Political Integration of Turks in the U.S. and the Netherlands: A Comparative Study of the Role of Turkish Immigrant Organizations (İşil Anıl)

This study will analyze how the organizational behavior of Turkish immigrant associations helps to explain the political participation of Turks in the US and the Netherlands, using metropolitan New York and Amsterdam as the study sites. Political participation is one of the most important indicators of immigrant integration. Active participation through electoral (voting, membership of political parties, unions, being elected to an office) or non-electoral (attending meetings or rallies, protests, demonstrations, boycotts, volunteering for campaigns, donating money to a political cause) ways constitutes a prerequisite for their complete integration. My study will focus on electoral participation. Earlier studies have emphasized the individual characteristics of immigrants in explaining variation in immigrant political participation and between immigrants and the host population at large. Lower participation has been tied to individuals’ lack of crucial resources, such as education, income, employment, and socialization, as well as differential effects of gender. However, this study will also take into account the way city level contextual factors structure political opportunities in the host country (not only national and local naturalization requirements and registration and voting rules, but also those that affect immigrant organizations and their membership). Over the years, during the process of settlement, Turkish immigrants have formed a large number and diverse types of organizations in their respective host countries. Their formation and development were influenced and shaped by the changing political opportunity structures in the US and the Netherlands, as well as the political and institutional networks and ties retained with the home country. Thus, I will explain the trajectories of organizational formation of Turks in both countries, assess their migration and settlement processes, how these organizations have been created and branched out over time, the political institutional framework of the host country, and the relations of the Turkish immigrants and their organizations to the country of origin. I will further describe the structure of Turkish immigrant associations currently existing in both countries, especially in Amsterdam and New York, which will include number, and organizational density, size and number of umbrella organizations, main organizational principles and functional types of associations. Moreover, I will analyze the role of Turkish (both umbrella and member) associations concerning their political participation as immigrants’ interest organizations.