



Governing urban diversity in Istanbul: Pragmatic and non-discriminatory solutions of governance initiatives in response to politicisation of diversity

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Abstract

This paper examines the discourses and practices of central and local governments, as related to the issues of urban governance and diversity, and the emergence of new governance arrangements in different fields of Istanbul's diversity. The paper claims that current diversity discourses and policies in Turkey are being increasingly used as a rhetorical device to promote the economic development of the city, and to circumvent the different demands of people of diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. In such processes of politicising diversity, governance initiatives undertake an important mission in coming up with pragmatic and non-discriminatory solutions to diversity-related issues. Through an examination of recent changes in the diversity policies of Istanbul and the emerging governance arrangements, this paper uncovers the conflicts and the mismatches that exist between the highly politicised discourses, policies and practices, and explores how different types of governance arrangements bring new arenas of expression to the diverse groups.

Keywords

Diversity, governance arrangements, disadvantaged groups, immigrants, Istanbul, urban governance

Introduction

Discourse and practices related to diversity are being increasingly politicised in Turkey. While politicians and policymakers praise “diversity”, the term has been redefined and reshaped in line with the interests of the central government and the connected newly emerging power groups, who are interested in manipulating the political attitudes of people living

in this huge metropolis. The right-wing populist political approach has been used extensively to circumvent the demands of groups advocating

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democratic, cultural and human rights. Such slogans as “diversity is the richness of the society living in peace” are used not to promote the respect of differences, but to increase the homogenisation of society and exclude those that claim the opposite. In defining the people as culturally homogenous, the central governments of the last two decades juxtapose the country’s identity and common interests, which are considered to be based on common sense, with the identity and interests of others, usually migrant minorities. While this rhetoric has been acknowledged swiftly by the majority in less diversified cities, it has led to conflicts and tensions in the metropolitan areas, which have experienced growing numbers of immigrants with distinct cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Different governance arrangements have become important not only in mediating among groups with different interests and relations to central/local government, but also in the struggle for rights and empowerment of these diverse communities.

In this paper, we present a study on the politicisation of diversity discourse in Turkey. We analyse the current government policies and practices and show how diversity discourse is being used to blunt the increasing voices calling for a “respect for differences”. This paper draws from fieldwork data to investigate the tensions between the central and local governments’ right-wing populist discourse, and pragmatic and inclusionary practices of different civil society and grassroots organisations on diversity-related issues. We conducted the study in Istanbul-Beyoğlu, which has long been a point of attraction for migrants from the entire country, who have distinct cultural, religious, ethnic and socioeconomic characteristics and, recently, for international migrants and asylum seekers from outside of Turkey.

The first section of the paper summarises the shifts in the debates on the governance of diversity, providing clarification for how these discourses have been politicised. The second section focuses on Istanbul, with particular attention paid to how diversity is addressed in the city, and the increasing role of governance arrangements in dealing with diversity-related issues. The concluding section presents an analysis of the major problems and challenges faced in Turkey in the governance of diversity.

Shifts in the governance of diversity

Diversity has always been an important topic in urban research (Amin and Graham, 1997), although the definition of diversity and diversity-related policies has shifted significantly (Grillo, 2005, 2007; Syrett and Sepulveda, 2012; Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2005), and the recent experiences of many urban areas have raised a number of challenging issues related to the governance of diversity (Syrett and Sepulveda, 2012).

As Grillo (2007: 979) highlights, diversity-related policies have changed substantially over time. From the end of the 19th century through to the middle of the 20th century, many countries’ nationalisation strategies suppressed cultural and ethnic identities. Nation-states enacted policies and practices that aimed to assimilate immigrants and ethnic minorities and enforce their compliance with dominant national norms. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the discourse shifted towards cultural pluralism and multiculturalism (Grillo, 2005). Governments introduced policies that recognised differences between host communities and immigrants, as well as different cultural and ethnic communities within the nation-state.

The beginning of the 21st century featured a new approach to diversity, which can be called “the return to scepticism about cultural diversity” (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2005), or the “backlash against diversity” (Grillo, 2005). This scepticism brought with it significant changes to the policy agenda. For example, Forrest and Dunn (2010) claim that political support for multicultural policies has diminished in Australia, while Koopmans (2010) argues that the Netherlands, where multicultural policies have long been the norm, has come to be regarded as an example of the failure of such an approach. In general, the policies adopted in many countries have shifted from promoting the recognition of ethnic and cultural identities to pushing for integration (Green, 2006) or neo-assimilation (Chan, 2010; Joppke, 2004; Meer and Modood, 2013; Modood, 2015). A neo-assimilation approach recognises that immigrants may have diverse backgrounds and different demands, but prioritises the fulfilment of certain expectations of the majority of the population (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013).

Recently, there has been growing hostility towards difference, given the rise of right-wing politics in many parts of the world. Anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobia that enjoy support in Europe and have growingly intertwined with far-right populist discourses (Vieten and Poynting, 2016) need a closer look.

Politicising diversity: The impacts of right-wing populism

Why did multicultural policies lose their attractiveness and get replaced by negative discourses on diversity? The current literature highlights different issues. Firstly, there are studies identifying new right-wing politics, which has been a significant factor in national and local politics across Europe, as important in this change. Secondly, ethnic, cultural and religious conflicts have effectively engendered a shift from “multicultural” to “neo-assimilative” practices (Grillo, 2007; Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010). Thirdly, the impacts of the 2008 economic crisis and the consequent austerity policies have incited negative attitudes towards “natives” and those considered “others”.

In general, politicisation is manifested by a change in decision-making processes, which is increasingly subjected to pressure by different advocacy coalitions (Beyers and Kerremans, 2004; Christiansen, 1997). It can be explicit different ways, namely institutions becoming ‘politicised’ when party politicians gain a tighter grip on the operations, the increasing influence of elected or appointed politicians in decision-making processes at the expense of professionals, and political clientelism. Political clientelism is the most common form of politicising diversity, with certain services used as a political tool to buy support for government policies. Clientelism is mostly in the form of delivering material goods or public services to people who are indifferent or not against receiving support on ideological grounds, and who would be most likely return the favour with their political and electoral support (Stokes, 2007). According to Raco and Kesten (2018: 891), the recent experience of politicisation of diversity has two distinct and conflicting faces: while right-wing politicians come up with pragmatic, consensual and seemingly inclusive narratives of diversity, they use these narratives to

“deflect political attention away from the socially and economically divisive impacts of global models of economic growth and physical development”.

This seemingly innocuous discourse has significant consequences on diversity policies, as it posits a moral distinction between the “real” people (supporters) and those not included in the majority. It is for this reason that diverse groups feel more alienated if they express their identities, compelling them to try to mask their differences. This deceitful attitude provoked groups with different identities to demand free expression of their interests. In metropolitan areas in particular, as points of attraction for both national and international migrants, disadvantaged groups began to show their discontent in different ways, including extreme terrorist attacks. The response to this situation has been the implementation of strategies to simplify and reduce the context of the term “diversity” and to use it as part of a political project focusing on competitiveness and economic development. Academic studies have been used to justify this approach, including those underlining the contributions of immigrants to long-term economic development (Putnam, 2007), competitive power (Florida, 2005; Storper, 1997; Thrift and Olds, 1996) and the prosperity of urban areas (Bodaar and Rath, 2005; Zachary, 2000), besides a significant number of studies focusing on the role of diversity in generating a creative, innovative and competitive economy (Fainstein, 2005; Florida, 2001; Landry, 2000; Tasan-Kok and Vranken, 2008).

Furthermore, a number of crowd-pleasing policies have been adopted around the world, including large-scale infrastructure projects, and iconic building and large-scale renewal and redevelopment projects, with the intention of the political elite creating an image of great economic power. Announcements of such projects are usually accompanied by requests for public support of ongoing policies, highlighting that everyone stands to benefit, while the negative consequences of such projects on diverse groups are disregarded, swept aside by rhetoric of competitiveness, growth and economic power.

Welfare reform programmes, policies for the disadvantaged, government services for all and equal citizenship policies constitute other actions on the agenda when politicising diversity. At first glance,

they may seem to be in conflict with the market-oriented neo-liberal economic policies, but that may not be the case (Peck, 2001). In fact, this is a good example of formal conservative pragmatism, showing that anybody can benefit from new economic policies if they behave as part of the majority and do not underline their differences. In this way, diversity is voluntarily concealed due to the promise of services and facilities offered by central and local governments.

The increasing role of governance arrangements

As governments in recent decades have increasingly transferred their capabilities externally through outsourcing, they are often left with reduced skill sets and limited capacity. This has created challenges for governments to deliver services through new working relationships with different organisations, which prompted other actors to take on roles in diversity-related issues with varying capacities and interests. It has triggered an apparent shift in responsibilities, away from the formal institutions and procedures of government to a wider governance process with respect to diversity-related issues (Syrett and Sepulveda, 2012). Different stakeholders, operating through partnerships and networks, have tried to fulfil roles that were formerly carried out by governments. However, in certain issues, it is possible to observe governments' lack of interest, especially regarding the problems of marginalised groups. Right-wing populist politicians and their rhetoric across Europe and beyond that see cultural, ethnic and religious diversity as a threat to national identities neglect the needs and claims of 'Others' (Wodak, 2015).

That is why marginalised communities articulate their resentment and dissatisfaction through governance arrangements, specifically grassroots opposition that enables diverse groups to raise their voices and claim rights. Non-governmental actors, including civil society-based organisations, grassroots movements and initiatives and other local activists, have taken on greater responsibilities in fighting for the rights of different identities and addressing their problems. They have struggled to ensure diverse groups' access to resources, services and their active

participation in social and economic life. Such governance initiatives are important in enabling diverse voices and views to be heard, and thus promote cohesion and social solidarity (Blake et al., 2008). In this regard, governance initiatives are recognised as key mechanisms in meeting unsatisfied needs, and in making diverse groups more visible. These two motives created increasing numbers of governance arrangements that have distinct characteristics in terms of their role in the governance practices, the distribution of decision-making powers and the interaction with the other actors of governance, especially government departments.

In the literature, it is possible to see the classification of governance arrangements based on different characteristics, which we have used to analyse our empirical data and present our findings in the following sections. Accordingly, Arnouts et al. (2012) argue that there are differences among governance arrangements with respect to their major concerns besides their actors, power relations and interaction. Brown (2015) defines different types of governance arrangements in metropolitan areas, including governance by the government, shared governance, governance by private actors and governance by indigenous people or communities. Ambrose-Oji et al. (2017) grouped governance arrangements into three categories: non-governmental-led approaches; co-governance and government-led approaches; and co-management. Van Montfort et al. (2014) and Risse (2012) brought a typology of arrangements based on leading actors and their interaction by defining several categories: provision of services by external state actors in areas of limited statehood; hierarchical steering by non-state actors; delegated authority to other actors; negotiation systems; external influence; competition systems; and parallel governance. As underlined by Daugbjerg (1998), membership (number and interests), interaction (bargaining, consultation, frequent or unstable interaction) and institutionalisation (consensus or conflict in principles, procedures and policy problems) are important issues that define different forms of governance arrangements. That said, the context, namely the characteristics of and institutionalisation in a society, is also an important factor in defining different governance arrangements.

Table 1. Summary of the main discourses, policies and main legislation related to diversity in Turkey.

Period	Pre-1950s	1960s–1970s	1980s–1990s	2000s	2010+
Main policy discourses on diversity	Homogenisation of population and assimilation Nationalisation	Emphasis on the free expression of interests More democratic rights	Disregarding the demands of diverse ethnic and religious groups	Democratisation discourse Integration	Disingenuous discourses praising diversity but disregarding ethnic, religious and cultural differences
Driving forces in defining main discourses on diversity	1923 Lausanne Agreement—defining non-Muslim population as minorities 1924 Constitution—the principle of equal citizenship	1961 Constitution—the principle of equal citizenship and more democratic rights	1982 Constitution—Limitations on the practice of cultural, ethnic and religious differences	The EU accession process 1999 Helsinki Summit; 2004 Civil Committee on Minorities; 2008 EU Council Decision	The rise of right-wing populism as the dominant political ideology Authoritarian drive of the government

EU: European Union.

Governance of diversity in Istanbul

Istanbul, which has been a multicultural and poly-ethnic city since the Ottoman Empire, is a very good case study in diversity policy shift and, recently, the politicisation of diversity-related issues.

According to the official statistics, only 15 per cent of the city's residents were born in Istanbul (TURKSTAT, 2016), and the share of people that belong to non-Turkish ethnic groups constitutes more than 30 per cent of the city's population: the largest groups being Kurds, and others including Albanians, Azerbaijanis, Circassians, Georgians, Laz, Arabs and Roma people.¹ In the last decade, the city has also experienced a soaring number of foreign immigrants and asylum seekers from different parts of the world, especially from Syria. The Turkish Ministry of Interior's Migration Management Directorate (2018) declares the number of registered Syrians in Istanbul to be 558,276, making up 3.71 per cent of the city's population. In response to increasing population diversity in Turkey, and particularly in Istanbul, policymakers have embraced a discourse that celebrates diversity. Central and local policymakers associate the multicultural character of the city with a "richness" of its society, and emphasise the city's "tolerance" and "openness" to different cultures. In October

2016, the Turkish President announced the following (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı (TCBB), 2016):

As representatives of a tradition that regards diversity as a richness in our social, cultural and political presence, we pay great attention to ensure that our citizens continue to live in peace and tranquillity, without discrimination based on religion, language, race, ethnicity or faith.

This new rhetoric, unfortunately, does not mirror the present policies and practices concerning ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. Diversity remains a problematic issue in Turkey, and there is a long history of scepticism on diversity, which makes the review of shifts in discourses related to the governance of diversity, and the driving forces that shape these discourses, rather interesting (see Table 1).

The basic distinction in the Ottoman Empire was based on being Muslim or non-Muslim. Non-Muslim groups were allowed relative autonomy in their religious, cultural, economic and political affairs as long as they paid a special tax called *cizye*. The rights to practice their religion and customs (Grillo, 2000) were accepted as a sign of tolerance by the ruling groups. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the 1924 Constitution enumerated

principles of equal citizenship in support of the government's homogenisation policy (İçduygu and Kaygusuz, 2004). The emphasis was on citizenship duties rather than democratic rights, and cultural, religious and ethnic differences were overlooked to construct a national citizenship identity. The idealised homogeneity and the uniform identity of the new political community also led to the foundation of societal division between the dominant majority, Sunni Turks, and the distinct ethnic and religious groups, Kurds being the largest among them.

The 1961 Constitution explicitly referenced freedom of thought, religion and beliefs and opened new channels of free expression of interests. These freedoms were curtailed by the military intervention in 1980. Economic crisis conditions and subsequent social movements that protested increasing socioeconomic disparities triggered the intervention. The post-1980s era was characterised by structural adjustment and neo-liberal policies in Turkey. The new constitution adopted in 1982 was in favour of the free market economy, but restricted the rights of different groups with ethnic backgrounds and religions that differed from the majority (Yanasmayan, 2017). That said, the use of the term "diversity" was mainly associated with socioeconomic differences in this period, as the gaps between the rich and the poor, and the globalised professionals and downgraded labour, widened in Istanbul, now a neo-liberal-postmodern-global city (Grillo, 2000).

The issue of ethnic and cultural diversity in Turkey returned to the agenda in the late 1990s during the accession negotiations with the European Union (EU) (Kaya, 2010). Following the 1999 Helsinki Summit, when Turkey was accepted as a EU candidate country, reforms were launched in line with the Copenhagen Criteria to be undertaken during the period between 1999 and 2005 and aimed at enhancing fundamental rights and freedoms (Avrupa Birliği Genel Sekreterliği (ABGS), 2001). The new AKP government included the EU-led democratisation programme as part of its campaign in 2002, advocating for reforms that supported individual freedoms. However, these efforts slowed after 2005, as the central government moved away from its earlier democratic discourse. The shift from democratisation to right-wing populism as the dominant political ideology and the authoritarian drive

of the government have led to resentment against diversity, and cultural, religious and political disenfranchisement and the exclusion of diverse groups.

The growing exclusionary, populist manner of the right-wing politicians nurtured political, cultural and religious divisions between Turks and Kurds, supporters and opponents of secularism and the Sunni Muslim majority and Alevis, as the governments disregarded the expression of diverse identities. As a result, most of the social movements and social and humanitarian claims have turned against the power of the government, even those without a political agenda, such as the Gezi movement in 2013. These types of reactions, however, accelerated the authoritarian attitude of the existing central government, giving less chance for groups to express interests and claims for their rights concerning their distinct identities.

However, as mentioned earlier, the diversity rhetoric and "strategic utilization of populist repertoire of the government" (Çınar and Sayın, 2014: 379) has resulted in the politicisation of diversity. This politicisation promoted resentment and division between the people who support the dominant ideology and those not included in the majority. For example, the ruling government defined its efforts to provide basic services and facilities to asylum seekers from Syria² as a sign of its humanitarian policy and respect for diversity. Actually, the politicisation of diversity has been manifested in different ways. Firstly, state institutions, including higher education, judiciary and security forces, have recently become politicised, as power has been accumulated and exercised by the elected authorities and the state elite. Secondly, the populist ideology of the government has been manifested through the emphasis on social assistance programmes where municipalities have provided assistance for the poor based on a faith-based and charity approach (Kaya, 2015). By providing them with material benefits and opportunities for upward mobility as well as governmental recognition, the governments have gained the support of the disadvantaged groups. Thirdly, by creating a seemingly inclusive diversity rhetoric, the current government has aligned diversity discourse with economic development. For example, Istanbul's cosmopolitan character has been increasingly used to promote it as

both a tourism destination and a viable option for businesses and entrepreneurs. The diversity of the city has been highlighted as part of a branding strategy, with such slogans as “city of tolerance and cultural diversity, coexistence of various ethnicities, mosaic of different religions” and rhetoric holding up Istanbul as “a global city”. The strategies followed by the national and local governments have indeed intensified socioeconomic inequalities and divisions and deflected the attention from the social consequences of large-scale urban development projects.

Today, the practice and measures concerning diversity parallels the dominant discourse and policies of the central government organisations³ (Eraydın et al., 2014). The central government institutions and the locally elected governments that belong to the governing national party do not show explicit interest in ethnic and cultural diversity; rather, they focus on socioeconomic and demographic differences, especially the problems of the disadvantaged groups. In this respect, the main concern of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, as the leading authority in the development of diversity-related policies, is providing opportunities to specific disadvantaged groups, including women, children, young people in need of help, the elderly and those with disabilities.⁴ Besides the Ministry, the government designed a support scheme for disadvantaged groups, namely the “Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund”. Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations, which are faith- and charity-based organisations, are responsible for managing this fund. The fund provides family assistance in the form of food, heating, shelter, education and healthcare, besides in-cash transfers. This scheme of the government works through “clientelism” and “patronage”; in other words, relationships based on demand for political support in return for certain services or assistance (Miller and Nicholls, 2013; Stokes, 2007). This is a good example of politicised diversity policies since it is used to attract partisan voters, including the politically weak and poor (Aybars and Tsarouhas, 2010; Sayarı, 2014).

The attitude of the metropolitan governments controlled by the ruling right-wing political party (AKP) is not so different. A review of the main policies and

practices of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) in diversity-related issues indicates that the main concerns of the IMM in this regard are related to socioeconomic issues. The IMM refers to the way it provides services as follows (IMM, 2011: 35):

...adopting a comprehensive approach and ensuring that all social groups, including disadvantaged groups, participate in decision-making processes that will fulfil their needs and demands.

While the focus is on disadvantaged groups, the problems of immigrants and the needs of ethnic, religious and cultural groups are rarely addressed in policy documents. Instead, the Department of Cultural Services focuses mainly on restoring and rehabilitating cultural assets and building cultural facilities, most of which are attractive for visitors. Indeed, this can be seen as part of the strategy to create a competitive and global image of the city by making it attractive to footloose capital.

The district municipalities governed by mayors of the ruling political party follow exactly the policies defined by the IMM. For example, Beyoğlu Municipality focuses mainly on sociodemographic and socioeconomic differences, although this district has the highest ethnic diversity in Istanbul. The concept of diversity used in the 2007–2009 Strategic Plan (Beyoğlu Municipality, 2006) is limited to “equal opportunities”, “participation” and “social municipality”. Contrary to the municipalities governed by AKP, the district municipalities that are governed by the opposition parties take a greater interest in issues connected to diversity. Since they have limited autonomy under the authoritarian central government and IMM, they want to enlarge their sphere of influence by enhancing their connections with local people. Accordingly, they use the rhetoric of “local democracy”. For instance, Kadıköy Municipality emphasises social solidarity (Kadıköy Municipality, 2012), while Bakırköy Municipality says that it pursues policies aimed at social cohesion, integration and cultural diversity (Bakırköy Municipality, 2009). Only a few district municipalities maintain close relationships with the representatives of diverse cultural and ethnic groups, such as Şişli and Beşiktaş Municipalities, although they have difficulty meeting

the demands of the different cultural and ethnic groups and religious communities. This is because, as Sayarı (2014) argues, the IMM has a strong control over their financial resources.

Governance arrangements in Istanbul: Trying to bring solutions where central and local governments are not interested

As the previous section demonstrates, while governmental actors have an interest in helping disadvantaged groups, they have failed to come up with effective strategies to address the growing diversity of populations or to deal with the cultural, democratic and human rights of immigrants and ethnic groups with or without Turkish citizenship. Therefore, various types of non-governmental organisations have flourished in Istanbul in order to provide support for the vast numbers of immigrants and people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds whose cultural and human rights are not being met through government policies.

This section presents the findings of research that aimed to analyse the roles of different governance arrangements in dealing with diversity-related issues. We use empirical data garnered during semi-structured in-depth interviews with various non-governmental organisations. The steps followed in the research are as follows. Firstly, we created a database through web searches of different governance initiatives located in Beyoğlu-Istanbul. Secondly, we carried out a detailed study based on the information found on the websites of the organisations (such as these organisations' aims, target groups, activities and projects), as well as other materials, to understand how the activities of each organisation are related to the problems of diverse groups. Thirdly, we formed the list of initiatives concerning diversity and selected a sample among them. Prior to the fieldwork, we contacted these sampled organisations via email or telephone to discuss a possible interview. We then conducted in-depth interviews with the selected organisations (Table 2). The fieldwork was carried out in Beyoğlu between February and May 2014. Following the theoretical debates presented in the earlier sections, in-depth interviews are organised to define not only the main concerns of target groups,

but also their actors, resources and interaction patterns. The findings of the fieldwork showed substantial variations among the governance arrangements, mainly those supporting the policies of the existing governments and others that fight against problems concerning the rights and problems of the diverse groups.

Main concerns and target groups. It is possible to group the governance arrangements into two according to their main concerns. The first group of governance arrangements focuses on the empowerment of disadvantaged groups, including women, disadvantaged children and young people, the elderly and disabled, while also giving support to people with the similar cultural background. These organisations, such as the Human Resource Development Foundation and Social and Cultural Life Association, endeavour to empower disadvantaged groups, enhance the development of social capital and capacity building among targeted communities and ensure social inclusion. Improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups and people with diverse identities, preparing them for the labour market via assisting them in raising their capacity for self-employment through training programmes and providing professional help are the common goals of these organisations.

The second group of organisations deals with the protection of the rights of distinct religious, ethnic and cultural groups. Ethnic and cultural identities in Turkey, including Kurdish and Alevi people, have faced various forms of social, economic and political discrimination. The ideology of political Islam, the everlasting "Kurdish problem" and the state's homogenising emphasis on Turkish-Sunni identity have collectively resulted in the resentment of the different ethnic, cultural and religious groups (Erman, 2001). The mushrooming of governance arrangements on such issues is a clear indication of the existence of problems in meeting the needs of immigrants and ethnic, religious and cultural groups in different fields, particularly human rights. The in-depth interviews with the representatives of the selected governance arrangements show that these types of initiatives fulfil important functions. They challenge the populist and clientelist discourse of

Table 2. List of the interviewed governance initiatives.

Governance arrangements	Main concerns and target groups	Organisational structure		Interaction in decision-making
		Actors	Resources	
Human Resource Development Foundation	Empowerment of disadvantaged groups	Non-state actors	Government assistance, UN and EU funds	Shared governance
Social and Cultural Life Association	Empowerment of disadvantaged groups	Volunteers	EU funds and membership fees	Non-governmental-led approach
Children's Hope Association	Empowerment of children and youth in need	Non-state actors	Government assistance, EU funds, membership fees	Non-governmental-led approach
Association of Disabled People, Istanbul	Addressing the problems and needs of people with disabilities	Non-state actors	Government assistance, sponsors, membership fees	Shared governance
Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation	Strengthening the fight against domestic violence	Activists & volunteers	Government assistance, EU funds, own commercial enterprises	Non-governmental-led approach
Women's Solidarity Foundation	Empowerment of women	Non-state actors & volunteers	Several national and international funds	Non-governmental-led approach
Foundation for the Support of Women's Work	Empowerment of women	Non-state actors	Government assistance, international funds, donations, own commercial enterprises	Non-governmental-led approach
Gökkuşuğu Women Association	Empowerment of women	Volunteers	EU funds and membership fees	Non-governmental-led approach
ASAM Istanbul Initiative	Protecting the rights of immigrants and asylum seekers	Non-state actors	Government assistance, UN and EU funds, membership fees	Non-governmental-led approach
GÖÇ-DER	Addressing the problems and needs of immigrants	Non-state actors & volunteers	Donations and membership fees	Non-governmental-led approach
Human Rights Association	Fighting against discrimination and human rights violations	Non-state actors & volunteers	Donations and membership fees	In conflict with the state
Association for Monitoring Equal Rights	Fighting against discrimination and human rights violations	Non-state actors & volunteers	EU funds and membership fees	In conflict with the state
Saturday Mothers	Drawing attention to disappearances in custody	Ad hoc initiative	Own resources of community	In conflict with the state
Rome People Platform	Providing help and consultancy to Roma people	Activists & community leaders	Own resources of community	Non-governmental-led approach

UN: United Nations; EU: European Union; ASAM: Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants; GÖÇ-DER: Migrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture.

governmental organisations by making the needs and claims of the most marginalised communities visible, while also providing non-discriminatory and pragmatic solutions to their problems. Among them, a group of governance arrangements focuses specifically on fighting against human rights violations. For example, the Human Rights Association, which supports the freedom of expression and equal opportunities, investigates human rights violations and reports them to the public, as well as to national and international institutions. Through its different commissions, it organises campaigns and monitors human rights violations. The Association for Monitoring Equal Rights also aims to eliminate the violation of human rights and various forms of discrimination (see Table 2).

As may be expected, the two types of governance arrangements with different motivations have different target groups. The target audience of many governance arrangements is *disadvantaged groups*, including women, children, youth, the elderly, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups and people with disabilities. Among the initiatives, the ones addressing women's needs and problems—such as violence, various forms of discrimination (economic, political and social) and other inequalities—need particular attention. It is the aim of many of the initiatives, such as the Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV) and the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV), to increase the level of education among women and provide them with necessary employment skills. However, some women—such as immigrants or those with different ethnic backgrounds—are more vulnerable than others. Gökkuşuğu Women's Association was established primarily to address the inequalities faced by Kurdish women, whether economic (e.g. ethnic discrimination in employment) or political (e.g. restrictions on parliamentary seats). The Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation focuses primarily on the issue of violence against women, offering legal assistance and psychological support for the victims of violence and strengthening women's solidarity. The Foundation also plays a significant role in raising public awareness on the issue.

The target groups of other initiatives are *immigrants and people from different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds*. Among these, the Migrants'

Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (GÖÇ-DER) provides immigrants with financial assistance and legal consultancy, and finds solutions to their accommodation, health, education and language-related problems. The organisation also helps immigrants to find jobs and offers training programmes. It is specifically concerned with disadvantaged immigrants who come to Istanbul due to forced displacement, and predominantly works for Kurdish people. The ASAM Istanbul Initiative, on the other hand, aims to provide support to Syrian asylum seekers. It was established due to the increasing number of asylum seekers in Turkey, and the need to provide them with psychological and social consultancy services. ASAM Istanbul develops public awareness projects and aims to improve the living conditions of asylum seekers through its activities, such as education, healthcare and accommodation.

The organisational issues: Actors/membership and resources. The actors of the governance initiatives, and how they are organised, have considerable differences. The first type of initiatives is *ad-hoc arrangements*. For example, Saturday Mothers was established in 1995 by a group of female human rights activists to raise awareness of the plight of their children, who were being held in detention. Inspired by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo of Argentina, they began their protests by meeting every Saturday and sitting in front of the Galatasaray High School on Istiklal Avenue in Istanbul. They carry placards, names and pictures of their missing kin, most of whom disappeared⁵ in the 1990s when the Turkish state was conducting counter-insurgency programmes against the PKK and Kurdish civilians. The membership to this arrangement is on a voluntary basis and this arrangement does not have any formal status.

Non-state actors, including community workers and volunteers, lead the second group of governance arrangements. These initiatives usually take the form of foundations or associations. Some governance arrangements in this group were established through hierarchical steering. ASAM Istanbul Initiative, for example, was established in 2014 as a subordinate body of the national ASAM organisation (Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants),

which is concerned with the plight of asylum seekers and internally displaced people and aims to defend their rights (ASAM, 2014).

Thirdly, some of the governance arrangements are led by activists and local leaders. Roma People Platform, for example, was initiated by people who are representatives of Roma community organisations. They try to help Roma people, a marginalised community in Turkey who face poverty and social discrimination, and give legal consultancy to them. Increasingly, the Roma face pressures to move from inner-city neighbourhoods as a result of urban renewal projects and gentrification.

According to the findings of the in-depth interviews and documents, the financial resources of the governance arrangements are comprised of central and local government assistance, funds from national and international organisations, donations and membership fees. For almost all the initiatives, regardless of their focus, finding financial resources was a common problem, in that the contributions of the members, volunteers and other supporters are usually limited. Some must organise fund-raising activities to increase their resources. Some have commercial enterprises, like the KADAV and KEDV do. It is important to note that the contributions of international organisations, especially the EU, were deemed significant for many, and these resources were cited as one of the reasons why voluntary groups organise as an association or foundation, as this allows them to receive support from such organisations. However, some of the initiatives, including Roma People Platform and Saturday Mothers, do not have any financial resources, and the expenses are usually covered by participants.

Interaction/distribution of power. The last issue of this study is the interaction of the initiatives studied with the government and the other organisations. In general, it is possible to define three types of initiatives. The first group of governance arrangements are characterised by a shared governance structure, where government bodies are directly involved in decision-making or provide guidance to the decision-making process. The Association of Disabled People Turkey, Istanbul Branch, for example, works with local governments and has monthly meetings

with officials from district municipalities in Istanbul to identify the needs of the people with disabilities and find solutions. The organisations in this group usually have strong collaboration with government bodies, and fill the gaps in government services.

The second group of initiatives adopt a non-governmental-led approach. The initiatives in this category provide support and assistance to target groups wherever government services remain insufficient or ineffective. While governmental bodies do not participate in the decision-making of these organisations, some of them have collaboration with the central and/or local government institutions in carrying out their activities. For example, the Children's Hope Association has a project-based relationship with several municipalities in Istanbul, and central and local authorities provide logistic support for the organisation (e.g. providing consultancy or physical space for some activities).

The third group of initiatives includes governance arrangements in conflict with the state. They do not have any interaction with central or local government bodies in terms of decision-making, collaboration or funding. Human rights-based initiatives are typical examples of this group. It is possible to observe the increasing importance of such initiatives in the last decade, as the authoritarian policies of the government became more evident.

Discussion and conclusions

Our analysis of the current government policies and practices has shown that the seemingly tolerant and open diversity discourse of governments is being used to legitimate wider agendas of promoting economic competitiveness of Istanbul, and to blunt the increasing voices calling for a respect for differences. In response to the right-wing populist discourse of the central and local governments, civil society and grassroots organisations have come up with pragmatic and non-discriminatory practices to address the problems of diverse groups.

In this paper we underlined that although Istanbul is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse cities in the world, the government has little concern with cultural and ethnic diversity. The general approach has been to devalue and disregard existing

cultural, ethnic and religious differences (Eraydin et al., 2014). Contemporary urban practices are not associated with the problems and needs of people belonging to distinct cultural, ethnic, disadvantaged and marginalised groups. There are also problems of discrimination against certain groups and human rights violations. This apathy and ignorance have been the main driver behind the emergence of different types of governance arrangements in Istanbul.

The findings of the study on the existing governance arrangements in Istanbul show that there are organisations working in collaboration with different government departments: they follow a shared governance practice, as defined by Brown (2015). These governance arrangements mainly target different disadvantaged groups, such as disabled people. Among them, there are initiatives concentrated on women's rights and problems, which are mainly led by volunteers. Although they have some contact with central and local governments, they define a specific domain in their activities and their way of work can be defined as a non-government-led type of governance. They have important roles in addressing the concerns of diverse communities, responding to the failures in the public sector and cleaning up after the state's negligence in diversity-related issues.

While these groups of governance arrangements aim to build good relations with the existing government mechanisms, there are initiatives that have tension with the state. If we examine their motivations and target groups, we detect that they are mainly concerned with human rights and human rights violations. As stated by most of the interviewees, the underlying reason behind this situation is that state officials perceive these initiatives as entities organising targeted communities against the government. This situation not only creates uneasy relationships but also limits cooperation between government offices and civil society actors concerned with diversity.

The Istanbul case offers a clear indication that governance arrangements can be effective in empowering diverse groups and making their problems more visible. These organisations make valuable achievements, as they bring pragmatic and non-discriminatory solutions against disingenuous discourses of governments. The successful attempts of such arrangements are quite important not only for

Turkey but also for many countries, since there has been growing hostility towards difference as a result of the rise of right-wing politics in many parts of the world. Their roles are quite indispensable in the period of "the politicisation of diversity" under the right-wing populist agenda. These arrangements protect people against a diversity backlash and fight for a more egalitarian and democratic society. The study introduced in this paper is an initial attempt to question the roles of governance arrangements in a period when scepticism on diversity has been increasing in many countries. Yet, further study is needed to investigate how such arrangements are having an effect on the current diversity agenda of the state.

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Notes

1. There have been no official statistics issued on the ethnic composition of the Istanbul population since 1965.
2. The total number of registered Syrians in Turkey is 3,591,714 as of November 2018 (The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2018).
3. There is no specific central government department in Turkey with responsibility for defining policies and practices related to diversity, although several ministries are involved in diversity-related issues, including the Ministry of Family and Social Policies,

the Ministry of Development and the Ministry of Employment.

4. However, public social spending is relatively low in Turkey. While the ratio of public social spending to gross domestic product (GDP) was 22 per cent on average across all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in 2014, Turkey spent less than 15 per cent of its GDP on social support and assistance.
5. The Human Rights Association says that it is investigating 792 cases of disappearances that occurred between 1992 and 1996.

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