The Impact of Global Civil Society on Local Practices: The Case of Turkey

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Panel Abstract

The status of civil society and civic engagements are of central theoretical and contemporary political concern. In an age of globalization and localization, they are doubly so. Today the civil society arena is faced with various types of challenges presented by the dynamic interplay of the discourses and practices of nation-stated-based political and social projects and those of transnational structures and processes on the one hand; and the interactions of the expanding, homogenizing, and hegemonizing nature of globalization and the shrinking, heterogenizing, and defying character of localization on the other hand. It is within this context that the term global civil society emerges as it refers to “a domain of conflict” which indicates a political domain characterized by peculiarly modern forms of civic mobilization and protest.

One of the functional and analytical aspects of this domain is the divide between “global and local” or the one between “center and periphery”. In this panel, we locate our discussion of this divide into the question of how the impact of global civil society is played out and experienced on local practices. Our case study here is Turkey which has had a fascinating experience of global and local interactions over the last two decades.

There appear to be three analytical ways of looking at the evolution of global civil society and its penetration to various localities. First, looking, at, above all, the impact of the global civil society on localities as part of the injection process of the ideals of European/Western political modernity have emphasized the presence, and sometimes persistence, of alternative modernities in which one can view the interaction of the global and local as a process of negotiation over different types of social and political spheres. From another perspective, research on global civil society has shown the mobilization of European/Western understanding of civil society into the non-Western localities, mostly with a perceptible success of the imitation of European/Western type of processes and structures. Finally and more alternatively, what emerges as very clear out of the debate on global civil society is viewing it as an ideal-type: this term implies “an unfinished project that consists of …actors who organize themselves across borders, with the deliberate aim of drawing the world together in new ways”, and it is “an actually-existing socio-economic and political domain which nonetheless needs to be fostered and promoted as an arena where ‘goods’ such as non-violence, civility, transparency and compromise are more likely to flourish” (Keane, 2003).

Although the ideals of global civil society --- such as non-violence, civility, transparency, justice, participation, and compromise --- are neither necessarily fully realized in all European/Western contexts nor have historically emerged out of practices that can only be placed within the boundaries of European/Western settings, they have an established normative power as the defining terms of globally mobilized civil society, which are often viewed parallel to the ideals of European/Western political and social modernity. It is this aspect of global civil society, despite the existence of some work on the impact of global civil society on local practices, that scholars have largely neglected in favor of studies which narrowly evaluate this impact as mostly one-way, evenly uniform, and mostly positive in the direction of global to local, or center to periphery. This panel is organized to fill that gap All of the papers follow a type of critical approach to linkages between global civil society and local practices, encompassing both institutional and discursive analysis of the politics of the impact of global civil society on local practices in the case of Turkey, discussing a range of issues from human displacement to environment, from social inclusion to Europeanization.
Another wide-ranging debate with respect to global civil society has concerned the effectiveness of global civil society as an actor in world politics, with the realist position emphasizing nation-state based politics while scholars who have heralded the emergence of a global public sphere emphasize global civil society as a crucial component of that sphere. Much has been said on the crucial role of global civil society in worldwide advocacy and the creation of global norms in diverse areas such as human rights, democratization, gender, and the environment (Scholte 2005; Held and McGrew 2003; Kaldor 2003; Clark 2003; Anheier and Themudo 2002; Khagram et al. 2002; Anheier et al. 2001; Risse et al. 1999; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Wapner 1995). However, as discussed above, the linkages and interactions of global civil society with local practices in a multidirectional fashion still remain to be analyzed. This is what this panel aims to accomplish in the case of Turkey. Exploring and divulging these linkages will help establish a solid basis for the role of global civil society in world politics. Accordingly, the panel specifically explores the following linkages/questions: Ozlem Altan-Olcay’s paper investigates two interrelated effects of international civil society activism on the realm of social inclusion: poverty reduction and, simultaneously, changing discursive definitions of citizenship and rights. It asks the question whether these projects, while making very real differences in the lives of people, also contribute to the normalization of a restrictive definition of citizenship rights, one based on individual market skills. Deniz Sert’s paper seeks to show that while the issue of human displacement in Turkey is a local problem; its management and monitoring are structured within a global framework, where civil society is an important stakeholder. Thus, it looks at the interconnected relationship between local dynamics and international civil society. On a different topic, Ahmet Icduygu’s paper aims at presenting a historical-comparative investigation on the impact of the Europeanization process on the civil society arena in Turkey over time. It intends to reveal striking changes, nature and characteristics of these changes, and investigates the mode of Europeanization as a key variable to account for the diverse experiences among various civil society actors in the country. Finally, in her paper, Hande Paker will analyze the role of global civil society actors in creating common spaces as well as the channels and mechanisms through which local/national civil society and citizens in transnational environmental networks participate in transnational spheres, using the controversial cases of dam construction and conservation efforts in the Mediterranean sea and shores in Turkey.

**Selected References**


Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Cohen & Deng 1998, 1998a; Deng 1995; Korn 1999; Leckie 2003; Muggah 2003; Vincent & Sorensen 2001; Weiss & Korn 2006). Most of the time IDPs have had to flee their homes because of internal conflicts, communal violence, forced relocation and/or other human rights violations, putting them at risk within the borders of their own countries in a situation where the ability to carry out the responsibility to protect (a task generally associated with state sovereignty) has been compromised or become impossible (Deng 1995). As Cohen explains, “They remained inside their own countries under the domestic jurisdiction of their governments, the very governments that may have caused their displacement in the first place and that were often unwilling or unable to provide for their well-being and security” with “nowhere to run, no place to hide” (2004: 36). The IDPs in Turkey, who have been displaced by the armed conflict in the southeast of the country, are no exception to this rule.

The Turkish security forces are known to expel and resettle the villages whose inhabitants refused to become village guards to fight against the Kurdish insurgents, whose security could not be provided, or who were thought to aid the Kurdish insurgents (Kurban, et. al. 2007: 81). This was a rather “planned social change that necessarily entails population movement, population selection and most probably population control” (Chambers quoted in Muggah 2003: 10) in a region where security was a high priority.

While security was a high priority, human rights were not. It was within this setting that the global civil society, with other global actors, became effective in raising awareness on the issue of human displacement in Turkey. Under pressure from the United Nations and the European Union, which Turkey wishes to join one day, Ankara commissioned in 2004 a study to verify the size of the IDP population as well as their living conditions. Conducted by the Institute of Population Studies at Hacettepe University in Ankara, the study estimates the IDP population to be between 950,000 and 1.2 million, which is almost triple the number that has been advocated by the government.

After the realization of the scale of the problem, Turkish government began to take some action, such as the 2004 compensation law, which intends to provide financial restitution to displaced Kurds, and the Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project (RVRP), which is supposed to help IDPs return their homes. However, as Walter Kälin points out, in addition to a national government, civil society and the internally displaced themselves are major stakeholders in the search for durable solutions for the displaced, and the most effective way of ensuring that governmental policies are well founded, well informed, and also sustainable is through close consultation with these other actors.

Accordingly, while the UNDP has aided Turkey's efforts to support the needs of IDPs, through a project, Support to the Development of an IDP Program in Turkey, in partnership with the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has established an informal mechanism to monitor progress in implementing recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General’s Representative on the Human Rights of IDPs. On the other hand, other global civil society actors, such as the
Human Right Watch has also monitored the process, stating that the compensation law for example, failed to offer the IDPs "fair and appropriate redress".

Thus, this paper seeks to show that while the issue of human displacement in Turkey is a local problem; its management and monitoring are structured within a global framework, where civil society is an important stakeholder.

References


Abstract

The current debate over “the notion of Europeanization of various institutions” is to a large extent about two competing lines of arguments: the inter-governmentalism of the realist traditions, and transnationalism of institutionalist approach. Particularly referring to the institutional development of the European Union (EU), realists stress the inter-governmental features of European integration, and they view the Union as an arena where national actors meet, negotiate, and cooperate. Institutionalsists, however, emphasize the capability of supranational institutions to breed interests and resources for their own existence, development, and expansion. These transnational institutions are seen with their contribution to the expansion of international norms and regulations which may transcend its member states. It is within this context that an expected result of the creation of the European Union is the emergence of Europeanization, which implies domestic changes caused by European integration and also reflects an institution, not only as a process. The position of non-state actors such as civil society organizations in the Europeanization process is therefore an issue of transnationalism from an institutionalist perspective. Hence, students of the field of civil society have begun to look more closely at the notion of Europeanization that operates at a transnational level.

This paper aims at presenting a historical-comparative investigation on the impact of the Europeanization process on the civil society arena in Turkey over time. It intends to reveal striking changes, nature and characteristics of these changes, and investigates the mode of Europeanization as a key variable to account for the diverse experiences among various civil society actors in the country. As parallel to the well-established theoretical link between civil society and democratization, it is often argued that there would appear to be a close relationship between the Europeanization process and the development of civil society. This partly theoretical and partly empirical linkage raises a number of questions, which form the main problematic issues to be elaborated in this paper. First, because it is not easy to determine the causal direction of the relationship: does Europeanization contribute to development of civil society or vice versa; and even if this is easily viewed as a two-way relationship, what is the nature and dynamics of this affiliation? Secondly, because it is not clear how the unquestioned conventional understanding of positive reciprocal interdependence between Europeanization and civil society affairs is able to reflect “the possible reality” of this linkage? Thirdly, because it is unclear what dimensions of civil society, or what type of civil society actors, should be taken into account in order to evaluate the features of this relationship?

In attempting to answer these questions above, this paper draws upon data collected in two studies: CIVICUS 2006 and 2009 Civil Society Index Projects conducted by the Third Sector Foundation (TUSEV) in Turkey. Data originated from these two surveys are exclusively unique in terms of their contents which enable us not only to reflect the changes in the current status of civil society in Turkey, but at the same time they facilitate us to evaluate the impact of Europeanization on the civil society in the county, more importantly reflecting the diverse and even controversial aspects of this effect over time. This paper argues that the historically determined structure of associational life, its level of domestic transformation, and its level of penetration and the relationship with the external factors such as transnationalization and Europeanization are the key factors shaping the current status of the civil society arena in Turkey. It sets out to pinpoint analytically the distinctive impacts of these factors, particularly illustrating the range, specificity, and the institutional characteristics of the impact of Europeanization process over the wider context of civil society as well as their influence on the specific dimensions of the civil society such as its structure, environment, values, and impacts in the country. The paper concludes that these impacts are neither uniform or one-
way type nor totally positive and purely constructive, but they are rather multi-dimensional, varied, contextual, and partly negative and even sometimes destructive.

Some References:


In a world of increasingly transnational interactions, processes and institutions, global civil society has emerged as a significant actor both discursively and in practice. Global civil society, defined as ‘the global process through which individuals debate, influence and negotiate an ongoing social contract or set of contracts with the centers of political and economic authority’ (Kaldor 2003), comprise of NGOs, grass-roots groups, loose coalitions, networks, think tanks, individuals, and movements (Anheier et al: 2001; Kaldor 2003). There has been a large growth in the number and scope of ‘third sector organizations/NGOs/civil society organizations since the 1990s as well as growing interest in them as they have become ‘high-profile’ (Anheier and Themudo 2002; Lewis 2001; Hulme and Edwards 1997; Edwards and Hulme 1996).

In considering the impact of global civil society on local practices, this paper aims to analyze the role global civil society actors play in creating/fostering common spaces as well as the channels and mechanisms through which local/national civil society constituents participate in transnational spaces. Even though analytical distinctions can be made with regard to local, national, and transnational/global levels, in fact, these are intertwined processes. It is precisely these interconnections that I aim to explore.

Beck (2006, 1996) argues that civilizational risks such as the environment generate global publics which promote the cosmopolitan outlook. Cosmopolitanism is the defining characteristic of a new era in which national borders and differences are dissolving (Beck 2006). Cosmopolitinization, as a multidimensional process, involves the development of multiple loyalties and increase in diverse transnational forms of life, the emergence of non-state political actors, the development of global protest movements against neoliberal globalization and in favor of an alternative (cosmopolitan) globalization (Beck 2006). Cosmopolitinization is indicated by people campaigning for the worldwide recognition of human rights, the right to work, the protection of the environment or the reduction of poverty which has crucial implications for civil society and citizen participation. In this paper, I aim to combine the literature on cosmopolitanism and the transformation of citizenship, through the environment which is a civilizational risk according to Beck (2006, 1996). Civilization produces global crises and dangers which dissolve the old distinctions between the internal and external, national and international. If it is the civilizational risk which moves us to a new cosmopolitan reality, how does it do it? How do the local, national and global dynamics interlink civil society?

Beck (2006) argues that environmental issues constitute a worldwide political public. My question is how do different actors play a role in making it a worldwide/global public (sphere)? Do civil society actors and citizens participate and if yes, to what extent do they participate in this worldwide political public? What channels are available to civil society actors? Directly related to this is an analysis of transformation of citizenship within national/local spheres in terms of whether the environment is claimed as a citizenship right. The transformation of citizenship has been underlined with respect to transnational groups, most eminent of which are migrant groups. Soysal shows that an encounter of particularistic identity politics and universal citizenship rights results in a ‘decoupling of rights and identity’. As rights become more universalistic and are divorced from national belonging, identities become particularistic and expressive (Soysal 2001). This is one of the main characteristics of postnational citizenship. Immigrant groups’ claims in Europe for group-specific provisions such as demands about mother-tongue instruction, Islamic headscarf or halal food in schools are not grounded in religious or ethnic narratives. Rather, they appeal to the universalistic principles of equality, emancipation, and individual rights. In doing this, Soysal argues, they participate in and contribute to the reification of European and global discourses and ideals as well as common public spaces (Soysal 2002). In this paper, I will examine whether these individual rights based on universalistic discourses include environmental rights which are claimed by citizens who are faced with local environmental risks. In that respect, I deal with the question of what channels civil society (intertwined globally and locally) opens for citizens who want to claim the environment as part of individual rights. Furthermore, the question of how the participation of local civil society and citizens in transnational environmental networks contributes to common/global public spheres will be investigated.
In order to analyze these questions, two cases of controversial environmental issues in Turkey will be studied. The first case is water regimes and dam construction. In that regard, perhaps the most controversial project in the recent years has been the Ilısu dam project in the Southeastern part of Turkey. This project has serious environmental and social repercussions one of which is the submerging of Hasankeyf under water, a site which fulfills nine of the ten UNESCO world heritage criteria. It is of interest because a campaign which involves local, national and global civil society has been running to stop the project. Similarly, a civic effort to stop dam projects in Black Sea region which has severe environmental consequences has emerged. The second case is the conservation efforts in the Mediterranean Sea and shores. The Mediterranean is selected because it is an issue which again brings together global, national and civil society as well as an international treaty and commitment from riparian countries. Thus, these cases are fitting for studying the dynamics of emergence of global public spheres from the perspective of civil society.

Selected References:


In the 1990s and 2000s, civil society has become integral to discussions of how to liberalize societies and democratize political regimes. This has been as a result of Latin American and East European regime transformations in the 1980s and 1990s, which highlighted the significance of civil society associations for dismantling authoritarian rule (Brysk 2000, Mouzelis 1986, Rau 1991, Wesolowski 1995). These experiences have also inspired international funding to civil society associations in developing countries with the goals of building reciprocity and trust among citizens, adding to the social capital necessary for vibrant, participatory development (Putnam 1993, Edwardz and Foley 1998), and contributing to effective channels for citizens’ inclusion in the political system (Walzer 1995, Taylor 1990). In other words, local civil society activism with global connections has become increasingly important in practices of citizenship.

In his classical text on citizenship, Marshall identified three stages in the evolution of citizenship rights. Accordingly, people first achieved civil citizenship when they acquired a series of rights pertaining to individual freedom. Next came political rights followed by a series of welfare and social security rights, bestowing people with social citizenship (Marshall 1992). Writing this study at the heels of the Second World War, Marshall drew attention to and offered a corrective to the capitalist model of economic development and its potential for immense havoc for the majority of populations (Janowitz 1994). Despite much criticism, this model based on rights to basic human dignity and their relation to the core of political membership continues to capture imaginations.

However, in the post-1970s world, the rise of market-centered policy making as well as the increasing power over of international institutions vis-à-vis national states have given rise to a situation in which there was need for other analytical tools to capture everyday realities. In the aftermath of the financial crisis of the 1970s, many governments in the developing world had to adopt structural adjustment programs, which meant drastic cuts in already low welfare expenditures. With the increasing significance of transnational corporations and international institutions, governments lost a good portion of their ability to adopt independent and effective economic policies within their borders. So the question became, if economic rights are an important part of citizenship; if there is a tremendous reshuffling of political power across the world; and if the economy is increasingly organized as a sphere seemingly separate from “intervention” by politics, how are we to conceptualize practices of citizenship in the contemporary context?

This paper argues that understanding the nature of increased international attention to civil society is one way of exploring these questions. It aims to assess the impact of international networks of civil society organizations in pushing for more social inclusion in the case of Turkey. It does so by specifically focusing on questions of poverty and socioeconomic needs. For Turkey, a massive restructuring of the economy took place from the 1980s onwards with government incentives to export orientation (Oniş, Boratav, Yeldan 1995), curbing of trade union activism (Boratav 1995) and capital account liberalization. Despite impressive economic growth, the following decades have been marked by several economic crises, growing inequality and poverty (Dufour and Orhangazi 2009, Şengül and Tuncer 2005). During the economic restructuring, the capacity of the state for offsetting marginalization and inequality was both reduced and delegitimized. Both international and local technocrats and the more vocal business classes articulated justifications for dismantling existing mechanisms of social protection (Buğra 2003 ) that resulted in the growing social exclusion of the laboring classes (Keyder 2005) based on discourses of economic “necessity.” The tendency of the governments to lower down social protection mechanisms has resulted in a situation in which citizens are increasingly expected to fare for themselves.

By following the implementation of a selection of internationally funded microfinance projects in Istanbul, this paper will explore three kinds of processes. First, it will assess the contribution of civil society activism to poverty reduction and, thus, its potential to enhance social inclusion. Second, it will explore the disciplinary practices of the projects to understand the kind of relationship that citizens in contemporary Turkey are expected to have with the market (Lairap-Fonderson 2006). Finally, it will evaluate the kind of cultural shift that this
relationship entails in the content of citizenship by drawing out undertones of individual rationalities and entrepreneurial attitudes.

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