When coding for partnerships with civil society I only included collaborations with IOs and INGOs such as UNHCR and Blue Cross and professional large-scale NGOs who are supported by IOs and INGOs, employ professionally trained and skilled persons, but operate at the local level (Sunata and Tosun 2019). Collaborations with organizations without expertise in migration were excluded as the main goal of the coding exercise was to identify know-how transfers about migration management.

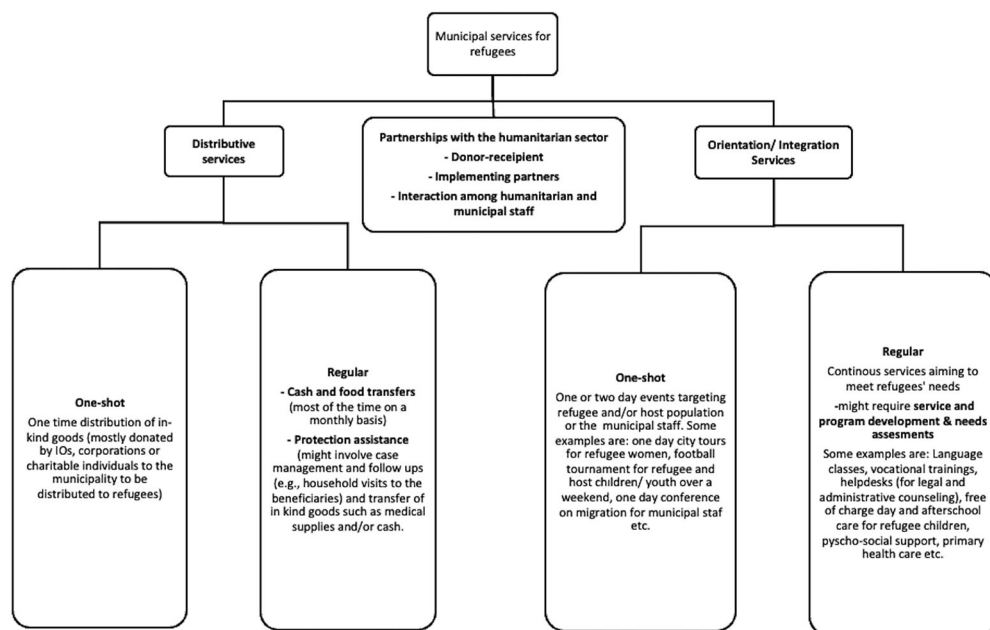


Figure 1. Codes for municipal services for refugees.

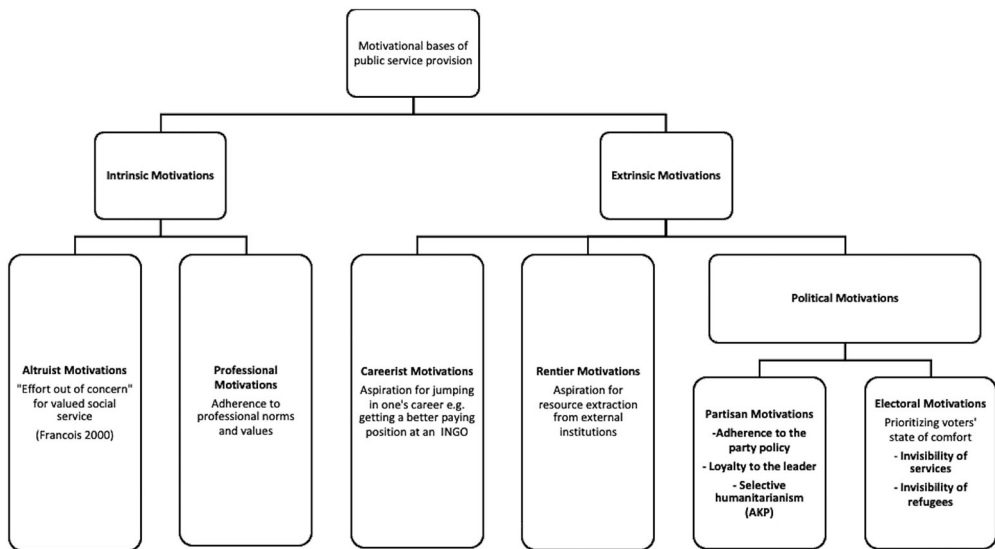


Figure 2. Codes for bureaucrats' motivations.

In the second step, I re-coded the same data set this time using codes for different motivations. During the interviews, the respondents were asked the question: 'We know that you are not legally obligated to provide for refugees living in your district. (I also understand that the services you cater to refugees put you in a difficult position first with the public, because you receive backlash from them, also for legal and budgetary reasons.) Despite this (all the disincentives) why do you (keep on) cater(ing) to refugees?' Depending on the answers received follow-up questions about how they managed the backlash from the public (in general and during the election period), whether they had any conflicts with the mayor about extending services to refugees, and how they convinced the mayor despite the risk of electoral discontent were also asked. Respondents' answers to these questions were coded for intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Sub-codes for intrinsic motivations are derived from the public administration literature on public service motivation. For the sub-codes for extrinsic motivations, I benefited from the literature on forced migration in the Middle East and added more codes down the line as the data presented more material. The coding exercise for extrinsic motivations was relatively more inductive compared to coding for intrinsic motivations because extrinsic motivations were observed to be more context-bounded compared to intrinsic motivations.

Case selection: partisan municipal bureaucracies and refugee incorporation in Istanbul

Turkey's highly centralized political tradition has always been conservative about sharing the central government's overwhelming authority with municipalities, say Danış and Nazlı (2019), and its asylum system is not immune to the influence of this tradition. The legal framework for the long-term and temporary protection of refugees in Turkey includes little to no roles for municipalities. In addition, the Municipalities

Law has substantial loopholes related to social services and assistance to be catered to non-citizens.⁴ The absence of legal regulations also prevents municipalities from seeking budget increases for hosting refugees. In such legal ambiguity, many municipalities on their own come up with solutions to extend their social services to refugees – amplifying the significance of bureaucratic decision-making in the process.

This paper focuses on Istanbul where about 1.5 million refugees are estimated to live. Although the refugee population is more clustered in some districts of the province, it is possible to say that in all 39 districts – there is a sizeable number of refugees (See Figure 3).

Istanbul has a two-tier municipal structure.⁵ Every five years, in addition to selecting a provincial mayor for the metropolitan municipality of Istanbul, constituents also elect a district mayor and a district-level municipal council. These district-level local municipalities operate independently of the metropolitan municipality and have many responsibilities such as implementing social assistance programs and supplying various kinds of provisions to residents living in their districts. Provisions include but are not limited to, food boxes, winter clothes, household supplies, newborn supplies, funeral support services, free cleaning, and transportation services for the disabled and elderly. Some municipalities establish food banks, where they allow residents in need to shop with ATM cards loaded and distributed by the municipality. Some also do one-time and/or yearlong monthly cash transfers for families in need.

Whether how much, and which refugees can benefit from these assistance programs and provisions are in general decided on the go by municipal bureaucrats at the social service (or similar) departments. The larger research reveals that the first initiative to start social assistance for refugees is rarely made by the mayors (Balcioglu 2021). In the absence of legal arrangements, local municipal bureaucrats in Istanbul lead the initiative and use discretion for incorporating incoming refugees into municipal social assistance programs. They also make the decisions concerning assistance type and eligibility – which refugees benefit from what types of services and if the municipality will invest in new programs that target refugees. Also, it bears emphasizing that ambiguity surrounding the municipality's role in service provision to refugees also causes a great level of variation based on bureaucratic discretion about which refugee groups are served by different municipalities. Although most municipalities primarily cater to Syrian refugees registered in Istanbul due to their high numbers compared to other

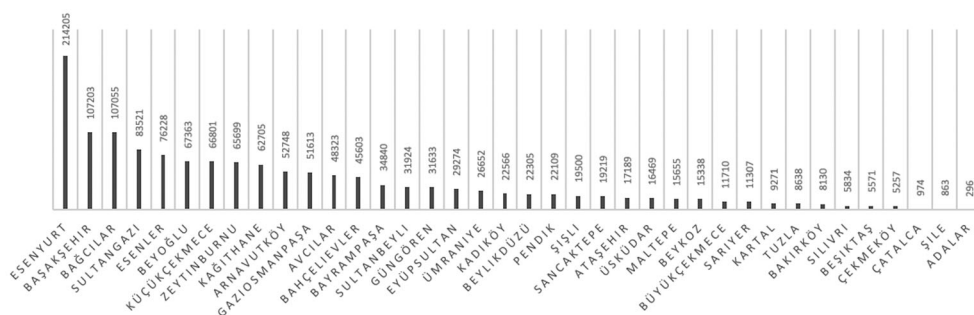


Figure 3. Refugee population per districts of Istanbul (in absolute numbers).

groups of refugees, I also encountered municipalities that incorporate refugees of other nationalities, unregistered refugees, and refugees registered elsewhere than in Istanbul.

Note that the local municipal bureaucracies in Turkey portray a very different picture than the conventional description of bureaucracies that are characterized by impartiality, bipartisanship, and technocracy. In Turkey, political and partisan control of local bureaucracies including municipalities are very high and practices such as party and patronage hire into local bureaucracies are prevalent (Kemahlioglu 2011; Kemahlioğlu and Bayer 2021; Laebens and Öztürk 2021). Thus, many of the bureaucrats who were interviewed as part of this research were partisan hires from the mayors' patronage networks I find based on bureaucrats' statements about their prior professional experience before starting their current job. Most of these bureaucrats also had formal education neither in migration nor in social work. Whereas despite the breach of the rule of meritocracy and the prevalence of patronage and partisan hiring, I refer to the municipal staff interviewed for this study as bureaucrats, as almost all my respondents were on paper public servants, but more importantly their job descriptions very well fit the definition of a street-level bureaucrat (Lipsky 2010; Meyers and Vorsanger 2013).⁶

Such a high prevalence of the practice of partisan recruitment into municipalities might lead to thinking that municipal bureaucrats' decisions would be strictly bounded by the influence of political parties. At the time this research was conducted, among 39 local municipalities of Istanbul, 25 were governed by the AKP (acronym in Turkish for the Justice and Development Party) mayors and 14 were governed by CHP (acronym in Turkish for the Republican People's Party). Based on the partisanship hypothesis one would presume bureaucrats from AKP municipalities to be more inclined to start and provide more for refugees relative to the bureaucrats from CHP municipalities as AKP has always had a relatively pro-refugee attitude in comparison to CHP (Sasmaz 2021). This was only partially found to be true as the findings of the larger research show that AKP municipalities were observed to distribute more to refugees, yet there is a great level of intra-party variation in municipalities' decision to cater to refugees or not as well as in the types and amounts of assistance they distribute to refugees (Balcioglu 2021).

Bureaucrats' motivations for catering to refugees and service preferences

Extrinsic motivations

Partisanship and lip service

When asked why they bother providing social services to refugees even though they do not have a legal obligation, local bureaucrats frequently referred to their responsibility to be benevolent and their duty to help persons in need. Although such expressions can be interpreted as altruistic motivations rooted in public service motivation at first glance, it would be misleading to think about these statements as independent from bureaucrats' political views at large. I find that many local bureaucrats, particularly the ones who are employed at the AKP municipalities gloss over their partisan motivations as altruistic and pro-social motives. Indeed, several bureaucrats indicated that their commitment to the central party policy and devotion to President Erdogan's mission of protecting the

needy are the main reasons they cater to refugees. The below quote illustrates how partisan motivations are expressed through altruistic narratives:

All the services we cater here [to refugees] are because our President wishes so. He is our leader; whatever he wishes ... The law may not permit but these people are residing in this district. They have a state ID. I have a responsibility to provide for them. (District 18, Respondent 1, December 2018)

Since the early days of Syrian's arrival into the country, AKP has strategically used the 'Ansar and Muhajir' rhetoric to bolster its policy of 'selective humanitarianism' that portrays the host community as benevolent helpers and the refugees as their Muslim brothers and sisters in dire need for protection (Akcapar and Simsek 2018). This rhetoric was often reinforced during the interviews. One respondent said: 'We are taking an initiative for these people [refugees] because our state does. If the president tells us that we need to take care of these people because we are Ansars, we do it.' (District 21, Respondent 1, AKP, November 2018)

Yet, analysis of the relationship between the motivations for public service and bureaucrats' choices of services reveals that partisanship in practice is very loosely associated with refugees' incorporation into municipal assistance programs if at all. As far as it goes, I find that many local bureaucrats from AKP municipalities adopt the 'Ansar and Muhajir' rhetoric as lip service.⁷ As illustrated in the above quotes, these bureaucrats think that following President Erdogan's lead is an obligation and therefore they must 'look after' refugees. Yet, given the absence of a legal framework and clear instructions from the party about what needs to be done, many bureaucrats choose to cut corners about how they do it. These bureaucrats with partisan motivations organize low-cost activities that require minimum effort on their parts such as one-time distribution of donations (e.g. blankets, school supplies, diapers, etc.) and one-day recreational activities such as trips to historical sites or sports games. These kinds of one-shot activities provide bureaucrats with the material to advertise to the party how their municipalities comply with the party policy without making the organizational investment and commitment to cater to refugees.

Electoral appeasement and reputation building for the mayor through cash and in-kind distributions

The interviews reveal that independent of their partisan engagements bureaucrats' motivations to incorporate refugees into municipal assistance services are primarily rooted in bureaucrats' desire to benefit their in-groups, appeasing the electorate in their locality. They consider municipal social assistance provided to refugees as essential for 'reinstalling law and order' in their districts that they think were disturbed by refugees' arrival. Hence, bureaucrats believe that they protect the mayors' reputation for governance in the eyes of the voters. It is important to note here that electoral volatility is pretty low in Turkey (Yardımcı-Geyikçi, 2015). In the latest local elections in 2019, from among 39 districts of Istanbul, only three switched parties. Then, why are bureaucrats concerned about appeasing the electorate and protecting the mayors' reputations one might rightfully ask. I find that municipal bureaucrats are deeply concerned about the electorate's view of the municipality and even more so of the mayor. Even though it was not explicitly stated in the interviews, this concern could be traced to patronage

recruitment into municipal bureaucracies being very common in Turkey⁸ and the re-election of the mayor who is their patron may be critical for their job security.

From the standpoint of local bureaucrats, whereas positive distributive behavior does not necessarily translate into political endorsements for the municipality and the mayor, the occurrence of negative incidents such as the eruption of physical violence between the host and refugee communities are interpreted by the voters as the municipalities and the mayors' impotence for governing. Local bureaucrats claim that they cater to refugees to prevent such incidents and safeguard their agencies and the mayors' eminence for governing. They argue that their services have an instrumental value. They are the means to a 'peaceful end' – the state of 'law and order' where crime rates are low and societal conflicts between the host and refugee populations are under control (Üstübici 2020b). One respondent stated that when the number of refugees reaches a certain level in a district, the municipality must act because nobody wants to see refugees begging on the streets. 'People otherwise can perceive this as a security issue, which is dangerous', they added (District 24, Respondent 1, CHP, December 2018). Similarly, another correspondent claimed that they fixed the district's reputation by distributing assistance to refugees which they asserted decreased 'the illegality' in the district (District 37, Respondent 1, AKP, December 2018).

'Action' in bureaucrats' jargon means the distribution of assistance to meet the immediate needs of the refugees – this could be paying their rent, furnishing their apartments, and doing cash and food transfers (often monthly). Doing so, municipal bureaucrats claimed, prevents refugees from engaging in crime and more importantly from disturbing the host population. One respondent said:

Look, if we do not distribute to them, we encourage them to commit a crime. Persons without the means to satisfy their basic needs can do anything. They can easily harm others. You can think of our services as a preventive measure against possible societal conflicts. (District 37, Respondent 1, AKP, December 2018)

The decision to introduce social assistance for refugees is a calculated one: local bureaucrats think that the benefits of their services outweigh the adverse reactions and the accusations of favoritism for Syrians that they receive from the host population. At all the municipalities, I was told that they were receiving negative reactions from the host communities about social assistance distribution to refugees – about the possibility of distribution if they are not distributing already, with accusations of favoritism for refugees. Yet, many bureaucrats stated that they can contain this backlash directed towards them first because they know the community and how to talk to them and second because their services have a conducive role in preventing these reactions from turning into larger dismay against the municipal organization and the mayor.

How much and what is catered to refugees is critical to making sure that these services do not attract more refugees to settle in districts while enabling bureaucrats to exert control over the refugee population. Because these bureaucrats' main goal when catering to refugees is appeasing the voters, they rarely engage in service and program development that considers the needs of refugees. Their preferred services are cash and in-kind goods transfers through which they can render the refugee population invisible to the host population. A major aspect of maintaining 'law and order' is making sure that both the refugees and the municipal services catered to them are invisible to the

host population. For instance, many municipalities use no logo vans when they distribute in-kind goods to refugee households and seclude buildings where they cater to host and refugee communities (Üstübcü 2020). Bureaucrats stated that invisibility is critical for them to be able to handle the adverse reactions directed at them and refugees by the host population. One respondent, who oversaw the sub-unit for migration management in their municipality said:

The host population in this district is not well-off either. Every time one of them [from the host population] is turned down for assistance, they get up in arms. But now that we [the sub-unit for migration management] are out of their sight, our job actually got easier. [...] We do not even have a signboard outside this building. But honestly having this secluded space is the best for my friends [refugees] living here. (District 38, Respondent 2, AKP, December 2018)

In their interactions with refugees, local bureaucrats use their discretion on eligibility for social assistance as a tool for discipline. According to Lipsky (2010), among the most common characteristics of street-level bureaucrats are the personal relationships they establish with their clients and their role as agents of social control. Street-level bureaucrats use their discretionary power to exert control over their clients' behavior and attitudes. They signal the 'suitable attitudes' that the clients need to adopt to be considered for eligibility. A similar dynamic is present between the local municipal bureaucrats and the refugees in Istanbul. Local bureaucrats build personal relationships with refugees. Through daily personal acquaintances, they get to know the families in need. And, in the absence of standard criteria for eligibility, they leverage this personal information to exert control over the same families as illustrated in the below quote:

I have been working with refugees for more than two years now. I know everything about each and every refugee in this town. I know their faces and names; where they live; how many children they have; and even how their children are doing at school. I am the one who gets to decide who is going to get what and when. Refugees living in my district know that I am always fair to them. Two years ago, when I was new at this job, they used to contest my decisions. Now, things have changed, and we have built trust towards each other. But you know what: I sometimes doubt that this trust is a good thing. Like, if I give these people a bottle of poison and tell them that it is medicine and they should drink it; they would, without a doubt. (District 38, Respondent 2, AKP, December 2018)

The same bureaucrats are also skeptical of engaging in partnerships with IOs and (I)NGOs of the humanitarian sector. They are willing to receive donations from these organizations but distant from the idea of working together. When asked about partnerships one respondent said:

We do not sign protocols with civil society [means international organizations]. [...] We do not need to out-service what we do here. I do not like it when people meddle in my work. We benefit from their donations such as food baskets, but do not accept civil society personnel here. Neither the mayor wants it. We do not want anyone to stick their nose into our business. Cacophony is not good for anyone. (District 18, Respondent 2, AKP, December 2018)

The reasons for such skepticism might be related to national-level factors and/or bureaucratic shirking. The government's aggressive 'burden-sharing' rhetoric against international humanitarian actors might be breeding distrust towards these organizations

among local bureaucrats. In addition, one respondent from a national non-governmental organization said that the rampant environment of distrust in the country further consolidated in the aftermath of the coup attempt in 2016 makes it harder for them to get appointments from municipal executives (February 2019). On the other hand, local bureaucrats might avoid working with IOs and NGOs because these organizations impose higher standards of care and an additional layer of monitoring (Cammett and Şaşmaz 2022)

Intrinsic motivations

Professional motivations, partnerships with the humanitarian sector, and program development

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to say there are no exceptions to such distaste for partnerships with IOs and (I)NGOs. Conversely, I observed some spill-over effects in bureaucrats' willingness to establish partnerships with IOs and (I)NGOs.⁹ I find that a few bureaucrats who had taken the initiative of partnering with international humanitarian organizations early on led the way for other bureaucrats and municipalities to do the same. I conducted several interviews with representatives of a national civil society organization funded by the UNHCR and was partners with 12 local municipalities in Istanbul at the time of the interviews and asked them how they could get so many municipalities on board despite prevalent skepticism about working with non-governmental organizations. They told me they had started with small pilot projects with a few municipalities and built trust over time. Some of these small projects later turned into larger-scale partnerships. The head of this organization explained the process in the following words:

Then started the spill-over effect. Bureaucrats whom we work with recommend us and our work to other municipalities. Municipalities that refused our partnership offers early on, now say that they would love to do it. (February 2019)

These bureaucrats who had taken the initiative of establishing partnerships with IOs and (I)NGOs at the outset of refugees' arrival into their districts when nobody else was doing it, strongly emphasized their professional duty to serve persons in need when asked about the reasons why they choose to cater to refugees. Compared to the bureaucrats with extrinsic motivations, they prioritize the well-being of their clients (both Turkish and Syrian nationals) over their sentiments and attitudes about refugees' presence in the country and over partisan and electoral concerns about the municipalities and the mayors' reputation for governance. One respondent for instance expressed their disapproval of the government's open border and immigration policy and then emphasized that this does not make an excuse for them to discriminate against refugees (District 23, Respondent 3, CHP, April 2019). They engage in program and service development reckoning their clients' diverging needs including refugees. Some also include refugees in decision-making processes.

Different from their peers who acted with motivation for electoral appeasement and expressed a general distaste for partnerships with the humanitarian sector, because they would not want the IOs to 'meddle in', bureaucrats with professional motivations asserted a strong interest in partnerships with IOs and (I)NGOs because such

partnerships make their projects less contingent to political turmoil in general. As an example, I asked these bureaucrats if they are concerned about interruption to or cancellation of the programs and services they developed for refugees when and if the mayor changes. One respondent said:

I am not concerned about a possible interruption of services during the election period. [What if the new mayor decides to upend the services they cater to refugees, I asked.] Even if they do that, I think the civil society organizations [IOs and (I)NGOs] that we have been working with for so long would take over all our projects. (District 5, Respondent 1, AKP, October 2018)

This stands in sharp contrast with bureaucrats with extrinsic motivations who explicitly expressed their interest in receiving funding from international agencies even though they have a strong distaste for working together with the humanitarian staff. It might also be helpful to emphasize that during the time of the interviews, only four out of 39 district municipalities were receiving monetary funds from international agencies for their expenses arising from capacity building and service provision for refugees. Hence, bureaucrats' willingness to work closely with the humanitarian staff from IOs and (I)NGOs appears to be the factor that differentiates intrinsic motivations from extrinsic ones about bureaucrats' interest in collaborations with the humanitarian sector.

At most of the municipalities that have partnerships, a team of humanitarian staff from partner organizations was present, sometimes part-time, to facilitate the implementation of services and projects. Bureaucrats stated that working this closely with the humanitarian staff presented them with many learning opportunities, which helped them build know-how about the ways to improve the quality of services they provide and enhance the capacity of their agencies. The below quote from an interview with a mid-level municipal bureaucrat illustrates a strong example of this:

A couple of researchers approached us a while ago about an experiment they want to conduct with families with newborns [with families from the host population]. They had some training modules for the new parents. The idea is that half of the parents receive the training and half don't and they check if the training has an impact on the children's development in the long run. Anyways, we said we would be happy to help them. We assigned two municipal personnel to assist these researchers while they were in the field. These two friends had learned everything about this experiment. Now, we are replicating the same experiment with Syrian families. We translated all the training modules into Arabic. We do this because we care about integration. And I think small children are the best place to start. We will follow their course of social and physical development over the years. This is going to help us better understand the problems – could be related to their physical and mental health and make interventions before it is too late. (District 1, Respondent 1, AKP, October 2018)

Of course, it is not easy to tell whether these bureaucrats have engaged in such partnerships because they have had professional motivations all along, or whether they had started these collaborations with different motivations and their perspectives have evolved. Yet the spill-over effect indicates that the latter is a possibility as it shows that bureaucrats' policy preferences can change. In their study of municipal bureaucracies in Amsterdam and New York, de Grauw and Vermeulen find that bureaucrats' interactions with other governmental and non-governmental actors in their local contexts play a key role in overcoming bureaucratic resistance and inertia for accommodating

immigrants. Similarly, the evidence from the local municipalities in Istanbul indicates a positive relationship among the humanitarian sector- municipality partnerships, professional ethos in public service provision, and service and program development efforts by bureaucrats that recognize and attend to refugees' needs.

Conclusion

This paper argues that municipal bureaucrats' motivations for public service provision shape how and which services they choose to cater to refugees. Its findings contribute to the literature on forced migration in two main ways: First, they illustrate that bureaucrats' positive distributive responses to refugees do not always emanate from altruistic, pro-social, and professional motivations to help and serve refugees in need. Bureaucrats often initiate service provision for refugees out of extrinsic motivations with the aspiration to benefit their ingroup and themselves. In the case of local municipalities in Istanbul by extending municipal social services to refugees local bureaucrats aim to appease the voters living in their locality, build a reputation for governance for the mayor in the eyes of the voters, and perhaps secure their jobs at the municipality in the long term. In addition, bureaucrats' decisions about which services to cater to refugees and how to are made in a manner that fits their motivation – the type of reward that they would like to obtain from the act of extending and developing services to refugees. For instance, bureaucrats with extrinsic motivations prefer providing cash and in-kind aid transfers, because these services allow them to exert control over the refugee population and render them invisible to the host population.

By providing a snapshot of a local bureaucracy from the Global South this paper also aims to add to the very limited scholarly discussion about the effect of bureaucracies on migration outcomes outside the Western world. It presents findings that capture the local political dynamics of bureaucratic decision-making about refugees and intends to go beyond the widely recognized presumption that distribution always benefits the receiver. It acknowledges that frontline service providers have complex, multifaceted, and sometimes conflicting motivations that reflect their ties to different networks and ideologies (Wong et al. 2010). For this very reason, social assistance programs such as cash assistance programs can produce adverse effects and enhance the inequalities between the provider and receiver groups instead of reducing them. When bureaucrats adopt subjective discretionary practices, refugees can easily become objects of subordinate inclusion because they are left out of formal deservingness categories.

As Rosenblatt (2011) suggests understanding the factors that lead to the development of different types of public service motivations is critical to knowing which incentives to tap into for ensuring the provision of higher quality and sustainable services. It is important to acknowledge that one of the main limitations of this research also lies in its inability to provide a detailed analysis of motivation formation and transformation processes in different institutional setups and explain how different motivations take form for different individuals. Although findings point to the role of patronage networks and intersectoral engagements in shaping local bureaucrats' motivation for service provision to refugees, they fall short of providing a full picture of how these processes take place. This calls for more research to be done about the topic to better understand the

connections between institutional and political arrangements at both micro and macro levels, motivations for service provision, and integration outcomes.

Notes

1. Data is retrieved from the *UNHCR Refugee Data Finder* (2022).
2. The total size of the refugee population living in Istanbul is estimated to be 1,660,395 by the baseline assessment of Istanbul that was conducted in 2019 jointly by the International Organization for Migration and Turkey's Presidency of Migration Management. This number includes Syrian refugees registered in Istanbul and registered in other provinces but living in Istanbul, refugees of other nationalities registered in Istanbul and registered in other provinces but living in Istanbul, and unregistered refugees.
3. Perry and Wise (1990) for instance differentiate between affective (altruistic) and norm-based (professional) motives.
4. Article 14 of the Municipality Law (2005) states that: 'Municipal services shall be provided to citizens at the nearest possible locations and by the most appropriate methods.' In contrast, Article 13 of the same law states that: 'Everyone is a town(wo)man of the town in which s/he lives. Town(wo)men shall be entitled to take part in municipal decision making and services, receive information on municipal activities, and benefit from the aids distributed by the municipal administration.' Basing their actions on the 'fellow citizens' clause in the law, some municipalities opt to provide social assistance for refugees (Erdogan 2017).
5. In Turkey, provinces with populations that are equal to or higher than 750,000 are designated as metropolitan provinces per the Municipality Law (2005). All metropolitan provinces have the two-tier municipal structure described above.
6. An extended discussion on the influence of politics on bureaucracies is beyond the scope of this paper. For more on the political-bureaucratic relations in the developing world and their impact on service delivery see the reviews by Dasandi and Esteve (2017) and Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks (2017).
7. In her study about discursive practices that street-level service providers in Turkey adopt when catering social services to refugees, Üstübcü (2020) discusses the limits of the 'religious hospitality' narrative reinforced by the state and the party.
8. This is perhaps even more prevalent in Istanbul compared to other provinces in Turkey where the return of rent-seeking activities is highest and therefore electoral competition over mayoral seats is most intense.
9. Most of the time, national non-governmental organizations working on forced migration are funded by international humanitarian organizations. Thus, the conditionalities that they put forward for establishing partnerships are in general the same or very similar to the IOs.

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