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Article

Collective Action, Civil Society, and Public Policy in Turkey

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ABSTRACT *Understanding policy change mechanisms has been a key question for scholars of public policy and collective action. However, policy scholarship mostly ignores civil society-based explanations of policy processes. In order to address this gap, this study combines the Advocacy Coalition Framework with networked collective action perspectives and analyzes a successful case of mobilization of women's rights organizations in Turkey to reverse a bill on child marriage. Study findings suggest that advocacy coalitions are not static entities. When different issues in a policy subsystem are invoked, the structure of inter-coalition networks can change substantially and these variations in inter-coalition interactions may have consequences for influencing policy change. Moreover, this paper argues that extensive street protests and online campaigns by civil society organizations have the capacity to boost the bargaining power of minority coalitions, especially in contexts that lack multiple formal venues for making policy claims.*

Keywords: comparative public policy; civil society; political networks; Turkey; ACF

Introduction

What are the processes that lead to policy change? This is a central question for two streams of scholarship: public policy and collective action. Despite this common focus, these two lines of scholarly work rarely interact with each other. Collective action by civil society tends to precede policy change (though public policy may trigger collective action as well), but scholars of mobilizations are more concerned with explaining the processes leading up to the disturbance of policy subsystems, with limited attention paid to variations within policy processes. For public policy scholars, collective action, whether in the form of campaigns, coalitions, or social movements, is an exogenous factor. Mobilization dynamics do not receive further attention in understanding the processes of public policy. More direct interactions between civil society and policy makers in shaping policy change are largely ignored (Burstein and Linton 2002). David Meyer (2005, p. 3) discusses this mutual neglect as follows:

> Although policy [is] almost routinely treated as one social movement outcome, the interaction of both substantive and symbolic changes in policy with the

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> development of a challenging movements is undertheorized and understudied … Social movement scholars treat the policy process as a black box within the state, which movements may occasionally shake and upset into action, whereas policy scholars treat movements as undifferentiated and unitary actors who respond (or not) by disruption.

The main purpose of this paper is to contribute to studies that aim at filling this gap. I utilize policy change mechanisms emphasized by the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) and theories of collective action, with a focus on micro-processes, to explain the successful outcome of a recent case of mobilization of women's rights organizations (WROs) in Turkey to reverse a bill on child abuse and marriage. Such an approach has the potential to provide a more holistic understanding of policy change by magnifying mechanisms both within state institutions and among civil society actors, as well as the linkages between these fields of action. Moreover, theories of policy processes mostly depict policy mechanisms that are characteristic of pluralistic Western liberal democracies, and their transferability to democratically less open contexts have been challenged. Unlike the US governance model, the lack of multiple venues for challenging policy monopolies in illiberal democracies or competitive authoritarian systems, such as Turkey, increases the need for integrating perspectives from grassroots political mobilizations and civil society with theories of the policy process. This is due to the fact that in such systems, formal pathways for civil society to have a voice in policy making are limited, and civil society actors are more likely to participate in non-institutional forms of collective action such as protests and rallies to shape policy (Eisinger 1973; Casey 2004).

The two-way causal relationship between collective action and public policy is well documented (e.g. Baumgartner and Mahoney 2005; Mettler 2005). While policy may trigger collective action (e.g. anti-war protests), the main focus of this paper is cases when policy change is considered the dependent variable that is shaped by both policy processes and the collective action efforts of civil society actors.

Policy Change, Civil Society, and Theories of the Policy Process

Explaining processes leading up to policy change has been an explicit focus of many empirical and theoretical studies. However, the majority of these theories originate from the context of Western democracies and comparative applications to less democratic settings are still limited. Therefore, how and when civil society can shape policy in less open systems is still very much an open question. The review of policy change explanations in the literature from the Western democracies reveals three main thematic clusters: (1) significant events that shock the system, originating internally or externally; (2) policy learning that leads to change in values and behaviors; and (3) change through negotiation and cooperation among actors motivated by self-interest (Weible et al. 2012). Howlett and Cashore (2009) further highlight shifts in the belief systems dominating policy subsystems and changes in the composition of actors that make up a policy subsystem as the predominant mechanisms that lead to the shattering of policy monopolies. What role does collective action by civil society play in these explanations?

Among theories of policy processes, the Advocacy Coalition Framework developed by Sabatier makes the most explicit connections between civil society and policy change

(Sabatier 1988; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Sabatier and Weible 2007). The reason for this is ACF's considerable focus on actors in the policy process relative to institutional forms and policy content (Tosun and Workman 2017). The fluid and frequent interactions between civil society actors and policy makers are recognized to a great extent in ACF, regardless of whether these interactions lead to major policy change or not. ACF is mainly concerned with understanding coalitions that aim at promoting policy change. Changes in belief systems and learning are the main mechanisms underlined by ACF as instigators of change. The specific emphasis on interactions and the structure of coalitions inevitably make ACF more sensitive to collective action perspectives. For ACF, policy subsystems resemble policy networks (Heclo 1978) that are dynamic and diverse.

Policy subsystems can be considered clusters of coalitions made up of actors that have common beliefs and strategies. For ACF, there are four routes to policy change: (1) an external event in combination with public attention that is utilized by a minority coalition; (2) internal shocks such as policy failures challenging the beliefs of dominant coalitions; (3) minor policy change through learning; and (4) changes as a result of bargaining among opposing coalitions (Sabatier and Weible 2007). ACF has gone through various additions/clarifications in the last decade (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014). One significant change has been the explicit adoption of the political opportunity framework from collective action scholarship, such as coalition opportunity structure (COS), into ACF. In order to enhance the adoptability of ACF to less democratic settings, COS are new sets of independent variables such as the relative openness of the systems and the degree of consensus necessary in order to achieve major policy change (Sabatier and Weible 2007).

When compared with other major theories of the policy processes such as Multiple Streams (Kingdon 1984) or Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (Baumgartner and Jones 2010), the ACF has greater potential to integrate the role of collective action by civil society in shaping policy processes due to its flexible and multifaceted characterization of the policy-making environment and emphasis on informal policy networks that make up coalitions. Moreover, ACF pays more attention to the role of actors and networks trying to affect policy regardless of sector (public, civil society, or private) (Tosun and Workman 2017). Therefore I use ACF as the main policy-oriented framework while trying to emphasize the role of civil society in shaping public policy.

However, the ACF still needs to be synthesized with bottom-up collective action approaches to magnify the micro-processes. First of all, coalitions in ACF are fairly stable structures in terms of their membership configurations. On the other hand, change-oriented political coalitions are dynamic as well as "complex and highly heterogeneous network structures" (Diani 2003, p. 2). As the illustrative case indicates, each coalition within a policy subsystem has structures that change over time as different aspects of the policy issue are debated and challenged. Moreover, despite ACF's emphasis on coalition networks, the majority of studies using ACF still rely on aggregate approaches to coalitions. In other words, competing coalitions are typically analyzed by studying the composition and attributes of actors, with limited attention to the structure of relationships within and between coalitions (exceptions to this trend include Ingold 2011; Leifeld 2013). Thus synthesizing policy change mechanisms outlined in collective action theories with an emphasis on micro-processes may increase the explanatory power ACF.

Policy Change in Theories of Collective Action

Collective action can be defined as a type of coordinated activity by a group of civil society organizations towards a common goal. While the terms social movement and collective action are commonly used interchangeably in the literature, social movements are better conceptualized as a subgroup of collective action. According to Diani (2015), we should not label any mobilization on the street or online advocacy campaign by civil society as a case of social movement. Instead, forms of collective action can be categorized into four ideal types based on variations in two critical levels of interactions among organizations: resource exchange and collective identity. A social movement is a mode of coordination indicating a strong collective identity bonding participants with an extensive exchange of resources (e.g. the civil rights movement in the US), whereas when collective identity is limited but resource exchange is intense, a coalition mode of collective action is observed (e.g. the anti-war coalition in 2003). Most online campaigns on Twitter and other online platforms in which inter-organizational ties are sparse but identification with a wider collectivity is common are defined as communitarian collective action (Diani 2015). Finally, collective action cases when both inter-organizational exchanges and collective identity are weak are organizational modes of coordination (e.g. interest groups in the US).

When and how mobilizations in different forms of collective action shape public policy is a central question for social movement scholarship. However, studying the policy outcomes of collective action is challenging due to a number of reasons, including barriers to establishing a causal relationship between action and policy change, and operationalizing and measuring specific outcomes (Giugni 1998; Bosi and Uba 2009; Amenta et al. 2010). In most cases of collective action, a multitude of structural factors and actor-based attributes interact in complex ways to shape mobilization outcomes. The consensus in the field suggests that, due to these intricate interactions among factors influencing collective action outcomes, there are multiple causal pathways rather than a single mechanism that can explain policy change driven by civil society (Cress and Snow 2000).

The major theories that explain collective action outcomes are political opportunity structures, framing, resource mobilization, and network theories. Political opportunity structure (POS) theories explain movement outcomes through variations in the structure of power relations and institutional arrangements, such as changes in the configuration of elite alliances, the strength of countermobilizations, and the degree of openness of major political institutions (Tilly 1978; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi 2004; Kolb 2007). Cultural and framing approaches emerged as a reaction to the lack of attention to the relationship between social movements and meanings and are mostly based on works of scholars such as David Snow and Robert Benford. Studies using a framing perspective conceptualize social movements as struggles over meanings and ideas produced by movement protagonists and antagonists. According to the framing perspective, movements can mobilize larger segments of society and are more likely to be successful if they can challenge the dominant definitions of reality and meanings, framing contested issues in a way that will resonate more with people's emotions (Benford and Snow 2000).

A more agent-based tradition in the study of social movements, resource mobilization theory, focuses on the role of organizational structure, leadership, material resources, and particular tactics utilized by activists for successful movement outcomes (McCarthy and Zaid 1977). Mobilizations that develop successful strategies (e.g. whether to focus on

national vs. local politics, whether to use disruptive tactics) and ones that effectively utilize material and non-material resources are considered better challengers and more likely to succeed. This is due to the fact that such mobilizations will have an effect on public opinion and increase the cost of repression or policy makers' disregard of mobilizers' claims.

Role of Networks

Another important stream in collective action studies focuses on network dynamics (Diani 2003). Social networks emerge as a result of voluntary interactions among organizations and individuals involved in online or offline collective action events. These network structures are not pre-defined or mandated by a leader or external forces. Instead, they develop as a result of the self-organization of actors involved in the mobilizations. The network structures that stem from actors' interactions can shape the processes of information exchange, coordination, and recruitment, which are shown to be significant factors in explaining the policy outcomes of collective action events. Studies show that social ties are crucial for recruiting participants for collective action events since they can act as means of social control and a source of peer pressure, restructuring the costs and benefits of participation by disseminating emotions, ideas, and information (Gould 1991; Diani 2003; Passy 2003). In addition to these, social networks act as pipelines and transmit ideas and information that may enable efficient coordination of collective action events. Similarly, the spread of ideas and emotions through social networks may facilitate the emergence of collective identities. Moreover, social networks dominated by strong ties can increase the likelihood of participants taking part in high-risk events that may be crucial for shaping public opinion. Furthermore, certain network structures may be more resilient against disruption from the external environment. In addition to these, as the case study illustrates in the coming section, social networks may enable the coordination of organizations nested in adversary coalitions via bridging actors.

Despite differences in emphasis, most studies see these approaches to collective action as complementary. For example, mobilizations of large numbers of people, one of the most important predictors of movement success emphasized in the resource mobilization approach, not only depend on leadership and resources but also on the use of effective frames and activation of networks (McAdam 1996). According to Amenta et al. (2010), there is no simple recipe that can facilitate policy change through collective action. Instead, structural constraints and actors' strategies interact in complex ways. But overall, policy makers need to see mobilizers as either contributing to their agendas or significant threats to their goals based on how they affect public opinion and changes in electoral coalitions (Amenta et al. 2010).

Towards a Synthesis

Collective action researchers have been interested in policy theories but not for the limited role they accord civil society and mobilizations. Interest from sociologists has been mainly due to the components of the policy-making environment, such as the role of policy monopolies, policy subsystems, and policy entrepreneurs, as well as characterizations of changes in policy as sporadic episodes of drastic change and long periods of

stasis (Koopmans 2004). Moreover, a majority of collective action studies tend to focus on the agenda-setting power of mobilizations, mostly ignoring the possible effects in different stages of the policy process such as legislation and implementation. Similarly, policy scholars recognize the agenda-setting function of mobilizations, but tend to neglect (1) the political context within which civil society organizations operate, (2) variations in tactics and resources utilized by civil society, and (3) the dynamic structure of interactions within and between coalitions of civil society organizations.

The dearth of comprehensive studies of policy processes with an extensive focus on civil society is not surprising. There are a substantive number of mechanisms identified in policy scholarship that lead to policy change. There are even more mechanisms in collective action theories that show how mobilizations may directly or indirectly affect policy-making processes. When one combines policy change mechanisms from both lines of scholarship, it is possible to end up with dozens of unique paths to policy change. Since the majority of empirical social movement and policy studies can only focus on a single or small number of cases, almost all of these studies can understandably highlight only a small number of pathways linking civil society to policy change. Going beyond applications to single case studies, Casey (2004) combines major theoretical perspectives, such as political opportunity structures, networks, and resource mobilization, to generate a comprehensive analytical framework specifying the mechanisms through which civil society organizations can shape policy. This framework also emphasizes how the characteristics of civil society organizations, such as organizational identity and membership structure as well as the nature of the policy in question, may also affect the capacity of civil society organizations to influence policy processes.

Empirical studies aiming at bridging policy and collective action theories, emphasize the limitations of conceptualizing the relationship between civil society and policy as a unidirectional process (Baumgartner and Mahoney 2005). These studies also underline the limitations of characterizing state and civil society as isolated entities (Meyer et al. 2005). Civil society is not necessarily a unitary coherent actor or an external force that strives to influence the state from the outside. Instead, the nature of the relationship between collective action and policy processes may be better depicted as "interactive and mutually constitutive" (Ingram and Ingram 2005, p. 140). Civil society, mobilizations, and government actors are not independent forces; collective action, public organizations, and civil society intersect in various ways (Banaszak 2005; McCarthy 2005). A strict policy insider/outsider dichotomy is not meaningful since states consist of a combination of policy actors and the strength of each actor's relationship to particular civil society organizations varies significantly (Banaszak 2005). For example, there may be instances when valuable civil society leaders become "insiders" in policy-making processes (Banaszak 2005). Or certain civil society organizations that have strong ties to policy elites may be more influential in shaping policy than many of the governmental actors involved in policy processes (Pettinicchio 2017). This variation in the strength of ties between various segments of civil society and the state is well conceptualized in studies of civil society (e.g. Foley and Edwards 1996). However, the structure of ties between civil society and the state are not static; for certain issues, civil society organizations may act as a legitimizing force for state policies in the Gramscian sense. When other issues/problems arise in the policy agenda, the same actors may have a more confrontational relationship with the same governmental actors. Therefore, a dynamic

and networked perspective towards the relationship between policy and collective action offers a more compelling explanation as to when and how policies change.

Using an illustrative case study, this paper also contributes to the line of studies that aim at utilizing tools from both public policy and collective action scholarship. However, due to the abovementioned constraints of providing an overarching synthesis in empirical cases, I zoom in on the role of elite allies, positions of key actors, and overall structural properties of civil society networks in shaping policy outcomes. I also argue that the structure of advocacy coalitions are not static. While conflictual interactions may dominate relationships among coalitions a majority of the time, the nature of interactions may vary when different problems/issues gain prominence within a policy area.

Methodology and Data

By using ACF and relational approaches to collective action, the main purpose of this descriptive study is to reveal the role of civil society and structural properties of advocacy coalitions in affecting public policy. The context of the study is Turkey, an example of a strong state–weak civil society in which non-institutional forms of collective action by civil society are more likely to occur due to the lack of formal inclusion mechanisms of civil society actors in policy-making processes (Eisinger 1973). Therefore, examining the role of civil society in shaping public policy in a context like Turkey highlights the role of collective action-based explanations of policy change. The method of the study is a single case design based on an *extreme* (rare) case of a collective action event in Turkey that led to successful policy change. The extreme case method is based on the selection of a case because of its extreme value in the dependent or independent variable in which the researcher is interested (Seawright and Gerring 2008). The mobilization of WROs in Turkey in November 2016 to reverse a bill that would overturn the convictions of child abusers if they married their victims is an example of an extreme case because it is one of many mobilizations that have aimed at reversing government-led legislation since the 2013 Gezi Park protests but is one of the very few that were successful at influencing policy (a positive value on the dependent variable in a universe in which most cases are negative). The rarity of the case is valuable because it has the potential to expose mechanisms or independent variables that were overlooked in previous analyses (Seawright and Gerring 2008).

Network data about inter-organizational ties are collected as event data through an online search of news sources. Newspapers remain the best available source to retrospectively compile collective action event data, despite the prevalence of errors of omission of small-scale events (Koopmans and Rucht 2002). Specific keywords used in the search are "*cinsel istismar*" (sexual abuse), "*yasa*" (law), "*düzenleme*" (regulation), and "*yönerge*" (directive). The search for these terms was carried out via Google for the time period November 17–23, 2016. This period corresponds to the day the bill was proposed in parliament until the day after the bill was withdrawn. A search with these rules returned 89 unique entries. Event data is coded only from webpages of national news sources (e.g. www.hurriyet.com.tr/, www.diken.com.tr/, www.bianet.org/). Events in which only one organization (*isolates*) was involved are not included in the analysis. News stories about political party activities in parliament (e.g. speeches by opposition parties) are also not included in the event data. Event data is coded as an *affiliation*

matrix (organizations × events). In other words, rows of the raw data matrix consist of organizations and columns represent protest-type events. In order to acquire the inter-organizational network data, the *affiliation matrix* is transformed into a *one-mode matrix* (organizations × organizations). The resulting square inter-organizational matrix is dichotomized (0 if there are no interactions, 1 if there are one or more interactions) since there are very few ties with values greater than 1. The final inter-organizational network consists of a total of 137 organizations. A tie in this network indicates two organizations engaging in joint collective action events such as demonstrations, public statements, pamphleteering, or public meetings with politicians. *Visone* and *igraph* software packages are used in the visualization of the network as well for the calculation of basic network measures.

Context: Civil Society and Policy Making in Turkey

Turkey is typically defined as a case of a strong state with a relatively weak civil society that has limited power to counter the state. The dominance of clientelism, populism, and lack of pluralism are the main characteristics of state–society relations (Heper and Yıldırım 2011). Moreover, low levels of bridging social trust, tolerance, and hierarchical relations dominate the structure of civil society networks (Aytaç et al. 2017). Following the proclamation of the new republic, the Turkish state actively promoted the formation of civil society organizations, but this top-down approach led to the emergence of many organizations that acted as extensions of the state and failed to function as intermediaries between citizens and the state (Karaman and Aras 2000). The acceleration of the European Union (EU) accession process by the end of the 1990s contributed immensely to positive changes in civil society in Turkey. Following the 1999 Helsinki and 2002 Copenhagen decisions, in 2002 the conservative AK Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), (JDP) won the general elections and was able to set up a majority government without the need for coalition partners for the first time in more than ten years. Up until the late 2000s, the JDP implemented a significant number of reforms in order to satisfy the requirements of the Copenhagen political criteria (Sarigil 2010). In addition to curbing the powers of the military and improving minority and women's rights, some of these legislative changes also had a crucial impact on the legal framework within which civil society organizations function. For example, changes to the Association Law in 2004 eliminated a number of constraints to establishing and managing associations (e.g. the official permit requirement for international funding).

In addition to legislative changes, the EU also promoted strengthening civil society in Turkey by acting as a legitimizing force for the goals and activities of civil society organizations as well as through its funding and alliance-building programs (Rumelili and Boşnak 2015; Ertan 2018). However, in recent years Turkey's accession to the EU is at an impasse, due to the increasing authoritarian tendencies of the JDP, and EU–Turkey relations show no sign of recovering in the near future. Consequently, the EU's legitimizing and empowering role for Turkish civil society is eroding fast as well (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber 2016).

Recent events in Turkish politics have also had tremendously detrimental outcomes for Turkish civil society. The State of Emergency that was declared as a result of the 2016 coup attempt was in effect between July 2016 and July 2018 and led to the closure of more than 2000 civil society organizations; harsh police treatment of participants in

protest events is increasingly becoming the norm. According to the CIVICUS (2017) *Monitor*, which tracks civil space, the extended emergency law is eradicating independent civil society by curbing freedom of speech and the right to peaceful assembly. Following the 2016 coup attempt, the powers of law enforcement also increased significantly. Strikes are prohibited; police can easily detain citizens without a prosecutor's order, even for the expression of opinions on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (IPC 2017). Overall, the civil society space is shrinking, in terms of the actual number of organizations as well as the legal environment and dominant values.

Civil Society in Policy Making in Turkey

As a result of the highly centralized state structure, extreme levels of party discipline, and dominance of hierarchical norms, not only in politics but all aspects of social relations, policy processes in Turkey were typically explained as bargaining among military and bureaucratic elites and elected politicians until the 2000s. Since 2002, the JDP has curbed the power of the military and various other bureaucratic institutions that were deemed undemocratic and established critical reforms to enhance certain ethnic and religious rights. However since the 2010s, JDP rule has become increasingly authoritarian, backed by its electoral power, and more and more scholars are categorizing Turkey as a case of "competitive authoritarianism" (Özbudun 2015; Esen and Gumuscu 2016). Particularly since the declaration of emergency rule following the attempted coup in 2016, even legislative processes have been bypassed to a great extent and policy making characterized by top-down and executive action through regular decree laws.

When we examine the integration of civil society into policy-making processes in Turkey, there are no formal/legal structures that require input or participation from civil society organizations in policy processes. In the absence of such structures and regulations, it is not surprising that according to one CIVICUS report, 73 per cent of all participants in a study stated that Turkish civil society has limited or no impact in policy making (İçduygu et al. 2011). This does not necessarily mean that cooperation between civil society and public organizations is absent; instead, studies show that such networks are strong and established as a result of personal relations (TUSEV 2013). When civil society participates in decision making in any governmental organization, only government-friendly civil society organizations are invited, and these organizations rarely conflict with or challenge government officials (TUSEV 2013).

As a result of the prevalence of emergency decrees and the majority alliance between the JDP and Nationalist Movement Party in the parliament, opposition parties are ineffective in policy making through legislation. The contraction of the civil society space, increasing repressive powers of the state, and eroding legitimizing power of international organizations such as the EU following the 2013 Gezi protests and 2016 coup attempt are evident. However, due to the lack of multiple venues for challenging policy monopolies, bottom-up political mobilizations are increasingly important sites for civil society to influence policy processes.

Policy Change and Mobilizations in Turkey – Repeal of Child Abuse Bill

Most significant mobilizations in the recent history of Turkey aimed at reversing a policy decision. Such mobilizations are also known as reactive mobilizations and are more

likely all around the world because individuals value losses more than gains (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). People are more likely to mobilize to protect the status quo than to achieve new benefits. In a notable example, starting in late May 2013, in order to reverse the decision of the government to build a mall at Gezi Park – one of the last green spaces in downtown Istanbul – tens of thousands of people mobilized. Soon, there were non-stop protests in all provinces of Turkey which lasted about three weeks. Since the Gezi protests, such mobilizations have decreased to some extent, mainly because of the abovementioned increasing legal and physical costs of protest, especially after the emergency rule following the coup attempt. Despite this environment, there have been many large-scale cases of collective action since Gezi in 2013, reflecting a variety of grievances such as the environment, election integrity, women's and children's rights, and the right to work. However, none of these cases succeeded at influencing policy at the agenda-setting, legislative, or implementation stages. Unlike these cases, WRO mobilization to repeal the child abuse bill that was brought to parliament during November 2016 was quite successful in a short period of time. I argue that this success can be explained by the unique configuration of the advocacy coalition network at the time. A group of women's business associations were able to act as bridges across adversary coalitions and capitalize on the close ties of Islamist women's organizations to policy makers. At the same time, these business associations were able to diffuse and legitimize the opinions and positions of a large number of feminist organizations that are rarely given any voice in formal policy-making platforms.

Overview of the Case

On November 17, 2016, a group of MPs from JDP proposed a bill that would overturn the convictions of child abusers if they married their victims. The bill would also drop charges for men marrying underage girls. Turkey still struggles with the prevalence of child marriages; according to the State Institute of Statistics, in 2016 about 5 per cent of all marriages were cases of girls marrying before the age of 18.[1] Child marriage is especially common in the poor, rural southeastern region of Turkey, where arranged marriages may provide financial gains for the family of the bride.

Then-Prime Minister Binali Yildirim argued that the bill was aimed at freeing a small number of men in prison who married underage girls with consent and were separated from their wives and children. More specifically, the bill would release men guilty of sexual assault as long as they married the victim, provided the cases did not involve force, threat, or any other restriction on consent. Then-Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdag, along with many other influential members of the JDP, defended the bill, arguing that the goal was to reunite some 3,000 families and the measure would only be used in cases committed before November 2016.

In addition to disapproval from opposition parties in the parliament, The Turkey country offices of UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA also raised their concerns and stated that "any forms of sexual violence against children are crimes which should be punished as such".[2] Soon, an online petition to repeal the bill was signed by more than 800,000 people, and the Twitter hashtag for mobilization, #tecavuzmesrulastirilamaz (#rapecantbelegalized) became a top trending topic on Turkish Twitter, reaching the top 20 list of hashtags for Turkey for 2016.[3]

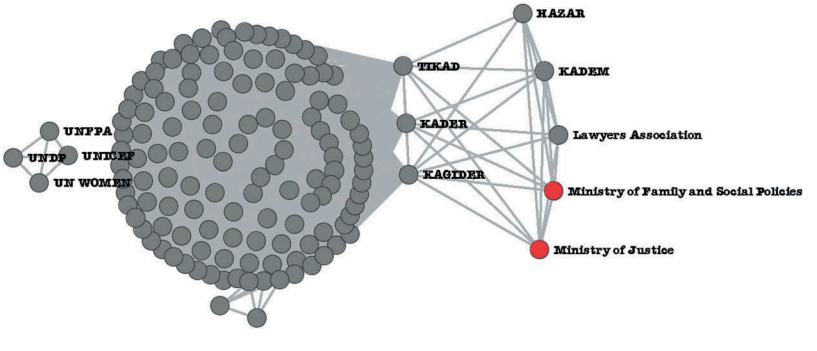
Mobilizations on the streets were as intense and far-reaching as online mobilizations. All around the country, women took to the streets to protest the bill in large numbers. The main concern of the WROs was the emphasis on consent. Many claimed that underage girls cannot consent to a marriage, or they can be easily manipulated by their own families or the perpetrators. On November 22, then-Prime Minister Binali Yildirim stated that the bill would be returned to the commission for review. However, after further pressure by civil society, the bill was dropped completely.

The Role of Coalition Networks and Bridging Actors

The dominant advocacy coalition on gender policy in Turkey is comprised of a network of well-organized conservative Islamist civil society organizations focusing on women's issues and relevant governmental organizations such as the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. The Islamist organizations have strong ties to government agencies, and these organizations rarely collaborate with secular and left-leaning WROs. Following the proposal of the bill, the street protests and online campaign were exclusively organized by more than 100 secular and feminist WROs with no participation or visible support from Islamist organizations.[4] None of the Islamist organizations joined the protests or were signatories to the petition. However, Islamist organizations were crucial actors, since they have easy access to decision making of macro-political institutions through their strong informal ties, such as the Ministry of Family and Social Policy and Ministry of Justice. Figure 1 displays the structure of coalition networks in this particular action situation, based on event data extracted from newspaper articles. The large, highly clustered component of the network represents well-connected secular and feminist organizations. There is also a small component of the network consisting of various UN agencies that exclusively interact with each other.

The nodes colored in red are The main governmental organizations at the center of the contested policy issue of child marriage, the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Visualization of the network clearly demonstrates that there are no direct ties between these governmental organizations and feminist and secular WROs represented within the large cluster. However these organizations still interact with a number of civil society organizations. Among these organizations are HAZAR, KADEM, and the Lawyers' Association, well-known Islamist organizations. Despite being civil society organizations,

Figure 1. Adversary coalitions and bridging actors



due to their closeness to government organizations, these organizations can be considered as policy insiders when it comes to gender policy in Turkey. These types of organizations are powerful but small in number. The majority of WROs in Turkey are secular and identify as feminist. Due to the limited nature of relations between these feminist and secular organizations and the Islamist ones, it is possible to categorize them as adversary coalitions (Simga and Goker 2017). Moreover, these organizations also differ based on their belief systems: secular feminists are united with the goal of achieving gender equality whereas Islamist organizations promote gender equity, arguing men and women have different natures and should have complementary roles in social and political life (Simga and Goker 2017). However, when the issue of the child abuse bill arose on the policy agenda in November 2016, a group of women's business associations, such as TIKAD and KAGIDER, were able to act as bridges among these coalitions. The bridging role of these organizations is revealed empirically in the visualized network since they have the highest betweenness degree centrality score in the mobilization network. The betweenness centrality score is a node-level network measure that indicates the extent to which an actor is situated on the shortest path between other pairs of nodes and is commonly used to identify network members that act as important bridges linking otherwise loosely connected actors (Borgatti et al. 2013).

The women's business associations, especially KAGIDER, are active participants in many collective action campaigns organized by secular feminist organizations. However these business organizations also closely work with the government and Islamist organizations that are close to the government such as KADEM. The business associations' main mission is to advance the status of women in businesses, and they tend to be secular. However, these organizations are also economically right-wing and developmentalist, and their economic views are very much in line with those of the government. They do not share the anti-capitalist views of many feminist organizations. This uniqueness in the coordinates of their interests and belief systems enabled them to act as crucial bridging actors between feminist and Islamist organizations in this particular case. Before the bill was dropped, a group of Islamist organizations and business associations had a meeting with the Ministry of Justice and many analysts argue that this meeting was the key moment that triggered the reversal process.[5] The business associations were able to voice the concerns and claims of the street mobilizations to the policy makers with the support of Islamist organizations. The arguments of protestors, which can only rarely attract the neutral attention of current policy makers in Turkey, gained legitimacy only when they were delivered by business associations and accompanying Islamist organizations close to the government. A minority coalition was able to affect policy in this instance through two mechanisms. The first was organizing well-attended street protests all around the country and by running a successful social media campaign on Twitter, Facebook, and change.org. The high participation in these events was crucial for signaling public opinion and increasing the cost of repression or neglect by the government. The second was having elite allies who were well-connected to organizations in the dominant coalition that could easily access policy makers in the government.

Conclusion

There is no single mechanism through which civil society can influence public policy (Casey 2004). This paper first argued that among the major theories of policy processes, ACF has the most potential to reveal the role of civil society organizations in affecting policy due to its focus

on policy networks and actors in the policy process. After a review of the policy change mechanisms from collective action and public policy scholarship, the paper combined analytical tools from the ACF and collective action studies in order to show the role of the network structure of coalition networks in shaping a particular action situation in gender policy in Turkey. Within the gender policy subsystem in Turkey, when large-scale online and offline protest events were combined with the support of elite or insider allies through bridging actors, a minority coalition was able to have an effect on policy decisions. The case study illustrates that more attention to micro-processes is likely to contribute to explaining policy change, especially in less plural and participative contexts such as Turkey. Civil society organizations are not just outside actors that interrupt the agenda of policy makers. Their power is not only a function of the number of people they can mobilize but also the structure and composition of the dynamic informal inter-organizational networks they are embedded in.

ACF pays particular attention to the networked structure of coalitions that make up a policy subsystem; however, the dynamic nature of these coalitions and formal network properties are overlooked to a great extent. There have been multiple collective action events organized by feminist women's rights organizations in Turkey in recent years; a majority of these events lacked any interaction with the Islamist organizations (Simga and Goker 2017). However, the structure of the advocacy coalition network in this case study was not fully fragmented, unlike in many other action situations (Ostrom 2005). Therefore, this study suggests that the belief systems that demarcate advocacy coalitions have higher fluidity than considered before, and advocacy coalitions are not static entities. When different issues in a policy subsystem are invoked, the structure of inter-coalition networks can change substantially, and these variations in inter-coalition interactions may have consequences for influencing policy change. Moreover, this paper argues that extensive protests and online campaigns have the capacity to boost the bargaining power of minority coalitions by signaling high levels of public support, especially in contexts that lack multiple formal venues for making policy claims. Finally this study also highlighted the porous nature of the structure of relations between civil society and the state. Certain civil society organizations may act as powerful insiders in shaping policy and the configuration of the ties of these organizations to other coalitions can change significantly when different issues rise to prominence in a policy subsystem.

The paper also has some limitations. Due to the complex causality of social phenomena, it is difficult to argue that a network configuration with bridging actors linking adversary coalitions is a sufficient condition for civil society organizations to shape policy through collective action, but it may be one of many pathways when accompanied by large-scale online and offline campaigns. In addition, the study relies on a single case study and has limited generalizability. Empirically oriented, medium-*N* comparative network studies of multiple action situations can better highlight the causal effects of civil society and network dynamics in shaping policy. Overall, with increasing populism and authoritarian tendencies around the globe, comparative public policy as a discipline needs to enter into a more direct dialogue with collective action studies to understand policy processes.

Notes

1. Turkish Statistical Institute, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/HbPrint.do?id=24645.
2. "Turkey should reject child abuse law shielding men who marry from punishment: UN", Reuters (2016), http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-politics-law-sexcrimes/turkey-should-reject-child-abuse-law-shielding-men-who-marry-from-punishment-u-n-idUSKBN13G22K.

3. "*2016'da Twitter'da ne konusuldu?*" [What was spoken at Twitter in 2016?], Mediacat (2016), http://www.mediacatonline.com/2016da-twitterda-ne-konusuldu/.
4. "*Itiraz ediyoruz*" [We object!], Kadinin Insan Haklari Yeni Cozumler Dernegi (2016), http://www.kadininsanhaklari.org/.
5. "*Bozdag kadin dernekleri temsilcilerini dinledi*" [Bozdag listened to representatives from women's organizations], Al Jazeera (2016) retrieved from http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/bozdag-kadin-dernekleri-temsilcilerini-dinledi.

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