Article

Youth Work in Turkey: A Sector Newly Emerging and Marked by Political Competition

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Abstract: Youth work is a very recent field in Turkey and the evolution of the field has been very much influenced by the European institutions, especially with the European Union candidacy process of Turkey. Youth work in Turkey can be analyzed in three different layers since the central government, local government (municipalities) and civil society organization all have youth work activities. During our Horizon 2020 PARTISPACE research project, we conducted ethnographic research to shed light on the local characteristics of youth work in a central Anatolian city in Turkey. The cases we discuss in the scope of this paper based on our ethnographic research includes two youth centers, one run by a central government agency, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the other by a local municipality run by the party of opposition. The study reveals the influence of local dynamics and political competition in the development of youth policy and youth work. Our research demonstrates that, even if youth work is not a priority in the public policy agenda, it has become an object of political competition in Turkey.

1. Introduction

Youth work emerged in Turkey with the EU candidacy process. Youth-oriented services identified as youth work and youth workers claiming to provide these services start to appear within different settings: within youth centers established by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, within youth centers established by local administrations, and within civil society structures. As a recently emerging field which does not seem to be a priority in the public policy agenda, there is a lack of experience and expertise in the subject that is recently developing. Furthermore, there are differences in terms of approach to youth work regarding its practice and even disagreements over its definition, and there is no formal training for youth workers. This paper is based on an ethnographic study of two youth centers in a central Anatolian city. These two experiences will allow us to explore what is identified as youth work, the factors influencing the evolution of youth work, and the conditions of its provision. Due to the local dynamics of the city in which we conducted our research, and the institutional/organizational differences between the two centers, including in terms of political affiliation, we will more particularly focus on the influence of political competition on the evolution of youth work.

One of the centers is run by the Ministry, the other by the local administration (a district municipality). The Ministry, as the main institution responsible for youth policy and the provision of youth-oriented services, started to establish youth centers in the mid-2000s. Today, there are youth centers in every city in Turkey. Regarding local administration, municipalities have started to create youth centers too, but it in a more random and less standardized way. In our city, it seems that two factors are determinant in the creation of this particular youth centre, on the one hand, a relatively

strong local administration and on the other, a significant student/youth population. Local authorities, historically weak in terms of administrative and financial autonomy, have started to be more powerful and more important for voters, on the one hand with increasing urbanization and on the other, with subsequent changes in their administrative structure starting in the early 80s. Consequently, local politics, in terms of its functions and structure, start to change, and create a new source of political capital, especially for the mayorship. In this context, local politicians start to engage in service provision in various areas such social services, culture, health, education, tourism, etc. Concerning our city, youth-oriented services are one of the main domains of provided service. It seems that more recently youth work also became an object. Since there are central government agencies providing these services, as the main responsible institutions, the enterprises of local administration potentially create a situation of competition. In the current state of party politics in Turkey, this kind of competition emerge mores explicitly when parties at both levels are different, as it is in our city.

In the context of our study, the elected metropolitan administration (and the district municipality which runs the youth center) and the national government are from opposing parties, the Justice and Development Party (JDP)[1], and the Republican People Party (RPP)[2]. The JDP, in government, was created in 2001 as the result of a split within an Islamist party, the Welfare Party (WP)[3], claiming to represent a moderate fraction of this latter. A fervent advocate of EU candidacy at the time of its establishment, the JDP managed to attract the electorate of central right parties of the period and come to power in 2002 (Çarkoğlu 2002). During its first term in government (mandate) the JDP stuck with the National program for the adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, and continued to adopt harmonization laws with the EU, including those which are more particularly related to our subject here, concerning youth policy and local administration/decentralization (democratization). Since 2002, while the center right has completely disappeared, the JDP has progressively increased its electoral support and has been consecutively reelected without interruption. However, towards the end of 2010, and especially with its third term, authoritarian tendencies and practices have become more apparent (Öktem and Akkoyunlu 2018), which has a direct influence on opposition and party competition. The main opposition party since 2002, the RPP is a central leftist party, which has two strong fractions, social democrat and republican/secularist. Even if the JDP has difficulties challenging the JDP and effecting an alternation in power, the party still has a relatively stable electoral constituency, of which our city is one of the important bastions. If one of the major aspects of the political struggle between the JDP and RPP is at the ideological-programmatic level/difference, the current conditions of party competition and increasing polarization shape the struggle as well. Both are using all their resources within this struggle, which eventually influence public service, which become politicized as a tool for political competition, including youth work.

In this paper, we will first start with an overview of youth policy and youth work in Turkey and then in the second part of the paper, we will concentrate on our ethnographic study in the central Anatolian city and discuss the influence of local dynamics and political competition observed in the youth field. During our Horizon 2020 PARTISPACE research project[4], we conducted ethnographic research to shed light on the local characteristics of youth work and youth participation. Even though our research scope is a larger one, in our article we will only discuss our ethnographic research in two youth centers. The first phase of PARTISPACE methodology consisted of a social mapping of actors, infrastructures, activities, and issues of youth participation in the city. This mapping stage consisted of expert interviews as well as group discussions and city walks with young people. After this mapping phase, a second phase consisted of choosing six case studies per city (two of which are

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youth centers studied in this article). For the study of case studies, an ethnographic approach was taken. Researchers spent time at those ethnographic sites and participated and documented their activities through participatory observations, the development of fieldnotes, the use of a research journal documenting the fieldwork, and the realization of expert interviews, group discussions and biographical interviews (see for details (Batsleer et al. 2017)). Our ethnographic research started in the two centers in December 2015 and continued till September 2017. For ethical purposes, we anonymized the names of the participants and we chose to not clearly spell out the name of the city even though due to its characteristics, for a person familiar with Turkey, it is not difficult to guess its name.

2. Youth Policy, Youth Centers and Youth Work in Turkey

As already stated, "youth policy" and "youth work" are recent concepts which began to be discussed in Turkey's civil society within the European Union candidacy process (see for details (Yentürk et al. 2008; Yurttagüler et al. 2014; Yılmaz and Oy 2014)).

Since 1999, the European Union (EU), through its Youth and Education Programs, has been a major actor for youth policy and youth work in Turkey, which also has a national page in the European Youth Portal. In addition to the Euromed Youth Program, the Socrates, Leonardo and Youth Programs have created new opportunities for the emerging actors of youth work and formal education since their establishment in 2002. For example, almost 20,000 people benefited from 1476 projects organized between 2003 and 2007 (UNDP 2008, p. 82).

The Council of Europe (CoE) is another important European actor. Since 2002, the Council of Europe (CoE) has developed cooperation with Turkey through the General Directorate of Youth and Sports, and later with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Numerous training courses have been organized for youth leaders on the issues of youth work and youth policy. The creation of the Turkish National Campaign Committee for the "all different-all equal" campaign in 2006 played an important role for the development of youth work and youth policy.

The major reference policy document in the field of youth is the National Youth and Sports Policy Document of 2013 (see for details (Şenyuva and Göksel 2016, p. 20)), a document in which reference to European discourses is explicit. In fact, it is possible to say that the document was prepared in the process of the EU candidacy of Turkey, seeing that Turkey needs to adopt a youth policy. That is why in the text, it is possible to see the traces of European discourse on youth. Almost all the keywords of European youth policy are present: education and lifelong learning; employment, entrepreneurship and vocational training; disadvantaged young people and social inclusion; democratic participation and civic consciousness; voluntary work and mobility. However, even though all these keywords are present in the text, some problems remain. On this subject, an expert on youth policy in Turkey stated in our expert interview that what really matters is not the content of the document per se, but "how" the policy is being implemented (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017).

Another channel of European influence is through the written material and sources on the subject of youth work. In order to proliferate studies on youth work, the Istanbul Bilgi University Youth Studies Unit, under a European Union funded project, "Network: Youth and Participation," translated into Turkish six important works related to youth participation, youth policy and youth work: *Gender Matters*, *Youth Policy Manual: How to Develop a National Youth Strategy*, *History of Youth Work*, *Political Participation of Young People*, *Training Essential: T-kit 6* and *Learning Mobility and Non-Formal Learning in European Contexts: Policies, Approaches and Examples*. However, despite these important efforts of the Istanbul Bilgi University Youth Studies Unit, there are still important gaps in youth work studies in Turkey.

Turkish youth policy structures and actors can be categorized in three levels: national, local and associative. HpH The main institution responsible for creating youth policies at the national level in Turkey is the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which was founded in 2011 as a replacement of the Directorate of Youth and Sport. It is important to note that a Ministry of Youth also existed in the past, and had passed through several previous reorganizations, reflecting varying perspectives of

subsequent governments. A Ministry of Youth was created for the first time in 1972 when the Ministry of Sport was reconfigured as the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Later, in 1983, it was merged with the Ministry of National Education to become the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. From 1989 until 2011, youth policy has been under the responsibility of the Directorate of Youth and Sport, under the supervision of a Minister of State. However, the Directorate of Youth and Sports, the organizational structure that existed until 2011, had in fact concentrated mainly on "sports" and did not play an active role in creating youth policy. It seems that the need to create a Ministry and adopt youth policies was also an issue during the EU candidacy process of Turkey, so it is possible to see the influences of European youth policy.

The two major domains of action of the Ministry are sport and students in higher education. This priority is translated in the institutional structure of the Ministry as well. There are two main institutions linked to the Ministry of Youth and Sports: the General Directorate of Sport and the Higher Education Credit and Dormitory Agency (YURTKUR). The main objective of the General Directorate of Sport is to promote sports in general terms, while the objective of YURTKUR is to financially support economically disadvantaged students in higher education through the granting of scholarships and student loans, and the provision of low cost student housing. Under YURTKUR, there are three directorates: the Directorate of Loans; the Directorate of Administration and the Management of Dormitories; the Regional Directorates of YURTKUR. Between these three directorates, the share of the budget of the Directorate of Loans is the highest; almost any one asking for a loan can get it. For example, in 2012, the loans given to students comprised 45% of the expenses of YURTKUR (Kurtaran 2014, p. 103; see also for details of expenses on youth (Yentürk et al. 2014)).

Beside these two domains, the responsibilities of the Ministry related to youth include more general objectives as well, such as providing support to young people and promoting their participation through providing services such as guidance, access to information, and counseling; to establish coordination and cooperation with other public institutions on issues related to youth; to conduct research; and to determine the basic methods and principles on youth including directly carrying out projects.

In line with these objectives, a structure that recently proliferated are youth centers, which employ professional youth workers. The missions of these youth workers, are defined as organizing leisure activities for young people, keeping young people away from "bad habits", organizing courses for education and employment, providing a structure of socialization, reinforcing an awareness of the sanctity of the family, contributing to national unity, creating conditions for the participation in decision-making processes and facilitating their access to communication technology. As the case study will demonstrate as well, two conclusions can be reached from an interpretation of these missions. First, instead of creating structures to help and reach disadvantaged young people, the centers target young people ready to develop skills to compete in the job market. Yet, since the activities are free of charge for all the young people between the ages of 14–29, they are accessible to disadvantageous young people and still may contribute to improving their lives. Secondly, some of the missions reveal how youth policy and youth work is influenced by the ideological orientation of the political party in government. The conservative and nationalist political orientation of the party in power at the time of the implementation of these centers is reflected in their structure (for youth and education policies in Turkey see (Lüküslü 2016)). Moreover, even if these structures are administratively linked to the Ministry, we observed during our fieldwork that they benefit from other public institutions resources as well.

As well as structures related to the Ministry of Youth and Sport, there are also numerous public institutions providing services related to young people such as Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), the Ministry of Development preparing reports and development plans including youth policy recommendations as well as providing services to young people through the GAP Administration's Youth Culture Houses and Social Assistance Program in the east and southeast of Turkey, and the Directorate of the Center for EU Education and Youth Programs (National Agency), which used to

function under the Ministry of Development and recently started to function under the Ministry of European Union.

Following the national level, the municipalities structure youth policy at the local level through two different units. The first one is the Municipal Social and Cultural Work Unit. This branch is not specialized in youth and does not necessarily perceive youth as a distinct category in terms of its policies. Yet, some of the services provided are youth-oriented or beneficial to young people. The second is the youth center, quite similar to those of the Ministry, especially in terms of their activities, all free, including as well leisure time activities, courses for education and employment, mobility activities and socialization. It is also possible to conclude that they are also targeting university students and they are employment oriented. There are also youth workers hired by the municipality. However, compared to the structure of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, their budget and resources vary according to the municipality's budget and their willingness to invest in the field. Even if there are strict regulations imposed by the municipality law, binding local administrations, compared to those of the Ministry, youth centers established by municipalities are less widespread and have less-standardized structures.

Three characteristics of Turkey's administrative structure affect the capacity of the municipalities to independently formulate and implement youth policies in Turkey. While the first two concern the nature of central administration and local administration relations, the third covers the nature of the relations within the municipalities themselves. Concerning the relations of the central administration and the municipalities, one can easily observe that the Turkish administrative structure gives a very limited role to the municipalities in formulation and implementation of youth (or other) policies, which mostly enter the jurisdiction of the central government. First, the policy formulation process is very centralized, where local authorities' responsibility is strictly limited to implementation. In general, all the policies in Turkey are formulated by central authorities. For instance, youth policies are mostly formulated by the Ministry of Youth and Sport, whereas education policies are mostly formulated by the Ministry of National Education in the realm of education and both diffused to the local authorities. Yet, the limited role of the municipality presents itself not only in the policy formulation but also in the implementation process because the central institutions implement these policies not through the municipalities but mostly through their appointed local governors at the provincial or district level who are directly responsible to the central institutions and are independent from the municipalities. Under such an administrative structure, the municipalities can only voluntarily perform local youth policies limited to their areas of jurisdiction (for more information: (Özcan et al. 2008; Ersoy 1992)). The third effect derives from the administrative structure and area of jurisdiction of the municipalities themselves. Until 1980, Turkey was administratively divided in provincial and district municipalities each having their own area of jurisdiction. However, during the 1980s, to solve the coordination problem of large cities that resulted from rapid urbanization, a new kind of provincial municipality, "the metropolitan municipality", entered the Turkish legal code. Thus, it is possible to conclude that metropolitan mayors' authority and resources were enhanced with the establishment of metropolitan municipalities (Kalaycıoğlu 1989). In this process, depending on their initiatives and political incentives, local administrations have started to enlarge their scope of activities and diversify their services. Some of them, such as the one in our city, have been investing in youth-oriented services as well.

Lastly, there are structures and actors of youth policy at the associative level. Most of these are not organizations specifically formulating youth policy, but some associations' youth branches or associations in the field of education concern young people. However, the issue of civil society associations will not be discussed within the scope of this paper.

3. Case Study: Understanding Youth Work and the Role of Youth Centers in a Local Context

3.1. The City

The city where we conducted the research is a city in central Anatolia connecting Istanbul, a global city, and Ankara, the capital of Turkey. With a population of 812,320 in 2014 it is the 25th largest city in Turkey comprising nearly 1.14% of the total national population (TUIK 2014). Regarding socioeconomic indicators such as gender composition, life expectancy, employment rate, unemployment rate, participation to labor force, the city's indicators do not vary significantly from the rest of the country. Even in terms of the percentage of youth population, the city known as a student city, the difference is not significant. It is important to remind at this point, that, especially compared to European countries, Turkey has a very young population with 25.52% at the national level, and 25.03% in our city. However, one particular aspect that distinguishes our city from the rest of the country is the education patterns of the population above the age of 15, which demonstrate the presence of a more-educated population in our city. For example, for the year of 2014, while the illiteracy rate is 2.59%, 17.81% are university graduates and 31.02% have attended at most primary education in our city; national level indicators are 4.49%, 14.02% and 36.8% respectively (TUIK 2014).

Our city is referred to (almost in all the interviews and focus groups) as a student city. One of our experts, "Mahmut", who had first come as a student and then stayed there for 10 years even said that "*the city itself is indeed a campus*" and highlighted the links between the university campus and the city. It is also important to underline the participation of students in the economy of the city both as consumers and part-time workers. It seems that many sectors have a student/youth-targeted production, including housing, entertainment, culture, sport, and of course education. They offer various and diversified choices to students. For example, in terms of housing, as well as public dormitories there are private dormitories, student "residences" and recently built studios mostly for students (small apartments are not very common in Anatolian towns). Moreover, compared to most of the other Turkish cities, it is probably easier for a student to rent an apartment or to find a part-time job. However, it is also being noted that working conditions for students who work mainly in the service sector as waiters/barmen or as musicians are extremely poor since their daily salaries are very low and these are usually informal jobs, yet it is stated positively that there are at least those part-time working opportunities for young people.

The fact that it is not a big city (especially in comparison to other cities of Turkey such as Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir) was commented by young people we had interviewed both as an advantage and disadvantage. We had very often heard comments in favor of the size of the city such as easy access (accessibility) to services and activities in a small/medium size university town. The size also seems to enable students to easily integrate to the city. This size is also referred to, however, as a disadvantage that can after some time in the city bring "boredom" and the feeling of "having spent" the city. It is also underlined that even though it not a big city, it is a developed one which makes it easier to live there than in other less developed cities.

3.2. Youth Policy and Youth Work in the City

The city is referred to as a student city not only because of the high number of university students or their visibility in the city but also because of the youth/student-oriented services and activities provided by public authorities, including the Directorate of Youth and Sports attached to the Ministry of Youth and Sports (national level), and the municipality (local level), but also activities organized by civil society organizations and university clubs. As mentioned earlier, the Ministry is not only the major institution responsible for youth policy, but in terms of budget, especially regarding its infrastructural investments such as dormitories and student scholarship and loans, it is by far the most influential actor as well in our city. However, one of the particularities of our city is the significant role played by the local administration in the field. Even if services are not necessarily formulated as youth policy, and do not consist in infrastructural investment exclusive to youth, the metropolitan

municipality in the city seems to be a very important actor. This can be explained by the increasing resources and authority of the local administration, but also by a certain political stability in this particular context since the same mayor and his administration are serving their fourth term since the local elections in 1999. It is also important to note that the mayor of our city, as the founding president of one of the two universities in the city, was already a very notorious and influential figure at the local level even before his election; which also shows the importance of the university in the city as well as subsequent cooperation between the university and the local administration. Moreover, this success is still fueled by political incentive at another level: even if the same administration has been in power uninterruptedly at the local level since 1999, at the national level, the JDP, its main rival, is in power since 2002 and progressively increasing its popular support nationwide.

As mentioned above, local authorities' financial capacity and functions have started to change with the adoption of the Metropolitan municipality structure within the Turkish administrative configuration. Consequently, local administration services have started to expand to various areas which were previously restricted to the domain of the central government agencies, such as social services, culture, education, health, tourism, etc. Our city became a metropolitan city in 1993. Services provided varies according to the local conditions and the initiatives of administrations as well as its capacity. With a strong local administration in our city, we have observed during our fieldwork that services in almost all these areas, including free clinics, women shelters, social centers in less developed rural areas, free professional training courses, free lessons for students, are provided by the municipalities (the metropolitan municipality, but in close cooperation with the district municipalities which are from the same political party). However, as a particularity of the city, cultural and youth-oriented services are very distinctive. Among other things, cultural centers, parks, opera, and theaters have been established by the local administration, but also artistic and sportive festivals in various kinds are frequently organized. Concerning youth-oriented services, these cultural activities are made very affordable to young people, and some of them are youth-specific. In addition, more recently, youth centers have been established as well. If these services are explained by the increasing financial resources and scope of activities, vote-seeking and more specifically reelection is a major incentive.

The increase in capacity of local administration has created a new level of political competition. First, local politics has started to be more prestigious than before. As İncioğlu stated: "In the past becoming a mayor was generally viewed by many as a stepping stone for entry into the parliament. Today aspiring leaders are likely to prefer the top political position in a city with millions of inhabitants to serving as a parliamentarian in Ankara" (İncioğlu 2002, p. 74). However, moreover, success in local politics could have been translated at the national level as well. For example, the leading social democrat party of the 1980s, has converted its local victories at the local level to a success at the national elections, becoming partner of the coalition government in 1991. Similarly, the local achievements of the predecessor party of the JDP has been influential to increase its electoral support at the national level starting with the mid-90s. Also, the current President of the republic and leader of the JDP built his political capital during his mayorship of Istanbul. According to some scholars, among other factors explaining the rise of the Islamist party, local solidarity networks (White 2002) backed by social help and services provided by local municipalities (such as the distribution of food, medicine, coal, school books, or funeral services, health services, school renovations, professional training courses), have been the major key to the party's electoral mobilization success. In our city, the local municipality seem to have perceived, beside social services, youth-oriented investments as politically rentable as well.

However, this trend in local politics did not bring the expected democratization effect through decentralization and citizen inclusion in the decision-making process (İncioğlu and Erder 2013; Bayraktar 2007). If local administrations' increasing capacity vis-à-vis the central government has been perceived as a decentralization process at first, not only a hierarchical structure has been progressively reinforced at the local level, but the dependency of local administrations to the central government has been restated as well. Concerning the former, the weakness of municipal councils vis-à-vis mayors

as a feature of local administration has become even more pronounced (İncioğlu and Erder 2013; Bayraktar 2007). Moreover, until 2012, the areas of jurisdiction between municipal, metropolitan and district municipalities were independent from each other. In 2012, under the JDP government, the Turkish Grand National Assembly passed a law that not only increased the number of metropolitan municipalities to 30, but also that changed the area of jurisdiction of the metropolitan municipalities. With this new law, the area of jurisdiction of the metropolitan municipalities has been enlarged to cover all formerly independent district municipalities of the province, creating a hierarchical and centralized strategy-formulating process and placing the metropolitan municipalities at the top of this hierarchy. District municipalities in metropolitan municipalities, such as our city, are dependent on the strategic plan of the latter which is responsible for formulating and implementing strategies for all the districts in the province (Polatoglu 2000; Alkan 2015). These developments follow a re-centralization process at the national level as well. Even if reforms stimulated by the EU candidacy perspective appeared as a trend towards decentralization, subsequent regulations extracting important authorities from local administration to central government reinstated centralization (İncioğlu and Erder 2013).

Concerning the inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes, it is also important to underline that for enhancing participation in the local level, the adoption of Agenda 21 by UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro is a milestone. The process in Turkey launched officially in 2004 and in 2005, the city councils were established within the framework of Agenda 21 through a regulation adopted in 2005, Article 76 of Municipal law 5393 (Gökçe-Kızılkaya and Onursal-Beşgül 2017, pp. 102–3). Under the city councils, various assemblies were established including youth, children, persons with disabilities, retired persons, etc. Ideally these youth assemblies under city councils would have played an important role for youth participation and youth work in the cities. However, in practice city councils and youth assemblies seem to be "a lost opportunity" (Gökçe-Kızılkaya and Onursal-Beşgül 2017, p. 98) for Turkey since they are not functioning, including our city.

That is why in our research we decided to focus on two youth centers, one run by the government and the other by the opposition party, for understanding youth work in the city.

4. A Special Focus on the Youth Centers in the City: Two Competing Centers on the Same Avenue

4.1. Municipality Youth Center

Our first case is a youth center established by a district municipality and which is employing youth workers. Within the framework of a larger ethnographic research in the city, we learned that the decision to establish this particular youth center coincided with similar investments by other public institutions and civil society foundations in the city. From our interviews and participant observations within the youth center we had the opportunity to learn in more depth about the process of creation and functioning and reach some conclusions for this case in particular. The creation of the youth center is not the product of a well-developed plan intending to start youth work. It was the initiative of one of the vice-mayors, and he was not strongly supported by the rest of administration for this enterprise at first. Investments to the youth center have not been conceived as long-term structural investments. The hesitant and limited investments of the municipality administration seem to be related to several factors such as the fact that the local administration is not the main public institution responsible for youth services, or because there is a lack of expertise but also because there is a lack of trust in youth-led youth work or in non-formal learning. However, the proliferation of youth work, the previous experiences in youth-oriented services provided at the local level, its perception as politically profitable, but also the "success" of this particular enterprise, all seem to have contributed to the evolution of the center and its youth work services. Another important factor which seems to have a role in the process, is that youth workers have managed to benefit from EU-related institutions and networks, and compensated the lack of resources, including material resources through EU projects, youth-work training which they do not had, and network for youth mobility services.

As mentioned above, municipalities are not the main institutions responsible for youth policy. Concerning the local municipality in question, there is neither a specialized department or experts on youth, nor long-term well-defined plan for youth-oriented activities. Youth-oriented activities are organized by the Municipal Social and Cultural Work Unit, and the vice-mayor who took the initiative is the one responsible for the unit. Regarding the youth policy of the political party in office at this particular municipality: even if Turkish political parties are highly centralized organizations (Ayan 2010; Özbudun 2006; Kalaycıoğlu 2001), and all the branches adopt the same party program, which also mean a common youth policy at least on paper, at the local level, we observed that they do not necessarily provide similar youth-oriented services. Even different local municipalities in the same city, run by the same political party, do not necessarily provide same services. However, in this specific local municipality, the party in office is the same party which governs the city at the metropolitan level for years, a metropolitan administration very much engaged in youth-oriented services. Consequently, the provision of youth-oriented activities at the local level is an existing practice in the city. Yet, youth work and youth centers did not exist until this one.

The enterprise started with very few activities, services and personnel, and with a very low level of expertise on youth work especially since young people hired to practice youth work did not receive any formal training even nor previous non-formal training on the subject. The vice-mayor expressed during our interview that their initial idea was to create a "meeting place" for young people; "a place where they could be informed about youth activities in the city, and have a collective place specific to young people" (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017). When they decide to establish the youth center, they appoint a young municipality employee, who was still the person responsible for the coordination of the youth center at the time of our research. They also decide to invite a group of local civil society organization professionals in order to exchange ideas about "how a youth center should be" (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017). We have been told that the meeting was not very conclusive, and they started "on their own" and decided their first activity to be providing free English classes. Some initial decisions, such as the location of the center close to a university, or the decision to provide a free English course, but also the reluctance to allocate budget for professional trainers, seems to have shaped the main features of the youth center. Consequently, the users of the center are university students, the focus is on self-development and professional development, and the limited budget have led to the emergence of volunteer young trainers.

Today, the center's activities are far beyond English classes and involve activities aiming at developing young people's personal and social skills, with the guidance and support of youth workers. There are various classes such as, French, German, Pilates, Photoshop, photography, tracking, creative drama, guitar, project writing, etc. There are activities such as barter market, camping, charity work, youth rights workshops, European voluntary service information seminars, etc. All these activities have developed in the process, with the organization and initiatives of youth workers and according to the demand and engagement of users and volunteers. It is possible to categorize activities realized within the youth center as follows: 1—personal development; 2—professional development; 3—leisure time activity; 4—charity work; 5—mobility; 6—youth right; 7—friendship/hangout; 8—study. The class planning is done based on the demand and available resources, and depends especially on the available voluntary trainers. The main idea is to provide the opportunity to "try" a new activity. Most of the classes are on the elementary level. If there is demand and available resources, intermediate level is provided as well. To avoid repetition, the rule is to renew 30% of the classes every semester. Since the classes are free, the problem of absence is frequent; a rule of exclusion after 3 absences exists to prevent that. Concerning the charity activities, those are initiated and organized by one person among youth workers particularly responsible with charity activities, and involved young people interested in doing volunteer activities within this framework. Activities and projects related to youth rights are also attributed a lot of importance by youth workers but appears to be one of the areas they have the most difficulty in reaching young people. It is also important to emphasize that friendship at the different

levels of relationships within the center is very determinant of the way of functioning of the center, among young people, volunteer trainers and youth workers.

Due to high demand of the services provided by the youth center, a second site has been established as well. We had the opportunity to witness the registration day for classes: the queue had started at 5 am, and there were 500 people at 12 noon, at the opening time. It is important to note that this registration day is organized as a self-promotion event by the youth workers in order to show the local administration how "successful" they are. Both sites are coordinated together, their activities and youth workers are common. They are both close to each other and to a university. The first one is at the entrance floor of a building and was previously used as a low-cost coffee place where mostly young people used to hang out. The second site is a small 4-floor building which looks more like a residential building than a youth center, from the outside.

The municipality provides the physical space and the salaries of the youth workers, but also provides access to other municipality services. Due to the connection to the municipality, these centers have easy access to other physical facilities owned by the municipality, such as cultural centers or theatres but also facilities where municipality authority can get access, such as parks, museums or camping spaces. However, as mentioned earlier, the municipality provide only limited budget for professional trainers or other activities specific to the youth center. In the process, youth workers have found the solution to offer free classes with young voluntary trainers instead of professional ones. However, moreover, youth workers have grabbed available opportunities offered by EU-related institutions. They managed to develop their connections with EU-related networks and institution, obtain sources of funding for various projects, and get their own training by EU-led training programs. The center became a Eurodesk contact point, which means that they are accredited for providing information about European Voluntary Services and Erasmus + programs; youth workers have told us that they initiated the whole process themselves, they have applied for themselves to be a contact point and they are very proud of that. However, the institutional structure of the municipality has probably contributed to their accreditation. Once they became a part of the network, youth workers started to regularly attend EU-led youth work trainings, which they decide to participate in on their own. They also have realized EU funded projects. Moreover, due to their training, youth workers are highly influenced by EU promoted practices. It is important to underline that youth workers in this center, even if they are all college graduates, are mostly from social sciences departments and good universities; they do not have a formal education in youth work; they have acquired their expertise through a self-training process and non-formal EU training programs through their initiatives.

All these elements make the functioning of the youth center hybrid in terms of financial resources and functioning. Even if there is a control over the center by the municipality administration, this hybrid form provides some autonomy to the center and to youth workers. This autonomy seems to reflect on the relationship between youth workers and participants. Youth workers who are young adults themselves take youth demands into account while organizing activities, but also incite young participants to contribute in the making of some sort of self-organized center. This autonomy is also reflected in the relationship between youth workers and the municipality. The center's youth workers seem to have trouble with some people in the administration; that makes them feel vulnerable. In other words, they believe that the center's future depends on personal will rather than on policy; according to them some people in the administration have a "vision", while others do not (Municipality Youth Center, Expert Interview 4, pp. 15–16). They criticize the perception of the municipality, or at least the majority of the people in the administration who, according to them, value quantity over quality. According to youth workers, the municipality is being focused too much on the number instead of the substance. More concretely, the number of users, determines how much interest these local politicians show to the setting. However, the center's popularity among young people seems to have contributed to its development, at least for now.

Limited in number, youth centers established by Turkish municipalities do not have a standardized form neither in terms of services nor physical spaces. This particular youth center created by a local

municipality in the city is also lacking standardized practices and is far from being an institutionalized establishment yet. On the one hand, the lack of expertise on youth work within the local municipality and the lack of formal training of youth workers, on the other, the organizational structure within the administration and the youth policy of the political party seem to have determined some major features of the youth center. This case also demonstrates how the evolution of youth work might be influenced by political incentives and conditions.

4.2. Ministry of Youth and Sport Youth Center

The second case is a youth center established by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Ministry started to establish quite standard youth centers in the mid-2000s and these youth centers today exist in every town. The investment in a youth center in our city, its location, its activities, the period of its creation: all these indicators reveal that there are some youth work norms in the making, that youth work is perceived as politically profitable and youth policy has become an object of political competition. Moreover, we also observed that, even if the ministry's policy is designed in the capital, at Ankara, local dynamics and conditions influence their implementation and results. The director and youth workers of this center established by the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports expressed that the purpose of the center is to provide services particularly to university students. We also have been told that there was a plan to build a bigger youth center, but it has been postponed for now. The director of the center evaluated the situation in the city as follows: "in the city there is so much social and cultural activities for young people that it is hard to make a difference" (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017). On the one hand, regarding the proliferation of youth work in the city, it is no coincidence that the ministry decided to invest for youth centers at this particular time and location, but on the other, the incentive for a larger investment is not that strong due to the youth-oriented services provided by the local administration in the city. Even if our city does not seem to be a priority in terms of larger investment, the ministry's youth center enjoys access to very large public resources, which they are proud to say out loud, showing their capacity of influence.

The common objectives set by the Ministry for every youth center in Turkey has been expressed, during our interviews, and almost identically for this particular youth center in our city, by youth workers of the center. These objectives, congruent with the government's conservative discourse and policy on youth, are the following ones: organize leisure time activities, organize activities that may contribute to education and work life, help young people to stay away from bad habits, inculcate respect to family, contribute to national unity with an awareness of diversity, inform young people about the decision-making process and support their participation, contribute to their access to information technologies. Youth workers hired by the Ministry do not have a formal training on youth work. In this particular center, they are all under 30 years old, college graduate and mostly from an education faculty or social science departments. After a formal short-term training provided by the Ministry, once they start as a youth worker they continue to periodically participate in non-formal training, again provided by the Ministry. The latter are usually organized for transmitting new techniques or content related to activities and services provided within youth centers, which are prepared by the Ministry. It is important to note that activities and services provided within youth centers established by the Ministry in different towns are prepared by the Ministry at the center and diffused to the youth centers in a quite standardized form. Thus, youth workers' responsibility is mainly to apply these programs. Even if they eventually develop more personal relationships notably with more regular users, as "elder" young adults, and provide them with guidance at a more informal level, their autonomy is quite limited due to the centralized and hierarchical organizational structure of these youth centers.

This particular youth center is established nearby a university, open every day from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m., and provides services mostly to university students. We observed during our fieldwork that university students use the center mostly as a space to hang out and study, and to participate in free classes and activities for leisure time or personal and professional development. Among free classes

there are various foreign language, music and art classes. There are also other activities such as poetry contests, theatre, book talks, travels, charity events, etc. Free tea and coffee during the whole day, and free soup in the morning is also used as a strategy to attract young people. Even if there are no explicit references to EU institutions-led youth policy, there are some indirect influences visible through practices such as youth workers training programs, project-oriented work style or activities organized in the forms of workshops. However, it is important to note that these practices have been rather adopted in forms, while their content have been adjusted with an ideologically conservative one, such as workshops on religious values focused on a single religion.

Moreover, the center does not only have access to the resources allocated by the Ministry of Youth and Sport but also benefits from their connections to other central government agencies, such as the Ministry of Education, with their easy access to high schools, or Ministry of family and social policy, with their easy access to child and youth protection services. Professional educators affiliated with the Ministry of Education provide courses and activities within the framework of the center. Moreover, they also deliver certificates approved by the Ministry of National Education. For their mobility activities, busses are provided by the governorship, youth camping areas are almost exclusive to the Ministry's activities, or if the visit is to Ankara "we go to the Ministry for lunch, and if the Minister is available, he comes to take a picture with the group" as one of the youth workers told us (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017). The center's youth workers are allowed to promote their activities at schools and at the universities; meanwhile other organizations may need permission to do it, which is sometimes denied. However, they complained that the municipality which is led by the opposition party is not so friendly when they have demands that fall in their areas of jurisdiction; one of the youth workers gave the example of difficulties they encounter when they have to rent billboards in the city.

According to the youth workers as well as the director, there is "absolutely" no politics at the center. They claim that, as a public institution their function is to provide universal services, and they do not discriminate users on the basis of their political views. They also add that they have to face some people's prejudice about the youth center: "they tell us 'this is the ministry's center, so 'you will exclude those who are anti-government' or they ask if girls and boys are separated in classes (it is not the case for classes, but it is separated in camping activities) . . . these are prejudices . . . as the responsible at the ministry say, there is no politics in youth centers . . . " (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017). Another youth worker tells a story where he had to face hostile reactions from leftist students, when he opened a stand at the University to promote the center's activities; he says that they told him that they didn't want pro-government propaganda, and ask to close the stand, and he says "I asked them if they saw any party flag". Afterwards, according to the youth worker, one of the leftist students recognized him because he had previously participated to one of the camping activities of the center. Then he says that they met halfway, he changed the place of the stand, and leftist students stopped bothering him (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017).

During our fieldwork, we never heard anyone talking about daily politics. However, the whole structure, its very creation and activities, are all embedded in politics, and not only in a symbolic way, but all their strategies and practices reflect a particular political orientation (for the policies and projects of the Ministry see (Lüküslü 2016)). They provide a large range of classes, such as French, guitar, diction but also Ottoman language, Arabic or Quran. Moreover, even if youth workers mentioned that these latter classes are not attracting many young people, in order to make them visible, they specifically underline those classes in their promotion of the youth center. More recently a new series of workshops has been started: workshops on subjects such as innovation, social sciences, values and religious values. For example, in the latter one, during "value workshops", family and religious values are specifically promoted. One of the major themes of the social science workshop, is the veiling issue in Turkey. The theme of the "Letter to ancestor contest" of this year is the martyrs of the failed coup of the summer of 2016. Among their major destination for travel there are symbolic nationalistic places. In camping activities, girls and boys are separated, even in the buses. The criteria to participate in

camping and travel activities are the following ones: economic situation of the family, if the parents are alive, if they are divorced, if there are martyrs in the family, and school performance.

Whether politics inside the center influences users or not, it is highly probable that there is a self-selection before getting in the center; the center seems to attract young people with conservative backgrounds more easily. During our ethnographic fieldwork, based on the discourse of some young people and information they gave about their families during our discussions, or on some visible dressing signs, it has been in fact possible to conclude that there are many young people with conservative backgrounds among the users of the center. However, since we did not conduct a systematic survey on this particular aspect, which was not possible within the limits of the methodological design of our study, we cannot generalize this conclusion. However, it has been possible to identify more certainly a particular "ideal youth" perception among youth workers and a limited function attributed to the center which reveal the general features of the center. The features of this "ideal youth" profile can be described through the interactions of youth workers with users of the center, such as skilled but docile, self-confident but obedient to the hierarchy, creative and innovative but respectful to cultural norms and conventions, especially religious and national ones. Based on the perception of the service providers and users of the center, the function of the center can be described as a setting which provides young people with a "safe" environment "between school and home" (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017). However, in this respect, it seems that the center does not fulfil the targeted objectives of the Ministry. Regarding the investment level as well as the effort to adapt youth work norms to a more conservative content, it seems that the Ministry's purpose is to achieve more than simply keeping the youth from "bad habits" or "protect them from harm" (Lüküslü and Osmanoğlu 2017).

5. Conclusions

As discussed throughout this paper, youth work is a new field in Turkey and is recently developing in the national as well as in the local level. We already know that historical, cultural and political contexts influence the framework of youth work and in the European context where the youth work has a longer history and is more institutionalized (compared to Turkey where it is newly developing) we see a certain diversity. It is thus interesting to focus on a case, Turkey, where youth work is newly emerging and study the conditions of this emergence as well as different approaches to youth work. Furthermore, as there is a political rivalry between political parties, there seems to be also a rivalry in the youth field. Our ethnographic research makes this rivalry become visible since this political competition is going on between two youth centres situated on the same avenue. On the one hand, the two youth centres we studied were run by two different political parties and it was possible to detect some differences between them which seem to be related to ideological as well as structural differences. For example, it is evident that the youth centre of the municipality is more influenced by the EU, which can be explained on the one hand by ideological factors (no hostile relationship) but on the other due to the hybrid and autonomous structure of the centre (limited resources because of which EU resources became an alternative, but also initiative of youth workers). The ministry is more distant to EU, also can be explained by ideological factors but also due to the administrative and organisational structure of the Ministry and the youth centre. In other words, not only ideological factors but also organizational structures of youth centres influence the approach of youth workers to youth work. In the municipality they have more autonomy, and more influenced by EU, which influence their approach to youth work. In the ministry centre, due to the hierarchical and centralized structure youth workers lack autonomy and have less incentive to engage with young people and contribute to their development. However, apart from these differences, it is also possible to observe some main common elements in these two youth centers. Even though the ethnographic research demonstrates that there is not only one single approach to youth work and a homogeneous structure for youth centres in Turkey, it is evident that both of these approaches fail (or choose not to) "reach out" to the disadvantaged youth but focus their activities on a relatively privileged youth, the university

students. This characteristics of youth work in a student city can be understood and explained by the characteristics of the city but on the other hand we know that this is not unique to student cities. Furthermore, youth work in Turkey also seems to situate itself in complementarity with the formal education system and aims to strengthen and widen the education and training of university students.

In conclusion, our paper aims to contribute youth work literature in a general sense by focusing on a case study where it is possible to study the conditions of this emergence and development of youth work. Keeping in mind that not only youth work but also the literature on youth work is newly emerging in Turkey, we hope to make a humble contribution to the field hoping that important gaps of this field will soon be filled. In this paper, for instance, we only focused on local and national governance bodies related to youth work; future studies will hopefully broaden this scope and focus also on civil society organizations and even will investigate the role of private companies, firms or enterprises. Comparative studies (between cities as well as between national contexts) will also play an important role for broadening the research on youth work.

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