THE CITY AND THE CITIZEN: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

KENT VE VATANDAŞ: AKTİF VATANDAŞLIĞIN ÖNÜNDEKİ ENGELLERİ AŞMAK[1]

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ABSTRACT

Ideally, democracies are built on the ability of all segments of society to participate in civil society to enhance their community's well-being or to claim rights. Participation in civic and political activities is a key feature of equal citizenship. Sociopolitical features of a city may influence participation, developing different citizenship practices at the local level. Cities will differ in the types of CSOs that thrive, the particular grievances that CSOs address and the types of civic activities that prevail. This study examines how different sociopolitical settings in Turkey impact the development of *active citizenship* practices among participants in civil society organizations (CSOs). The conditions under which CSO participation may develop active citizenship is key to understanding the potential transformation of hierarchical and passive conceptualizations and practices of citizenship at the national level in Turkey. The study is based on semi-structured interviews conducted in three cities in Turkey. Findings reveal

[1] Bu çalışma TÜBİTAK 1001 Programı desteği ile gerçekleştirilmiştir (Proje No.: 113K187, Proje Adı: Aktif Vatandaş Olmak: Türkiye'de Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları ve Vatandaşlık). Araştırmanın etik kurul onayı, Koç Üniversitesi Etik Kurulları tarafından 2013.103.IRB3.61 numaralı karar ile 25 Şubat 2013 tarihinde verilmiştir. Alternatif Politika dergisinin hakemlerine çok değerli geribildirimleri için teşekkür ederim.

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* Makale Geliş Tarihi / Article Received: 24.02.2020
Makale Kabul Tarihi / Article Accepted: 30.11.2020

that sociopolitical differences foster the development of different dimensions of active citizenship at the urban level and hence challenge different legacies of citizenship in Turkey.

Keywords: Active Citizenship, Civil Society, Turkey, Urban Citizenship, Civic Action.

ÖZ

Demokratik toplumların temel özellikleri arasında toplumun farklı kesimlerinin sivil topluma katılabilmesi ve hak taleplerinde bulunabilmesi vardır. Sivil ve siyasi faaliyetlere katılabilmek eşit vatandaşlığın temel özelliklerindendir. Farklı kentlerdeki siyasi ve sosyal özellikler toplumun değişik kesimlerinin katılımını etkileyebilir. Bu farklılıklar bir kentte yaygın olan STK türlerini, hedef gruplarını ve faaliyetlerini şekillendirebilir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de sosyopolitik özellikler açısından değişkenlik gösteren illerde sivil toplum kuruluşlarına katılımın *aktif vatandaşlık* pratiklerinin gelişimine etkisini araştırmakta. Aktif vatandaşlık pratiklerinin gelişimi Türkiye'de pasif ve hiyerarşik olarak tanımlanan vatandaşlık algı ve pratiklerin olası dönüşümünü anlamak için önemlidir. Çalışma, sivil toplum katılımcıları ile üç ilde gerçekleştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlara dayanmaktadır. Bulgular, iller arasında farklı *aktif vatandaşlık* boyutlarının geliştiğini ve dolayısıyla ulusal seviyedeki farklı vatandaşlık algı ve pratiklerini dönüştürme potansiyelinin var olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aktif Vatandaşlık, Sivil Toplum, Türkiye, Kent Vatandaşlığı, Sivil Eylem.

INTRODUCTION

The study of citizenship has expanded beyond narrow definitions as a legal relationship between citizens and the state, and within a defined national territory. Conceptualizations of citizenship as practice and as rights pursuit have expanded it beyond a legal status. And post national and transnational theories of citizenship have multiplied the sites of citizenship beyond the nation state. Citizenship studies have also identified the sub state level, particularly the city, as an essential site for citizenship. The urban sphere is key to participation, identity formation, and the

exercise of rights and obligations (Staeheli, 2003). National citizenship may be different from citizenship that is defined and shaped by the particularities of where one resides (Işın, 1999; Young, 1999; Rocco, 1999). Both post national and subnational conceptualizations of citizenship highlight that the features that define a particular territory enhance understanding of the dynamics of citizenship. There are now "multiple and overlapping centres of power and sources of identity" beyond the nation state (Işın, 1999: 166).

The objective of this research is to understand the importance of the local setting in shaping the development of *active citizenship* practices through civil society participation. In doing so it contributes to the strand of literature that underlines that participation types and sites have multiplied, expanding and diversifying citizenship experiences. The study of active citizenship is situated at the nexus of national and urban citizenship in order to recognize the urban experience of CSO participation and its development of citizenship practices. This research of three different cities in Turkey seeks to identify the potential for transformation to citizenship perceptions and practices in Turkey.

Over the past decade the concern that citizens are engaging less in politics has been debated. Scholars warn against the risks of decreased participation for the wellbeing of democracies (Putnam, 2000). In response, others have claimed that rather than a decline in participation, *how* people participate is changing (Bolzendahl and Coffe, 2013; Dalton, 2008). How and why citizens participate is linked to prevalent norms of citizenship which are inevitably embedded in particular sociopolitical conditions. In Turkey, the legacy of a strong state, and hierarchical and passive citizenship discourses persist. And in practice, there are concerns regarding the narrowing of civic space and barriers to critical civic acts (Yabanci, 2019; Doyle, 2018). Yet, there is also evidence of new strategies on the part of civic actors to function in this changing environment, and the development of more reactionary types of citizen engagement (Yabanci, 2019; Kaya, 2017). Situated in this paradoxical depiction of civic life in Turkey, an assessment of specific urban spaces provides insight into the roles and experiences that civil society participation provides to the formation of active citizens.

This study is a comparison of three cities in Turkey: Diyarbakır, Konya and Trabzon. These cities present divergent pictures in terms of their social, political and cultural fabric, citizenship perceptions and experiences, and dynamics of civic life. The prominent sociopolitical dynamics that emerge from the interviews for each city frame the analysis. Each city is evaluated based on the extent that participation in CSOs is able to foster one or more of the three dimensions of active citizenship: 1) civic action 2) social cohesion 3) self-actualization. Active citizenship, which is conceptualized in detail below, entails the ability and will to make demands, exposure to differences, development of a sense of solidarity, and

achieving self-actualization. Active citizenship is juxtaposed to a duty driven form of citizenship that promotes a hierarchical relationship between state and citizen and the marginalization of groups, denying equal access to full citizenship. The focus on *active citizenship* is motivated by the objective to understand the potential for a change to citizenship practices in Turkey which is generally framed as passive, hierarchical, nationalist and conservative. The practice of citizenship is formulated by the context in which citizenship actualizes including one's perception of what citizenship entails, one's own experience as a citizen, the extent of rights and obligations attached to one's citizenship, and state policies regarding citizenship. While this context is certainly national, urban specific variation is key to understanding citizenship in Turkey.

1. URBAN CITIZENSHIP

The city provides a distinct space in which politics takes place and hence in which citizenship is realized. Staeheli (2003) highlights the relevance of understanding citizenship constructed by political agents based on their particular localities. It is the circumstances of the local that motivates the practice and the substance of citizenship. This does not disregard national citizenship but rather it acknowledges the multiple levels of citizenship. As Young (1999) makes clear, while citizenship enables identification with individuals that are strangers residing in distant parts of the national polity, citizenship is also participation in one's immediate community.

The effects of post national level citizenship, through institutions such as the EU and global migration, are significantly visible at the local level. Migrants make claims at the urban level and identities are formed based on their city of residence (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003). One branch of urban citizenship studies has focused on the claims to urban rights by a range of groups that are positioned at the nexus of being included and excluded. The experiences, claims to rights, participation and integration processes of immigrants, undocumented immigrants, forced migrants and internal migrants in the city, comprise an important part of this literature (Darling, 2017; Secor, 2003; Gebhardt, 2016; Varsanyi, 2006).

In her study of segregation in American cities, Young (1999) highlights that segregation may in fact be a source of network for marginalized communities. Similarly, in a study of Latino immigrants in Los Angeles, Rocco (1999) argues that communities that settle in proximity enable associational interaction that becomes political and fosters an environment where rights claims may be advanced. Thus, the layout of communities and identities within a city delineate the political space (Rocco, 1999). These studies point to the possibility of citizenship practices and equal citizenship claims at the local level based on the associationalism that occurs within segregated communities. Trust develops from

non-state institutions, creating a distinct separation between a sense of national citizenship and local citizenship. Detaching citizenship from being solely national, and expanding citizenships opportunities at the local level, present prospects for stronger democratic practices (Baubock, 2003).

Staeheli accentuates that citizenship "is constructed through the actions of individuals, social groups and institutions as an ongoing pursuit for inclusion. In this pursuit, the spaces of the city play a central role" (Staehel, 2003: 101). Identity politics have been key to how individuals realize their agency as citizens. Erdi (2018) finds, for example, that women's participation in a neighborhood resistance movement in Ankara, to claim their rights to the neighborhood, empowered women and enhanced their political agency, all key to realizing one's citizenship. The rights one has, or the rights one seeks is shaped by the city and hence identity formation is not only dependent on the identity that derives from one's national citizenship (Staeheli, 2003). Whether ethnic groups, women, or youth, their claims to rights and justice have been integral to citizenship at the national level but have played out separately at the local level.

2. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The concept of active citizenship, developed for this study, is comprised of common features that define active citizenship across a range of disciplines including citizenship, civic education and political participation. Three dimensions emerge as key to active citizenship: civic action, social cohesion and self-actualization, each detailed below. The concept active citizenship is most frequently presented as an antidote to declining public participation (Blunkett and Taylor, 2010; Bee and Guerrina, 2014; Putnam, 2000). On the one hand, active citizenship is rooted in a civic republican understanding of citizenship where one ought to engage and contribute to one's community. On the other hand, its liberal reading emphasizes civic action motivated by the ability and will to pursue one's rights and/or to self-express, particularly in contexts where civic participation may be restricted (Abou-Habib, 2011; Akar, 2014). This is a conceptualization of citizenship as practice where the act of citizenship is defined by the process of making claims, despite status (Lister, 1998; Işın and Nielsen, 2008; Rumelili et al., 2011; Soysal, 1997).

Active citizenship is also about equal participation as citizens. The literature on "differentiated" citizenship (Işın and Wood, 1999) highlights the marginal status of groups based on gender, youth, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. There is extensive literature, in particular, on the gender gap in political participation (Norris, 2002; Schlozman et al., 1995). Women tend to engage more in "private activities" such as signing petitions and boycotting products for political reasons while men are more active in "political party membership, collective activism, and

political contact" (Coffe and Bolzendahl, 2010: 330). Bulut finds that in Turkey, the governing party drafts fewer bills that can be deemed feminist in comparison to the other political parties (Bulut, 2020: 10). And though female presence in parliament has a positive impact on proposal of such bills, the low numbers of women in parliament results in the underrepresentation of women's issues in politics (Bulut, 2020: 10). The nexus between gender and city is critical as marginalized groups such as women may have an impact at the national level not by engaging in large scale national political engagement but small scale local involvements (Erdi, 2018; Staeheli and Cope, 1994). Similar to women, the claims of sexual minorities are marginalized (Lister, 2002; Işın and Wood, 1999) and youth are less engaged in conventional political acts (Bennett at al., 2009). The extent to which CSO participation enhances the public participation of marginalized groups is significant for active citizenship.

An extensive review of the literature reveals three fundamental dimensions of active citizenship: civic action, social cohesion and self-actualization. *Civic action*, the first dimension, is the common denominator in all discussions of the concept and carries the most weight. Active citizenship is ultimately about encouraging or enabling action. Civic action, as defined by Son and Lin (2008), entails acts conducted by an individual or a group to address issues that concern a larger community. It entails increased and widespread participation with an objective of strengthening representative democracy and including citizens in the process of government (Farouk and Husin, 2011; Hoskins and Mascherini, 2009). Hence, active citizenship includes both action triggered by a will to serve one's community and by the need to make claims. It implies an equal and inclusive platform for participation.

The second dimension, s*ocial cohesion* has two components of its own. First, social cohesion is about developing a sense of solidarity and belonging in a community (Hoskins and Crick, 2010; Janmaat and Piattoeva, 2007). This is key to active citizenship because community empowers and enables individuals to act in a group. Community also enables inclusion and recognition of one's identity. It achieves the strong networks that empower the individual and the groups to participate as active citizens. Second, social cohesion is about exposure to diversity. Exposure to diversity is expected to enhance knowledge and values that foster inclusion (Mayo and Annette, 2010; Hoskins and Crick, 2010). The third dimension of active citizenship, *self-actualization*, concerns enhancing individual agency and the ability to realize one's own identity. It entails developing skills and values that boost self-awareness, self-confidence and thus agency (Bennett et al., 2009; Janmaat and Piattoeva, 2007; Dimitrov and Boyadjieva, 2009).

3. CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN TURKEY

Civil society organizations have become essential sites in which informal learning occurs (Serrat et al., 2017; Ollis, 2011). CSOs provide a space through which claims can be made, rights pursued, and services provided (Belda-Miquel et al., 2016; Çakmaklı, 2017). Hence, CSO participation fosters divergent citizenship practices based on how individuals engage, what issue areas they engage in, and the skills, values and practices that are learnt (Bee and Kaya, 2017; Karriem and Benjamin, 2016; Çakmaklı, 2015; Onyx et al., 2012). Suspect of the generally positive reading of the impact of CSOs on enhancing democracy, scholars question causality and emphasize context (Encarnacion, 2006; Altan-Olcay and İçduygu, 2012; Serrat et al., 2017). Divergent country contexts have attributed different roles and levels of success to CSOs in achieving their objectives (Howard, 2003; Wiktorowicz, 2000).

The strong, centralized state tradition in Turkey has historically placed barriers to autonomously functioning CSOs, and promoted an understanding of citizenship which emphasizes citizen duties over rights (Seçkinelgin, 2004; Heper, 1985; Ünsal, 1998; Bikmen and Meydanoğlu, 2006). Citizenship in Turkey is traditionally perceived and practiced as dutiful, passive, nationalist and hierarchical (Heper, 1998; Ünsal, 1998; Kadıoğlu, 2007; İşyar, 2005; Yeğen, 2004). The relationship between civil society organizations and the state have continuously been tense, at times resulting in severe restrictions to their activities (İçduygu et al., 2011). And periodically, the state and political parties have used CSOs as sites for the dissemination of political ideology and political influence (Biber, 2009). The patrimonial state culture provided little opportunity and incentive for individuals and CSOs to create a space independent from, or against, the state (Ünsal, 1998). The discussion below traces key transformations to sites and forms of citizenship practices and CSO activity, since the 1990s.

Forces of Change

Turkey's European Union accession process marks a key period that expanded opportunities for civil society activity and changes to citizenship. In the first decade of the 2000s civil society in Turkey expanded in terms of number of CSOs, participation rates and areas of activity (İçduygu et al., 2011; Yabanci, 2019). New laws on associations eased restrictions that had inhibited the founding of and participation in particular types of CSOs (Göksel and Güneş, 2005). Civic participation expanded from more traditional, interest group organizations, such as unions, political parties and vocational organizations, to CSO that address postmodern issues such as rights and the environment, and focus on the expression of individual claims (Cenker-Özek, 2018). However, an initial backsliding to CSO development began when declining influence of the EU depleted the motivation

and pressure for an expansive, critical and liberal civil society in Turkey. The EU's technical and financial incentives for civil society, which aimed to support the advance of Turkey's democratic transformation, did not fully meet objectives (Zihnioğlu, 2013). And despite a sustained increase to activities of and membership in CSOs since the 2000s, pro-government civil society has expanded while a conflictual relationship between the state and critical CSOs has persisted (Yabanci, 2019; Doyle, 2018). Many civil society organizations continue to function in a narrowed and exclusionary civic space with significant legal barriers to their activities (Doyle, 2018; Ayata and Karan, 2015).

Parallel to changes to civil society, the transformation to citizenship at the global scale has transformed citizenship in Turkey. Since the 1990s, globalization, migration, and transnational institutions have expanded the strictly nationalist, hierarchical, and homogenous stature of citizenship in Turkey (Kaya, 2016; Kadıoğlu, 2007). This process enabled greater visibility for the diversities that exist in Turkey and diminished the assimilationist tendencies of citizenship. The diversification of issue areas that CSOs became engaged in were linked to the increasing ability of different groups in Turkey to make claims (Kadıoğlu, 2007). Claims for multicultural rights was key to breaking away from the strictly nationalist formulation of citizenship. The series of legal amendments, supported particularly by the reforms enacted following Turkey's EU candidacy, marks what Kadıoğlu (2007) notes as the "denationalization of citizenship" in Turkey. The legal shifts were accompanied by a discursive shift embracing diversity and democracy (Kaya, 2016).

Despite these changes, however, studies show that the strong state and nationalist legacy of citizenship persists in determining the relationship between the citizen and the state in Turkey (Kaya, 2016; Polat and Pratchett, 2014). Kaya traces the national education curriculum to find that ethno-cultural features persist despite globalizing and transnational forces in Turkey and efforts to integrate universal values such as human rights (Kaya, 2016). And, regardless of the significant amendments to laws on citizenship, their implementation has not been as successful.

The Gezi Park protests of Istanbul in 2013 marks a turning point and second wave of transformation in which new forms and sites of civic activism expanded the repertoires of civil society and citizenship in Turkey (Zihnioğlu, 2019; Bee and Kaya, 2017). This period reflects the paradoxical forces of heightened CSO activity despite a narrowing space for civic activism. It is characterized, on the one hand, by government and state intervention in civil society and a burgeoning of pro-government CSOs, and on the hand, as fostering more "resilient, active, insurgent" citizenship (Kaya, 2017: 6) and "dissident activism" (Yabanci, 2019: 287). The focus on the environment and on urban development projects triggered

local protests and movements long after the Gezi protests, and established environmental movements as confrontational yet key civic movements in Turkey (Özler and Obach, 2018). Gezi Protests brought to the fore the agency of the city as a political space, and its inhabitants as political agents responsible for their urban space. Civil society gained momentum at the local level and on local issues, and many of these local issues had implications for national policies (Zihnioğlu, 2019).

In terms of citizenship, this period is depicted as more active and unconventional. "New civic actors" are juxtaposed to "traditional civic actors" where "diffuse and flexible organizational and membership structure" characterizes new activist (Zihnioğlu, 2019: 289). Acts of citizenship took a more communitarian and cosmopolitan turn, trumping individualism and ideologically motivated issues, presenting a potential to move civil society beyond the issues that polarize Turkish society (Kaya, 2017). This period witnesses the increased activity of formerly marginalized groups. Youth and women claim their status as citizens through their participation and increased presence in the public sphere. Youth have challenged perceptions of their apolitical nature (Bee and Kaya, 2017).

Current evaluations of civil society and citizenship point to a continued juxtaposition between barriers to civic activity along with heightened reactionary activism. Hence while one needs to be cautious not to overstate the potential for civil society, CSOs remain imperative for more democratic and inclusive participation in Turkey despite key differences over time and across regions (Cenker-Özek, 2018; Rumelili and Çakmaklı, 2017). Critical civil society actors have adjusted to find their place within a narrowing civic space. Newly founded cooperation between old and new civil society organizations signals an increased potential for civil society in Turkey (Zihnioğlu, 2019). Marginalized or polarized actors of civil society such as women's movements and environmental CSOs have adapted their strategies to influence politics in this new setting (Eslen-Ziya and Kazanoğlu, 2020; Özler and Obach, 2018). This research was conducted in the years just following the Gezi Park events when a rejuvenation in civic activity presided alongside concerns regarding a contracting civic space.

Active Citizenship in Turkey?

Each dimension of active citizenship carries the potential to break down barriers to interventionist tendencies of the state and the hierarchical, passive, and nationalist perceptions of Turkish citizenship. Civic action and self-actualization represent a move away from a passive and hierarchical understanding of citizenship. Since civic action as community service is generally what is expected of the citizen, the ability to make claims and confront the state weigh in more heavily in achieving civic action in Turkey. Self-actualization as individual

empowerment and self-recognition as an equal citizen challenge the passive vision of citizens and the hierarchical relationship between the state and citizen. The development of skills and values that enable the individual to voice opinions and make claims will enhance a more liberal practice of citizenship. Individuals that become more self-confident, self-satisfied, more aware of their identity, and able to express themselves will exercise their agency.

Significant divides are at the root of political and social tensions in Turkey. Social cohesion promises to acknowledges diversities, empower groups and to challenge nationalist and exclusionary tendencies of citizenship. Achieving an increased sense of community, solidarity, and most importantly exposure to the diversities that exist in Turkey, is a critical step to mending some of these rifts and developing more inclusive civic engagement. Social cohesion is particularly important for marginalized groups in Turkey as both their recognition and ability to act as part of a larger group is at stake.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study has two key methodological contributions to the literature on citizenship and civil society. First, it contributes to the more recent empirical work on the role of CSOs and the practice of citizenship at the individual level. And second, it contributes to the limited studies on citizenship and civil society at the urban level. It is key to note that since the findings of this study are specific to the particular settings in which participation is studied, it is not possible to make generalizations at the national level or to extend findings to other city and country settings. However, the study identifies the conditions under which CSOs develop particular dimensions of active citizenship and how the development of active citizenship may drive changes to national perceptions and practices of citizenship.

City Selection

The three cities, Diyarbakır, Trabzon and Konya, were purposefully selected from different regions in Turkey to reflect divergent political, economic and demographic features. Key, however, to this study, was the expectation that the differences in sociopolitical features would assign different meanings to citizenship in Turkey. Divergent claims regarding citizenship are expected to cultivate different experiences in the CSO and hence different dimensions of active citizenship. This study identifies whether the anticipated accounts of citizenship are mirrored in the experiences of CSO participants and whether this reflects on to the development of different dimensions of active citizenship. A complete analysis of the politics, sociology, economics, and demographics of each city is beyond the scope of this study. The differentiating sociopolitical features of the cities are based on the data derived from the interviews with CSO participants.

Diyarbakır was selected because of the contested nature of citizenship in this city and the conflictual setting between the state and citizens. Diyarbakır, located in Turkey's Southeast Anatolia region, is comprised of an ethnically Kurdish majority. Claims regarding citizenship have been rooted in a contestation of the official definition of the Turkish citizen and a sense of exclusion or difference (Yeğen, 2009). Citizenship comes with a legal basis of rights and obligations. It also comes with an idea of belonging to a particular community (Delanty, 2002). For Diyarbakır, both are contested. The tension between the state and citizens is visible in the relationship between state institutions and CSOs as well. Historically, CSOs in Diyarbakır have been monitored by the state and civic participation has been restricted. Hence, CSOs function in a highly politicized environment and rights organizations, in particular, face restrictions (European Commission, 2016). In post conflict areas, state institutions may be secondary to CSOs or international organizations (Nagel and Staeheli, 2015). In Diyarbakır, CSOs act as intermediary organizations between citizens and state institutions and have been burdened with representing and resolving the demands, rights violations, and other needs of the Kurdish population (Rumelili and Çakmaklı, 2017). It is expected that CSO participants in Diyarbakır will challenge the hierarchical, nationalist legacy of citizenship.

Konya is a city in central Anatolia, generally depicted as historically, culturally and politically conservative. Culturally, religion plays a central role in the lives of many in Konya, much of its inhabitants holding affiliations with religious communities. And politically, Konya residents are generally supporters of religious or nationalist parties with most support for the current political leadership, the AKP. While religiosity, conservatism and governing party support are not the only defining features of Konya, they demarcate the types of CSOs that flourish here as well as the experiences they foster (Rumelili and Çakmaklı, 2017). CSOs working in the area of charity comprise the bulk of CSO activity in Konya. Rights organizations are both limited in number and marginalized. Civic life in Konya is characterized by the fragmentation in religious communities, which results in fractionalization among CSOs. CSO target groups are Konya's poor population and refugees, whereas groups such as women, children, and the LGBT are less represented. CSO participants in Konya are expected to reify the conservative, passive and hierarchical perceptions and practices of citizenship.

The third city, Trabzon, was selected because it is a city depicted as overtly nationalist and conservative. It is frequently illustrated as intolerant towards ethnic, religious, and gender based differences. Hence, it is expected that the traditional notions of citizenship rooted in Turkish ethnicity, and strong state and passive citizens will prevail. Located in the Northeast of Turkey, along the Black Sea coast, CSO participants in Trabzon perceive participation and activity as low

and attribute it to "low levels of cooperation and solidarity, indifference, low levels of awareness about local issues and social prejudices" (Rumelili and Çakmaklı 2017).

CSO Selection

Participants were selected primarily through the snowballing method. One to three participants in each CSO were interviewed. Demographics of the participants varied in terms of age and occupation, including, but not limited to, lawyers, doctors, students, house wives, and businessmen. In Konya, five CSOs and thirteen participants were included in the study. The research on Diyarbakır includes eight CSOs and fifteen participants. And in Trabzon, ten participants at eight CSOs were interviewed. The names of the CSOs and the participants have not been disclosed for ethical reasons. However, the primary issue areas of the CSOs referenced are cited in the text.

The selection of CSOs was influenced by the features of civil society life in these cities. The predominance of charity and solidarity organizations in Konya, for example, led to several to be included in the study. Human rights organizations in Konya were purposefully included for comparative purposes, though they are much fewer in number. In Diyarbakır, rights organizations were targeted due to their prevalence and centrality to its civic life. Each city includes similar "types" of organizations such as human rights, women's rights, youth, education, solidarity/charity and vocational CSOs. Where possible, members of different branches of the same CSO were interviewed. However, the study is not limited to such organizations as there are few CSOs that have branches throughout Turkey. Focusing on these few CSOs would not have been representative of the range or weight of particular CSOs in each city.

Interviews and Analysis

Results of this research are based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with 38 CSO participants at 21 CSOs in three cities. The interviews were conducted between December 2013 and September 2014. The data is derived from questions that focus on the participant experience in the CSO, their learning process, and changes they identify in themselves as a result of their participation. The issue of causality is central to studies on individuals' experiences. In studying active citizenship one has to consider whether participation leads to increased active citizenship or whether active citizens are participating in the CSOs studied. Hence, the questions were designed to extract examples of how participants evaluate changes to themselves, specific to their CSO participation. Questions integrate perceptions regarding civil society and citizenship in their respective cities. The changes they witness in themselves as a result of their involvement with

the CSO are associated with the development of different active citizenship dimensions.

Each interview was transcribed and analysed based on coding developed for the three dimensions of active citizenship. Statements that indicated that participants had become increasingly active or had learned to make claims as a result of their participation were coded as contributing to the civic action aspect of active citizenship. Statements indicating intermediary mechanisms that fostered increased action, such as increased awareness, for example, were also coded as such. Statements that pointed to a heightened sense of community or a learning process that made the participant more aware of diversity were coded as contributing to social cohesion. And finally, statements that revealed that participants became more aware of themselves, developed empowering skills, were better able to actualize their identity or self-express were linked to the dimension of self-actualization.

5. FINDINGS

Diyarbakır

Data derived from the interviews in Diyarbakır reflect that civic life and conceptualizations of citizenship are embedded in the contestation regarding citizenship identification and definition. The official definition of Turkish citizenship is contested based on claims of ethnic difference.[2] Participants in Diyarbakır express passive and negative sentiments towards a citizenship which they find to be exclusionary. One individual states that "citizenship for many here is a kind of requirement. Citizenship defines you. . . you cannot have your own identity to be a citizen in Turkey… there is no state with which I feel I have a citizenship connection" (Human rights).[3] A sense of "non-citizenship," however, is not a barrier to the practice of citizenship and frequently expresses itself through activities to claim citizenship (Johnson, 2015). Non-citizenship has the potential to trigger reaction towards traditional modes of citizenship and manifest itself through active citizenship.

Findings show that CSO participants in Diyarbakır recognize their personal development in all three dimensions of active citizenship: civic action, social cohesion and self-actualization. Rights organizations are in multitude in Diyarbakır, and the experience of learning *how* to act against rights violations, for example, is a trigger for high levels of civic action. As one activist puts it: "You become aware of and you find yourself responsible for understanding and

[2] Citizenship in Turkey is defined in the constitution as "Everyone bound to the Turkish State through the bond of citizenship is a Turk" (1982 Republic of Turkey Constitution).
[3] Names of civil society organizations visited in this study are not disclosed. Rather the CSO's *issue area* is referenced after each citation.

struggling against all types of rights violations" (Children's rights). CSOs in Diyarbakır act as sources of information for participants as well as the general public. Rights organizations, for example, are initial points of contact for those in need of legal guidance. The dissemination and accumulation of knowledge that occurs in these CSOs is a primary driver of the *civic action* dimension of active citizenship. As the two following statements accentuate, awareness places a "burden" on the participant to act: "If there is a rights violation or injustice somewhere, it becomes impossible to say it doesn't concern you. You no longer can be the passive person you once were. You have to act to the capacity you can and if you don't, or you can't, you feel the pain of it" (Children's rights). Another participant states that "once you start to volunteer you can no longer act independently from issues of rights, responsibilities and events concerning your community" (Youth/ development). These quotes reflect the burden of civic action which is the inability to remain passive in one's community.

Many in Diyarbakır, define *active citizenship* as the pursuit of rights. One participant states: "Active citizenship is the struggle to reach one's natural rights. An active citizen is one who reveals wrongdoings, and works to fix them without fear or hesitation and one who works to make life better and easier for all to live" (Migration). Another participant makes a similar claim that "An active citizen is one who struggles to better the geography one lives in, one who struggles to develop mechanisms that support democracy, human rights, human happiness and wellbeing, one who struggles for oneself and others" (Children's rights). Hence, it is noteworthy that in a city where many participants claim to have little sense of citizenship in the traditional sense, recognize themselves as *active citizens* through their CSO activity. As these statements make clear, active citizenship is expressed around statements such as "revealing wrongdoings", not having "fear or hesitation", or "struggling" for others, establishing active citizenship as confrontational and something that needs to be claimed.

Self-actualization is the one dimension that CSO participation fosters in all three cities. In Diyarbakır, participants state that they become more self-confident, more aware of their potential and skills and become more sociable. Self-actualization is empowering as it entails self-recognition, self-awareness and self-expression. One woman describes her realization of individuality: "We learn communication. We learn to be ourselves. We are not someone's daughter or someone's wife. You become yourself as an individual" (Women's rights). A participant at a youth organization highlights the process of her ability to "know herself" better: "I began to criticize myself. I found myself and I gained self-confidence" (Youth / development). In Diyarbakır, CSOs provide a site in which participants are able to realize their identities and value their individuality.

Participants in Diyarbakır do not identify CSOs as places that expose them to diversities. Hence, this feature of *social cohesion* emerges less explicitly in Diyarbakır compared to the other two cities. However, the solidarity feature of social cohesion was prominent in Diyarbakır. This is driven by the empathy and solidarity that develops among participants towards the diverse issues that drive civil society in Diyarbakır: "You may be working on children's rights but you have to notice women's rights, LGBT rights, poverty, social and economic inequalities, inequalities in educational opportunities" (Children's rights). A stronger sense of solidarity through CSOs is also a consequence of the risk associated with CSO participation. One participant states that "being a part of an association is always an advantage. It will protect and develop the individual. This is why people feel the need to come together, it becomes a necessity" (Human rights).

At the urban level, citizenship in Diyarbakir is defined beyond status and is recognized around the civic acts that one engages in. CSOs working on rights set the tone for civic activity in Diyarbakır which parallels how active citizenship is understood and realized. State formulations or traditional discourses on citizenship are contested. CSOs provide spaces for its contestation and for the dissemination of active citizenship skills and practices. Knowledge accumulation, the acquired "burden to act" and solidarity between CSO participants enhances civic action, social cohesion and self-actualization. Hence, despite an overarching sense of "non-citizenship", a sense of exclusion, and tensions between state and society, CSO participation at the urban level enables a reactionary, claims based practice active citizenship. This local level achievement of active citizenship challenges the national level passive, hierarchical and exclusionary perspective of citizenship.

Konya

In Konya, participants of civil society organizations generally framed both citizenship and active citizenship around the idea of responsibility. Several participants expressed the idea of citizenship as rights as potentially conflictual. Charity organizations comprise the bulk of CSOs in Konya and, contrary to Diyarbakır, rights organizations are both limited in number and marginalized. Some participants linked the idea of civic responsibility to religion rather than citizenship: "helping others, helping the disadvantaged is a responsibility encouraged in Islam" (Charity). Perceptions of citizenship and active citizenship are motivated by both ethical and republican understandings of duty toward state: "Citizenship is the responsibility we hold towards a piece of land. Active citizenship is fulfilling this responsibility in an honest fashion" (Charity). Many participants are critical of liberal conceptualizations of citizenship that emphasize the individual: "A rights based perspective triggers individualism, ego and other problems" (Education).

A majority of participants identify the main target groups in Konya as the economically disadvantaged and refugees. Other disadvantaged groups such as women, children, and LGBT groups are less represented by CSOs. Even rights-based CSOs in Konya are selective in the issues they take up, excluding, for example, the claims of LGBT community members (Human rights). The civic space in Konya reflects a more conservative and republican approach to civic engagement which carries potential for civic action but not in its liberal, critical form.

The most significant impact that CSOs have on developing active citizenship in Konya is through the development of its *self-actualization* dimension. Interviewees in Konya underline self-development and confidence triggered by becoming more knowledgeable and aware of issues regarding the CSO and their communities (Human rights, Charity, Vocational). Some skills that participants cite are communication and problem solving (Women's rights). Women, in particular, claimed to be empowered. One female participant notes how, as a woman, CSO participation has enabled her to be more social, boosting her self-confidence and motivating her to be more active. Another states: "You bring services to those in need. Your relationships change. People see you as someone who can solve their problems" (Education / solidarity). Several participants asserted that CSO participation psychologically benefitted them, enabling them to overcome problems more easily (Education / solidarity). One participant states "You come across very different people. You come across very different problems. When you change some people's lives for the better you reach a sense of peace of mind" (Human rights).

In all three cities women are most vocal about their personal transformation. This corroborates the literature on the empowerment that experiences in the public sphere can offer women. The public sphere has generally been associated with male participation and the private sphere with female (Lister, 2002). Staeheli and Cope (1994) highlight that "by moving across the 'private' (household) to the 'public' (community, city, region), women who do become politically active can constitute a threat to the status quo, and thus may gain a new degree of power – power that can perhaps be passed on to other women" (Staeheli and Cope, 1994: 447). This potential "power" is indicative of a possible change to the role of women and their relationship with power structures.

Participation in CSOs in Konya enables *civic action* as community service more than civic action as rights pursuit. The role attributed to CSOs in Konya are service provision, enabling citizenship duty. There was little emphasis on CSO participation leading to increased engagement. Inherent to the civic action dimension of active citizenship is the ability and will to make claims. This implies a potentially confrontational relationship with the state. Data from the interviews

showed that most CSO participants were uncomfortable with acts and activities regarding rights pursuit. This points to a weakness in the ability of CSOs in Konya to foster civic action.

Findings are limited regarding the effect of CSO participation on *social cohesion*. Few participants did express having become aware of differences or having developed a wider outlook (Charity, Human rights, Vocational). One member of a rights organization explicitly noted that her exposure to the LGBT community in Konya was eye opening and broke down her prejudices. A key feature of civic life in Konya is that the fragmentation in religious communities is paralleled by a fractionalization among CSOs. This fragmentation and competition among CSOs is a risk for social cohesion, as religious divisions strengthen inner group cohesion and weaken inter group cohesion. It may limit mobility between divergent CSOs. One rights organization, for example, laments that though they are open to addressing rights violations of all groups, their membership base is not as diverse as desired. This depicts CSOs in Konya as insufficient in their ability to expose participants to differences. CSOS are weak both in terms of addressing issues of diversity and in achieving diversity in membership.

At the urban level in Konya, citizenship parallels the communitarian and republican idea of citizenship that characterizes citizenship in Turkey. The nature of CSOs and the experiences of participants in Konya marginally challenge this vision. Findings point to minimal enhancement of civic action and social cohesion through CSO participation in Konya. However, self-actualization is achieved as CSOs contribute to individual level empowerment, self-confidence and self-recognition. Women were the most vocal about this, which is a key achievement for CSOs that function in a relatively conservative environment. The increased public role for women, which is a key challenge to established power hierarchies in Turkey, should not be underestimated.

Trabzon

In Trabzon, similar to Konya, citizenship and active citizenship are both defined around a sense of responsibility: "citizenship is being responsible in the community and the city you live in (Human rights). Another CSO participant states: "When we get involved we all have a responsibility. Actually we are volunteers but it turns into a responsibility, we *have* to do it. If we don't do it, the project will fail. We are aware of this and this develops our sense of responsibility. Active citizenship is social responsibility" (Youth).

Analysis of the three dimensions of active citizenship show that Trabzon's CSOs are relatively successful at fostering social cohesion and self-actualization, whereas statements that reference the learning of civic action are less. Participation

in CSOs successfully expose participants to major social differences. As in the case of Konya, human rights organizations were most successful in this exposure. One participant in a human rights CSO states "I learned that humans have rights acquired at birth. You see a Muslim come here (*to the CSO*) – first, you see a "backward" Muslim. I met and interacted with many different people. I have relations with many of the Islamic communities in Trabzon. I got rid of the "other" in my head. I got rid of the "backward" Muslim view that many of my friends still hold" (Human rights).

A volunteer at a youth organization describes a similar experience: "I was against different sexual orientations. I was always prejudiced against different cultural ID's. But the trainings I participated in completely broke down these prejudices. Now I am fighting against these prejudices" (Youth). She adds that "It taught me to be "us" rather than "I." I learned that I was not alone. I used to be less tolerant. The LGBT community would shock me, I would react in violence. Bu I took part in human rights and social rights trainings. Each individual is a different world. I can't completely understand all these worlds but I can try to become more aware. In six years I changed more than 100%" (Youth). This is a very powerful statement of transformation on deeply rooted prejudices that persist in all the cities studied. Its transformative nature is particularly powerful in a city depicted as conservative and nationalist.

In Trabzon, social cohesion as associationalism works to develop a sense of empowerment: "Strength comes from unity. That's the point of establishing an association. You can struggle as an individual but to what extent? But when you are united, when you are under an association you can struggle much more effectively" (Human rights). In addition to empowerment and solidarity, the risk associated with civil society participation declines, encouraging civic action. As the following statement points to, individuals are more hopeful of achieving rights claims through a formal association, rather than individually: "If you pursue a right you feel the satisfaction of doing something together, you believe you can do something together. People can't achieve anything on their own, they believe in associationalism" (Women's rights).

Participation in CSOs in Trabzon also inspires development of the s*elf-actualization* dimension of active citizenship. In Trabzon, like Konya and Diyarbakır, this is evident particularly across CSOs that work on women's rights issues. The CSO socialization process triggers transformative skills for many: "I became more social. I interacted with many different people- my world changed" (Human rights). Another participant states: "I experienced great change. The first project I took part in changed my life. I was asocial . . . As a part of the project I wanted to be a volunteer at other places too, I wanted to be active. It created an excitement. I became self-confident and motivated. I developed leadership skills"

(Youth). This statement is central to exhibiting the link between self-actualization and civic action. Self-confidence, self-awareness, and the ability to socialize all trigger the will and desire to act further.

Civic action is the relatively weaker dimension of active citizenship in Trabzon. Women's and rights motivated organizations are relatively better at fostering the awareness that triggers civic action. Though there are fewer examples, overall, of CSOs triggering increased or critical civic action, the knowledge that is acquired or the awareness of rights that develop among participants, particularly in women's organizations, points to a potential for the development of self-actualization as well as civic action: "We realized how much violence we are subject to in this society. We learned to deal with this and develop strategies. We learned that as an individual living in this society we have different rights, and we need to defend these rights and we need to develop policies for these rights" (Women's rights). Another participant states: "I always thought I was free. But then I realized I wasn't" (Women's rights).

CSOs in Trabzon are able to challenge the uniform understanding of citizenship and this has been achieved mostly through their ability to foster social cohesion through exposure to differences. Many participants identify as having increased tolerance, challenging the exclusionary reading of citizenship. CSOs are also cited as empowering the individual through associating in groups. CSOs in Trabzon also advance self-actualization. Individuals that engage in civil society claim to be more self-confident, self-aware and empowered, which, as in the case of all three cities, challenges the passive and hierarchical understanding of citizenship. CSOs are least effective in fostering civic action in Trabzon. Few mentioned increased participation or the drive for rights claims, which signals the persistent barriers to more critical and liberal civic activism in Trabzon. Yet, in relation to individual empowerment and group solidarity, some participants link their personal empowerment to a drive to act, which points to possible development of civic action in Trabzon.

6. DISCUSSION: COMPARING CITIES

To complement the findings presented for each city above, this section takes a look comparatively into each of the three dimensions of active citizenship. A key finding based on these three cities is that the self-actualization dimension of active citizenship is achieved regardless of city setting. This corroborates the literature on the positive role of CSOs in empowering its participants. Achieving self-actualization alters perception of self through increased knowledge, greater visibility in the public, improved self-confidence, and ability to express self. This dimension was voiced most explicitly by women. Individual empowerment is key

to challenging the hierarchical and passive vision and understanding of citizenship in Turkey.

The development of the *civic action* dimension, which is the backbone of active citizenship, was most explicitly expressed in Diyarbakır, where participants highlight that their involvement directly triggered even greater involvement and that their activity was driven by necessity, and frequently confrontational. This can be attributed to the larger role for CSOs to mediate between citizens and the state in Diyarbakır. The political environment creates extensive sites for critical civic action through a multitude of rights based organizations. In Trabzon there were some instances of CSO experiences that encourage *increased* and *critical* civic activity, whereas in Konya civic action did not emerge as a significant citizenship practice. In Konya, civic action is motivated more by service delivery and charity where critical, rights based civic organizations are marginalized. Even in CSOs that carry such a potential, such as some of Konya's rights organizations, their low membership rates and marginalized status inhibit this potential. Strong republican conceptualizations of citizenship, a conservative community, and governing party influence persist.

Exposure to diversity was most explicitly vocalized in Trabzon and Konya. And this occurred not only in rights based organizations, where perhaps divergent identities make claims, but through interaction with other participants and target groups, exposing individuals to different viewpoints and identities. This exposure to Turkey's diversities is imperative for two cities that are characterized as conservative. The community dimension of social cohesion plays out differently based on the sociopolitical dynamics of the city in question. Where CSO participation is traditionally risky, like in Diyarbakır, or where CSO issue areas are limited, like in Trabzon, social cohesion skills develop as solidarity empowers CSO groups. Participants in Diyarbakir generally framed the development of social cohesion around the empowerment that CSO participation enables them as a group. This is similar in Trabzon where members also voiced how CSO participation developed a sense of solidarity against an inhibitive environment. Achieving social cohesion is a key step to breaking the hierarchical relation between the citizen and the state and empowering the citizen.

Where branches of the same organization were studied in different cities, the city setting fostered different experiences. In Konya, one human rights organization, though limited in terms of activity and participant base, was described by most of its participants as exposing them to significant differences/diversities. Similarly, its Trabzon branch, though limited in its ability to achieve its objective of human rights advocacy, exposed participants to significant community differences. The same organization's branch in Diyarbakır, was expressed as very active and had a high participant base. Hence, in Konya

and Trabzon participants of this human rights organization developed the social cohesion dimension of active citizenship in particular. In Diyarbakır, this organization was more effective in achieving civic action and self-actualization.

7. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand whether participating in civil society organizations in different cities in Turkey leads to different outcomes in terms of acquiring active citizenship practices and perceptions. Can civic life in different cities challenge national level perceptions and practices of citizenship in Turkey, conceptualized as passive, hierarchical and nationalist? The findings above show that civil society participation in the three cities foster different dimensions of active citizenship. Diyarbakır CSOs signal a learning experience of all three dimensions, challenging national level perceptions, practices and expectations regarding citizenship in Turkey. Findings point to active, universal, and liberal citizenship understandings at the urban level. Trabzon CSOs effectively foster self-actualization and social cohesion and show some potential for civic action development, breaking down in particular monolithic and hierarchical expectations regarding citizenship. The conservative and less critical nature of CSOs in Konya influences the extent to which CSOs foster active citizenship. Despite less ability to foster civic action and social cohesion, Konya participants achieve self-actualization which contests the passive and hierarchical legacy of citizenship in Turkey. The CSO experiences, framed by types of CSOs, the political and social issues that drive their agendas, the embeddedness of either traditional or critical perceptions of citizenship all affect the potential for fostering active citizenship and the potential to change citizenship at the national level.

Despite the persistence of barriers to achieving full and equal citizenship in Turkey, the ability of CSOs to encourage self-actualization in all three cities should not be underestimated. The empowerment of the individual creates a new relationship between the state and the citizen. It breaks down hierarchies and challenges established power relations. Recognition and expression of one's identity, gender or sexual orientation enables demands for a larger role in society. In this study, all participants, but particularly women participants, emerge with newly acquired roles. Self-actualization presents a key opportunity for all marginalized groups to attain a more equal practice of citizenship through the CSO and at the city level. Achieving self-actualization is the first indication that CSO participation can advance active citizenship.

This study illustrates that local citizenship practices interact with national level perceptions and expectations regarding citizenship. This interaction may confirm or contest national level expectations. The urban settings influence how individuals participate in CSOs by dictating what issue areas and types of CSOs

dominate civic life, the legal barriers to participation, the major grievances and priorities of citizens, and levels of activity and following of CSOs. These diverse CSO experiences interact with national level discourse on citizenship to dictate the development of active citizenship. This carries the potential to alter expectations and generalizations regarding different cities in Turkey and challenge urban and national level stereotypes. Additional studies in other urban settings, in and beyond Turkey, will be key to understanding the extent that CSO participation can alter citizenship practices. Studies on active citizenship may benefit from the findings established here to read the role of CSOs in other cities and countries.

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