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Immigrant Associations in Canada: Included, Accommodated, or Excluded?

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ABSTRACT *Concurring with the view that political opportunity structures and citizenship regimes affect participatory patterns of immigrants through shaping associational activity and mobilization of immigrant groups, this essay examines the evidence from the case of Turkish immigrant associations in Canada to delineate and analyze variables other than institutional context and citizenship regimes that constrain collective participation. It focuses on the impact of history of immigration by Turks to Canada (Montreal and Toronto), trajectory and scope of associational activity, group size and heterogeneity, and political participation. It concludes that collective mobilization and participation by immigrant groups are constrained by intra-group characteristics alongside the institutional context of the receiving country.*

Introduction

In studying different patterns of ethnic mobilization and participation across varying citizenship regimes scholars and policymakers have identified a need to facilitate participation of immigrant groups in different political systems for enhancing democratic inclusiveness in liberal democracies. This view has come to constitute the conventional wisdom in the literature not only on ethnic mobilization and participation but also on democratic inclusiveness. Participation of these groups as such, however, does not follow uniform patterns across receiving societies. By examining participatory patterns of ethnic groups at various levels of government across Europe (local, regional, national, supranational) some scholars suggest that participation by immigrants in fact reflects varying institutional structures, repertoires, and channels available in national as well as supranational contexts.¹

This essay concurs with the view that domestic institutions such as political opportunity structures and citizenship regimes of receiving countries affect participatory patterns of immigrants through shaping associational activity and mobilization of immigrant groups. This study, however, introduces a caveat and a set of conditions for the conventional expectations in this regard. The literature claims that more open political opportunity structures and more inclusive citizenship regimes are likely to result in increased levels of participation by immigrant groups

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and ethno-cultural communities. However, the evidence from the case of Turkish immigrant associations in Canada points to the limits of such expectation as it suggests that there remain variables other than institutional context and citizenship regimes that constrain collective participation. In fact, these findings are even more intriguing when compared to the evidence from the activities of Turkish immigrant associations in different European receiving countries. From a comparison of the associational activities of Turkish immigrants in Canada with those in Germany and France² the following propositions can be derived. First, the smaller the number of individuals and the more dispersed the group across the receiving country the more constrained participatory efforts remain. Second, the more available integration mechanisms offered by the receiving country the less likely is the service provision and advocacy by immigrant associations. Third, the more emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity in the receiving country the higher the likelihood of emphasizing cultural representation and participation on the part of immigrant groups and, at the same time, the less likely the emphasis on political participation. Fourth, the more heterogeneous the immigrant community the less likely political participation proper and the more likely diversified associational activities. Fifth, the wider the perception of discrimination towards and/or adversarial politics targeting the immigrant group the more likely collective mobilization and activism.

In order to test the empirical validity of these propositions this study analyzes the origins, organization, role, and practice of immigrant associations established by Turkish communities in Canada in general and in Toronto and Montreal in particular. This study brings new insights to the literature on participation of immigrant associations. Despite the ever-growing political science and sociological research on Turkish immigrants and their associations in Europe, there is a striking gap in the literature concerning the organization of Turkish immigrants in North America in general and in Canada in particular.³ While this may be due to the sheer size of the Turkish migrant population in Europe in contrast to North America, a comparison between these groups in Europe and North America would shed crucial light on how different dynamics of domestic institutional contexts play out in these two very different settings.

Through a case study of associations of Turks in Canada this essay will examine the dynamics between the domestic institutional context (featured by political opportunity structures as well as the citizenship regime of the receiving country) and organized activities of immigrants around culture, religion, business, and politics. Empirical research for this study is based on interviews with executive members of Turkish immigrant associations in Canada between 1998 and 2004, participant observation in a subset of these associations in Montreal, and an analysis of community print media. Since Canada is often cited as a country committed to multiculturalism with considerable respect for diversity, what does the evidence from the associational activities of Turkish communities in Canada demonstrate with respect to the impact of inclusive channels for organized participation of immigrants in the Canadian social, political, and cultural system? In addressing this question, this article argues that contrary to expectations, more open participatory channels or inclusive citizenship

policies do not automatically translate into increased political participation and ethnic mobilization. However, domestic institutional contexts as such *do* promote a vigorous associational life organized for particularly cultural ends and at different levels.

First, this article will introduce the Canadian sociopolitical context as a multicultural society and will identify the available channels for associational activity. Second, there is a brief overview of patterns of immigration from Turkey to Canada. Third, the associational life of Turkish immigrants in Canada, particularly those in Montreal and Toronto, is examined so as to assess how the domestic institutional context affects participatory patterns of this particular group. The article ends with concluding remarks.

Canada as a Mosaic: A Multicultural Polity

Canada is often cited as a relatively open country for immigrant/legally resident populations and their organized activities for a set of reasons. First, Canada has been committed to multiculturalism and diversity since the early 1970s, attributing equality to all Canadian citizens without regarding any difference on the basis of race, ethnic origin, language, or religious affiliation. This overall approach is supported by a set of official commitments through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Employment Equity Act, the Official Languages Act, the Pay Equity Act, and the Multiculturalism Act. Provinces and territories also have laws, human rights commissions, and programs that promote diversity. Such deep-seated commitment, however, does not imply that Canada is without its challenges in terms of fighting against racism and discriminatory practices. It is also in a constant need of reforms around how its increasing diversity could be successfully accommodated. In fact, there is perennial research conducted to overcome the increasing challenges that accompany the richness of diversity along different policy areas such as health and education. Second, the political system as a whole, including the activities of political parties and the general approach to associational life by ethno-cultural communities, point to continued efforts to include organized immigrant interests at different levels of government ranging from the local to the federal. Accordingly, there is an abundance of associations organized and run by ethno-cultural communities with aims covering a variety of policy questions. Among these associations are those that are organized for promoting equitable access to health and social services for all immigrant communities in different provinces (such as ACCÈSSS, Alliance des Communautés Culturelles pour l'Égalité dans la Santé et les Services Sociaux, in Quebec), facilitating gender equality for women of different ethnic backgrounds (for example, South Asian Women's Associations), and providing services to specific ethno-cultural communities (like Chinese Family Services). Such vivid associational life, however, should not suggest a substantial decrease in terms of the problems encountered by ethno-cultural communities; it merely confirms that organized representation of ethnic communities is part of how the system in Canada works with its linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity.

This approach is founded and continuously questioned, reshaped, improved, and kept alive due to Canada’s long tradition of balancing equitable representation and participation of both French and English speaking peoples as well as its commitment to aboriginal peoples. An example of how the commitment to consultation of diverse groups at the provincial level plays out within an overarching paradigm of diversity is also reflected in the consultative bodies that are established with the aim of allowing for representation of ethno-cultural communities in the health policy process, such as the Community Engagement Program of the Vancouver Health Authority. Moreover, topics such as mental health, interpretation services in critical service provision, education, and addressing problems of the aging population in Canada that cut across all ethno-cultural communities are addressed with the inclusion of ethno-cultural groups in the debates. Again, such inclusion should not imply effective participation and/or substantial contribution to the end result; it reiterates that the system in Canada is based on a broad commitment to awareness and incorporation of its diversity in policy processes at different levels by a range of practices across the country.

Such commitment is reflected in the practices that concern facilitation of integration processes of newcomers. Provinces such as Quebec, Manitoba, and British Columbia design and administer their own settlement programs. Most of the immigrants who arrive in Canada settle in the three major cities—Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver—and the ethnic composition of the population in these cities reflects Canada’s current and future diversity (see Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), among which the Turkish community takes its place. As permanent residents, individuals (most of whom are qualified as “skilled workers” selected under the immigration programs) and their dependents preparing for integration into Canadian society may enjoy a diversified set of language courses as well as integration courses where they settle. These services are provided in all provinces mainly by immigrant-serving organiza-

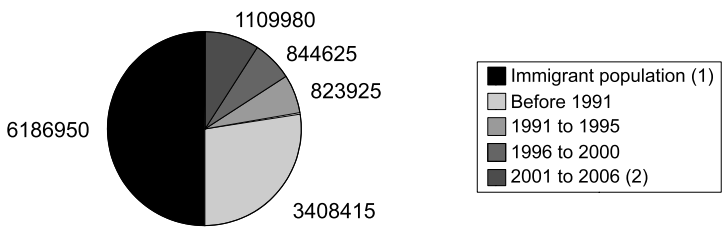


Figure 1. Foreign-born immigrants.

Source: Statistics Canada.

(1) Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

(2) Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

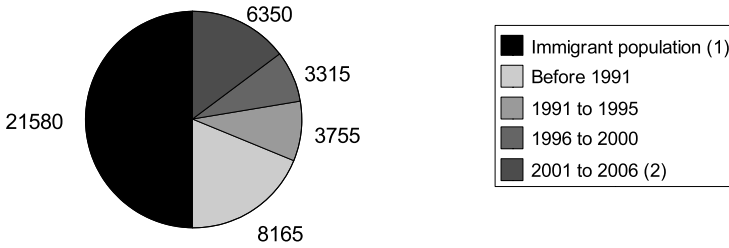


Figure 2. Turkey-born immigrants in Canada.
Source: Statistics Canada.

(1) Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

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tions.⁴ In order to advance integration in key areas, labor market initiatives such as the “Canadian Immigration Integration Project” promote interaction among all stakeholders including government agencies as well as a wide range of NGOs, foundations, and immigrant-serving organizations. They facilitate labor market integration particularly for newcomers from China, India, and the Philippines.⁵ Another example is the large-scale METROPOLIS research project, which works on comparative research and public policy concerning immigration and diversity.⁶

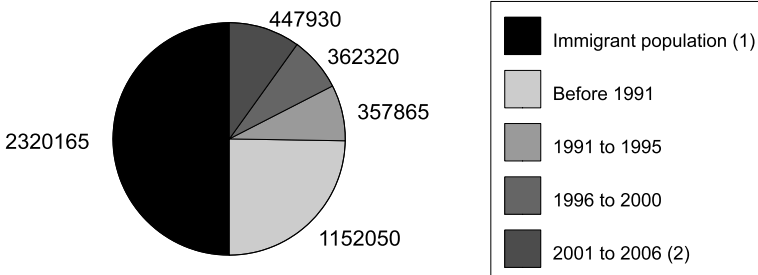


Figure 3. Foreign-born immigrants in Toronto, Ontario.
Source: Statistics Canada.

(1) Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

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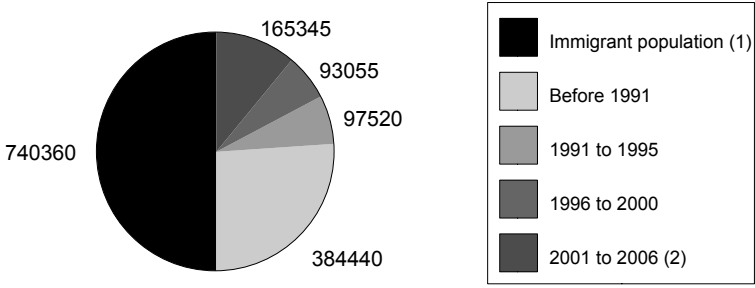


Figure 4. Foreign-born immigrants in Montreal, Quebec.

Source: Statistics Canada.

(1) Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

(2) Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

This approach of continuous facilitation of integration of permanent residents is complemented by a relatively open citizenship regime that enables permanent residents to acquire citizenship within three consecutive years of residence in Canada as regulated by the Citizenship Act or by birth for the children of permanent residents. A basic level of familiarity with one of the official languages and passing the citizenship test are the basic conditions through which the permanent residents will

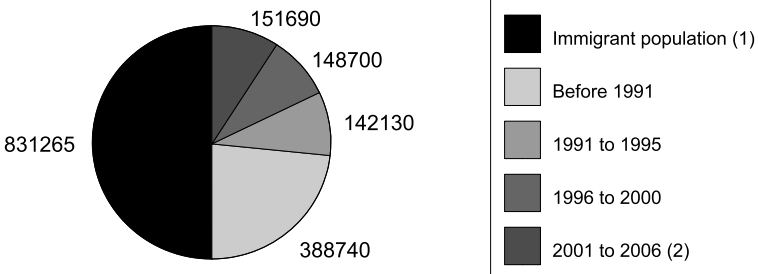


Figure 5. Foreign-born immigrants in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Source: Statistics Canada.

(1) Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

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begin to practice the political rights. In contrast to most European cases, such a process of citizenship acquisition suggests a comparatively uncomplicated and less demanding transition from non-citizen status to citizen status with political rights and privileges.

Such straightforward channels for access to citizenship, however, need not be interpreted as increased and expanded levels of participation in politics by ethno-cultural communities in Canada. Although acquisition of voting rights and being able to stand for elections are in fact open for these groups through acquisition of citizenship, such access does not necessarily translate into active participation or representation in politics at local, provincial, and federal levels.⁷ An interesting feature of the national party system in Canada is that for the selection process of the candidates, the major parties allow the participation of legally resident non-citizens. Such participation in party politics encourages parties to seek members from ethnic communities and also to engage with ethnic groups that have large social networks. This form of political interaction opens avenues for political mobilization by ethnic groups as well as a role for the representatives of ethnic groups that includes possibilities for immigrants of Turkish origin. In this way, through the political process the votes of new Canadian citizens become increasingly important for political parties at the national level party system. Thus the parties develop strategies to include such groups that benefit both sides to a certain extent. For example, parties in Quebec, especially the Liberal Party, made specific attempts to attract ethno-cultural communities into the political system by highlighting the multicultural agenda and its commitment to diversity, which they cited as likely to be challenged by a nationalist Bloc Québécois and Parti Québécois.⁸ The Turkish community in Montreal, for example, actively supported several candidates running in the most recent Quebec elections in March 2007.

In this overall structure of relative openness to diversity supported by legal regulation, policy initiatives, and practices concerning consultation of ethno-cultural communities as well as a relatively uncomplicated citizenship regime it would be expected that Turks in Canada would engage with no difficulty in the social, political, and cultural realm in Canada through both their individual and collective efforts. However, evidence presented in the next sections suggests that such participation is neither automatic nor immediate. The next section introduces the brief history of immigration of Turks to Canada. It provides an overview of their organizations, activities, participatory efforts, and mobilization to examine how the Turkish immigrant associations take part in Canadian cultural diversity.

The Turkish Community and their Organizations in Canada

A Brief History of Turks in Canada

Identifying the size of the Turkish community in Canada for the past and the current period is not an easy task. This is partly due to the difficulty in defining who constitutes an immigrant of Turkish descent in the Canadian context. In Canada, the term

Turk or Turkish applies to immigrants and descendants of immigrants who claim Turkish identity or cultural ties to Turkey and occasionally is not limited to those who arrived from Turkey or holding Turkish citizenship. This method of self-identification is also reflected in the cooperation among different associations. Moreover, the Canadian census also relies on self-identification, rendering estimations of numbers of Turks more difficult.

Leaving methodological challenges aside, according to the official statistics provided by Statistics Canada, which classifies ethno-cultural communities on the basis of place of birth and languages spoken, there were approximately 50,000 individuals of Turkish origin in Canada in 2006 (see Figures 6, 7, and 8). The immigration inflow from Turkey has taken place in different waves from different parts of the country, mainly in the post-World War II period. In the period between 1960 and 1970 most incoming immigrants of Turkish origin were skilled professionals with mostly urban backgrounds. These individuals, some of whom continue to actively participate in associational life in Canada, are representatives of the modernized and westernized generation of Republican Turkey.⁹ During this period, students who arrived to acquire professional degrees, mainly in engineering and medicine, chose to live in Canada and are represented in the executive committees of both the immigrant associations and the elite of the contemporary Turkish community.

The motives behind immigration inflows to Canada are similar with respect to immigration to most advanced industrialized countries. These include a search for better economic and educational opportunities and a better life for the next generation than what the immigrants would be able to secure in their country of origin for almost all periods beginning with the 1960s. The critical period after which immigration from Turkey diversified is the 1980s. Immigration from Turkey to Canada

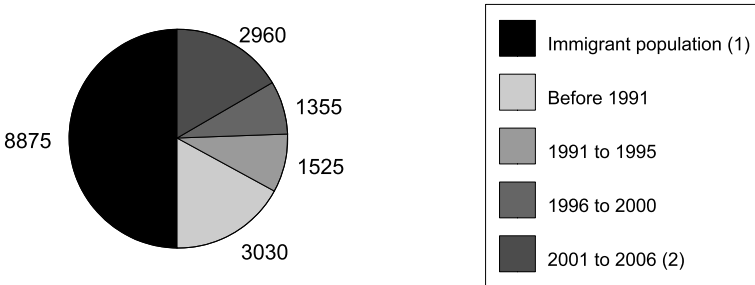


Figure 6. Turkey-born immigrants in Toronto, Ontario.
Source: Statistics Canada.

(1) Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

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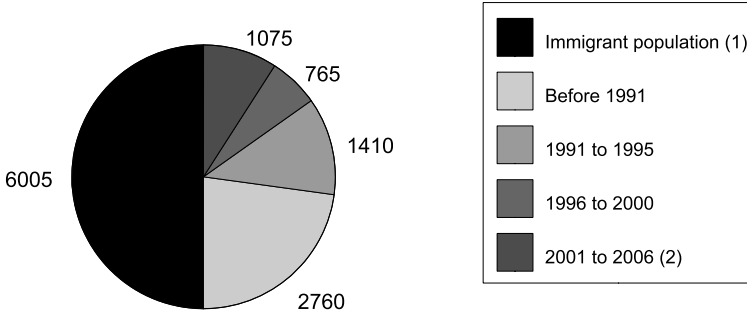


Figure 7. Turkey-born immigrants in Montreal, Quebec.

Source: Statistics Canada.

(1) Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

(2) Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

diversified in two major ways during this period. Those from rural parts of Turkey began to arrive in Canada (for example, a substantive number of individuals from Denizli arrived in Montreal in 1986). Moreover, due to the political turmoil in Turkey and the Cyprus conflict, increasing numbers of asylum seekers also chose to live in Canada in the same period. During these periods Canada did not require

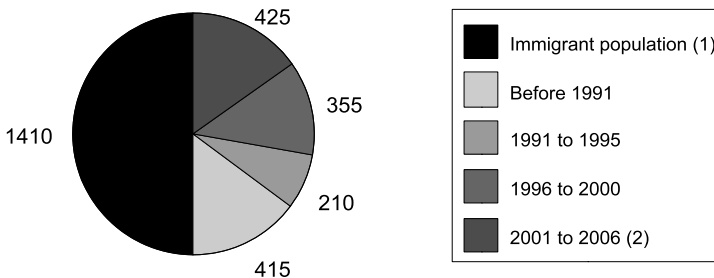


Figure 8. Turkey-born immigrants in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Source: Statistics Canada.

(1) Immigrants are persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others are more recent arrivals. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada. Includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to Census Day, May 16, 2006.

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entry visas from Turkish citizens. These individuals first started to settle in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver and began to form the core communities that would constitute the membership of different associations that they subsequently established.

Immigration from Turkey to Canada continued in different categories post-1980, mostly consisting of skilled workers and some investors who arrived with their families, as well as continued family reunification of those who arrived in the preceding period. They arrived from all regions of Turkey and settled mostly in the major cities with more job opportunities for themselves and better educational facilities for their children. Immigrants of Turkish origin do not constitute a large percentage of the immigrant population in these cities when compared to other ethno-cultural communities and are significantly smaller when compared to Turks in different European countries. Despite constituting a relatively small and diverse group, the community unites mainly around the ideal of upholding and promoting of Turkish cultural values and cuisine around which most associations form. Moreover, these associations are present in many cities, occasionally engaging in service provision and advocacy, albeit with limited scope, which will be discussed in detail in the next section as the organization and mobilization of the Turkish community in Canada is reviewed.

Why Engage in Associational Activity? Promoting Community Culture

The literature on engaging in associational activity identifies various sociological, psychological, and political reasons for establishing associations by ethno-cultural communities. Among the most common motives are filling the gap for *service provision* of services that are either not provided or not adequately provided by the receiving country, or *advocacy* for interests that are not met by the receiving country. A need to maintain ties with the country of origin as well as the cultural and linguistic heritage form the main objectives of most associations of Turks in Canada. Such an objective seems to run through the entire community, surpassing the otherwise mixed sociological profile of the community that reflects cleavages across socioeconomic sectors, political inclinations, urban-rural backgrounds, and secular-religious tendencies. Such a mixed composition is common to almost all ethno-cultural communities in Canada, and in almost all of these communities there is a tendency to organize around cultural associations. These associations focus on forming folk music and folklore groups and celebrate national holidays with events or community meetings.

An early organization called the Canadian Turkish Friendship Association (Türk Kanada Dostluk Cemiyeti) was formed in 1964 in Toronto. Until the late 1980s, this association also assisted with integration activities and provided some services to immigrants of Turkish origin. In 1976, the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society of Canada (Türk Kültür ve Folklor Derneği) was founded, which was followed by the Anatolian Folk Dancers (Anadolu Halk Oyuncuları) in 1982. These associations emphasizing Turkish cultural heritage multiplied across Canada wherever Turkish

communities lived. Examples of these organizations are the Association of Canadian Turkish Cypriots (Mississauga), the Canadian Association for Solidarity of Turks from Bulgaria (Mississauga), the Turkish Canadian Association of London, and the Canadian Turkish Cultural Association of Hamilton.

In Montreal, where a substantial number of Turks have settled, Association Culturelle Turque du Quebec (Quebec Turk Kültür Derneği) was founded in the late 1970s. In 1993, another group called Association Culturelle et Amicale (Quebec Kültür ve Dostluk Derneği), also known as Turquebec, was founded, and this association also engages in cultural activities such as folklore dancing mainly for children, organization of performances for Children's Day, and participation in Canada Day parades and Quebec Day parades. To a limited extent, the association organizes information sessions for their members in particular and the Montreal Turkish community in general on practical issues including taxes, home ownership, health, and financial management presented by volunteers from among the community in different professional positions.

In the late 1980s, the emphasis on representing Turkish culture for all associations took a dramatic turn for at least some members of the community. As the asylum seekers began to arrive in large numbers from Turkey, mostly seeking economic betterment rather than escaping political persecution, the presence of Turks in Canada began to catch the attention of the general public and policymakers from a very different angle. In addition to being a welcome addition to Canadian diversity, the mass arrival of individuals from Turkey around 1986 brought up questions about whether these individuals had legitimate claims to settle in Canada on the basis of asylum procedures. Immigration and Citizenship Canada intended to send many of these individuals back to Turkey. This resulted in the "Protest March from Montreal to Ottawa" to raise the voice of those who wished to stay. As a result, some of them were able to stay while others had to return to Turkey, only to come back and settle in Canada after a number of years. This group formed the core membership for Association Culturelle Turque du Quebec. The march also constituted the first and most extensive political mobilization by Turks in Canada, which surely pointed to how the community would be ready to organize in the presence of adversarial politics. Subsequent instances of street protests and mobilization—albeit much more limited than the march—took place while the Turkish community protested against the discussions in the Canadian parliament on the Armenian issue.¹⁰

Despite these instances of political mobilization, the primary emphasis on cultural representation of Turkey remained the main focus of the earlier associations. Such focus partially originated from, first, the emphasis in Canada on community values and cultural diversity that promotes such organizational patterns for ethno-cultural communities. Second, it is also a product of the characteristics of those who arrived in Canada in the 1960s who (due to their professional and language skills, urban backgrounds, and education) did not feel the need for extensive service provision or advocacy due to the low barriers to integration they faced in the Canadian labor market or to social, cultural, and political life in Canada in general. In the following

decades the emphasis on culture as the main motive for founding associations continued. This is not to suggest that such a unity around promoting Turkish culture resulted in unification around associations, which will be addressed further in the section on the attempts to form and sustain an umbrella association. In fact, the socioeconomic and lifestyle differences emanating from the country of origin are reflected in the nature of different associations. Despite a relatively small community in Montreal, Quebec, two associations function to represent different sections of the community, though they occasionally collaborate for different activities ranging from folklore events to celebrating national holidays or hosting artists from Turkey. One of these associations, *Turquebec*, is composed of mostly professionals with urban backgrounds, and it emphasizes cultural activities and political advocacy in Canadian politics concerning Turks as well as Turkey-related matters. The other, the *Association Culturelle Turque du Quebec*, is composed of those with mostly rural backgrounds focusing on mostly service provision, including offering courses in English and French and Turkish history, especially for children; facilitating the conducting of religious practices; and organizing activities for celebrating religious and national holidays. The executives of the associations as well as the communities come together for special events such as regular *iftars* during Ramadan or dinners organized for celebrating the proclamation of the Turkish Republic. They also coordinate and mobilize for advocacy on matters relating to adversarial politics originating from the country of origin, which will be examined below. However, the within-group differences remain such that they continue to exist and operate through separate associations. The diverse preferences and different organizational challenges within the group are not limited to the experiences of the Turkish community living in Montreal. In order to respond to the specific needs of a community that is ever-changing and diversifying, new associations such as the Turkish Society of Canada (founded in 2006) or the more recent Turkish Community Heritage Centre of Canada (TCHCC, or Kanada Türk Toplumunu Değerleri Merkezi, KTTDM, founded in February 2008), were established to promote Turkish culture and to provide services for language training and integration into the labor market—services that are becoming increasingly critical for Turks in Canada, similar to most other communities.¹¹

When reviewing the activities of the associations in the past decade or so clearly the most visible and successful community projects reflect commitment to cultural representation of Turks in Canadian multicultural society. Among these are the building of the Peace Garden in the Botanical Gardens of Montreal, the Tulip Festival in Ottawa, the regular concerts given by Turkish Classical Music Groups around Canada, and the organization of Children's Day performance in collaboration with other ethno-cultural communities. All these efforts confirm the commitment to emphasizing culture and peace in relations with other communities in Canada. These relations went through testing times, especially when the Canadian and Quebec legislatures decided to debate the Armenian issue. Leaving aside the protest march in 1986, popular reactions against the passing of the bills in both parliaments and lobbying have constituted the most extensively organized activity for the Turkish

community and their associations in Canada. The emergence of such issue, which the community perceived as a serious threat to their existence and the future of their descendents, gave way to the idea of forming an umbrella association—which itself presented various challenges with respect to mobilization and participation of Turks in the Canadian political system.

Culture Plus Business: Winning Formula?

As noted in the section on the brief history of immigration of Turks to Canada, those who arrived as landed immigrants from Turkey often had professional qualifications that generally helped them to find jobs within a relatively short period of time in the Canadian labor market. However, it is still possible to observe mixed experiences in the Canadian labor market, which is similar to the European cases and which also resemble the evidence from the labor market experiences of most ethno-cultural communities in Canada. Partly due to the points system adopted for determining permanent residence status most of these individuals were skilled professionals (including but not limited to medical doctors, engineers, computer scientists, finance specialists, etc.) who were fluent at least in one of Canada's official languages. As with members of all other ethno-cultural communities, being employed as a landed immigrant/newcomer to Canada did not necessarily mean that the individual was employed in his/her own profession immediately after arrival (or in certain cases ever), particularly for those arriving with medical degrees. In some cases, these individuals either engaged in retraining for another profession or pursued the requirements of retraining for having the equivalence for credentials of their own profession. In others, they engaged in entrepreneurial activities such as joining the retail sector, the restaurant sector, child care services, real estate agencies, moving and storage business, immigration, and/or legal consultants among a wide range of possibilities.

Echoing the cases of Turks in Europe, there are successes as well as disappointing stories for skilled workers as well as for entrepreneurs in the Turkish community. On the one hand, there are extremely successful businessmen in different sectors of the economy who joined the business elite of Canada. On the other hand, there are newcomers who experienced substantial difficulties with respect to integration into the labor market and were forced to accept part-time or contract work, which is usually low-paid and lacking social security benefits. Some semi-skilled workers in the community have also concentrated in certain sectors and have been substantially affected by the structural changes in the economy. In Montreal, for example, a good number of women who worked as seamstresses and in the textile industry suffered from the restructuring of the Quebec textile industry whereby job losses adversely affected many women in the Turkish community working in this sector. Despite these difficulties, Turkish immigrants have not been represented in labor unions and there is virtually no active involvement in advocating causes for better job opportunities, particularly through the associations. The ethno-cultural community networks are occasionally used for finding first-time jobs; however, there is no

study that documents how this is reflected in the employment experience or entrepreneurial prospects.

However, the community does cooperate for business and employment interests. First, there are three major sources of information compiled on businesses as well as job opportunities in Canada within the community: the regular ads in the Turkish community media, *Golden Directory Canada (Altın Rehber Kanada)*, and *Referans*. Second, there are two prominent business associations: the Turco-Canadian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Montreal and the Turkish Canadian Business Council in Toronto, both of which act as contact points for business between Turkey and Canada as well as being platforms of exchange for businessmen within the community. A remarkable feature of these institutions is that they also act as sponsors for cultural activities as well as steering interest groups in terms of promoting political participation and lobbying around matters that concern Turks in Canada as well as issues relating to relations with Turkey. In other words, they constitute a clear example of how community business interests also become a part of the cultural and political mobilization of the group, particularly in order to overcome financial difficulties. However, similar to the cultural interests, business interests also have not resulted in a combined effort to unite the Turkish communities across Canada.

Religion Unites or Divides, or Both?

Another noteworthy aspect of the Turkish community in Canada is that despite small numbers the community displays significant diversity with respect to religious affiliation and attitudes toward religion. Those who identify as Turks subscribe mostly to Islam but also to Christianity and Judaism. Additionally, within each group there are those who are regularly practicing and conservative while there are others who are more secular and distant to religion. However, religious diversity within the community is not reflected in associational life. Those who organize around religion reflect and promote Islamic values and practices. Hence, some associations have emerged that provide religious services such as space for prayers or facilities for meetings and *iftars* during Ramadan. The Canadian Turkish Islamic Heritage Association (Kanada Türk İslam Kültür Derneği), founded in 1983, and the Canadian Turkish Islamic Foundation (Kanada Türk İslam Vakfı), founded in 1987, both in Toronto, are among these associations. More recently, the Canadian Interfaith Dialogue Center (Kanada Dinlerarası Diyalog Merkezi), founded also in Toronto, engages in activities with other Muslim communities in Toronto in particular and across Canada in general. In Montreal, Association Culturelle Turque du Quebec acts as an association that facilitates religious practice with a sizable community center and mosque. The center has a local imam similar to the one in Toronto and offers courses on Islamic principles, especially for children. However, in terms of associational life, although it is commonplace to conceive of Turkish immigrant associations as part of the larger Islamic community in Canada, religion does not provide strong cohesion within the group to ensure higher levels of solidarity.

An Umbrella Association: A Blessing or a Challenge for Participation?

Similar to most other associational activities of Turkish communities in Europe and ethno-cultural communities across advanced industrialized societies, the Turkish community in Canada also made several attempts at establishing and sustaining an umbrella association. This association would serve as a contact point and a platform for exchange of ideas for identifying the needs of the community and would enable a single and strong channel for articulation of interests. These attempts resulted in the founding of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations (FCTA, Kanada Türk Dernekleri Federasyonu) on 1 June 1985 with headquarters in Toronto. As of the start of 2009, 17 associations from all across Canada were members of the FCTA.¹² The federation underlines a commitment to unity among Turks in accordance with Atatürk's principles as well as a dedication to democracy, secularism, and social justice while respecting individual rights.¹³ Moreover, the federation, similar to most other Turkish associations, highlights the goal of representation of Turkish culture and Turks in Canada and aims at facilitating relations with Canadians and all other ethnic communities, which is reflected in its membership (including, for example, the Canadian Turkish Cultural Association of Hamilton and the Turquebec Association Culturelle et Amicale). As the discussion above regarding the ambiguity around who could be categorized as part of the Turkish community in Canada, the membership of the FCTA reflects the diversity within the Turkish community. Among the members of the FCTA, for example, are the Canadian Association for Solidarity of Turks from Bulgaria, the Canadian Azerbaijani Turkish Cultural Association, and the Canadian Turkmen Center.

Activities of FCTA display characteristics of both service-providing and advocacy organizations for immigrants. In terms of service provision, FCTA pursues different projects: the Employment List (İş Listesi) promotes exchange of job and trading opportunities; Turkish Classes (Türkçe Sınıfı) aims to meet the needs of the Turkish community for education in the native language; and the Communication List (İletişim Listesi) functions to promote exchange of information among Turks in Canada on different topics. In order to promote advocacy for the rights of the Turkish community, several projects are also pursued, such as Defend Turks (Koru Turk), which aims to collect information on any form of discrimination or problems of equality experienced by Turks in Canada and to provide reference sources on various topics that relate to debates and issues emanating from challenges and issues originating from Turkey. The documents and reference literature produced through this project are expected to inform Turks across Canada about advocacy activities in particular. To that end, the FCTA draws on references from the Assembly of American Turkish Associations on the Armenian issue, terrorism, and the Cyprus issue.¹⁴ In order to inform the Turkish community about history and facts so as to expand lobbying efforts to the grassroots level.

Moreover, the FCTA aims to promote democratic participation of Turks in Canadian politics at the federal, provincial, and local levels both for encouraging voting by and standing in elections of Turks across Canada. Nevertheless, success in

achieving these objectives is far from being as extensive as the ones pursued by Turks across Europe. The FCTA is usually subject to criticism reflected in the community media, and the community expects it to be much more proactive in pursuing the stated objectives.

Accordingly, similar to the evidence in most European cases, the Turks in Canada also experience three major difficulties among others in sustaining ethno-cultural mobilization and participation under an umbrella organization. First, there is a significant discrepancy between the expectations of the community from the umbrella associations and what these associations can deliver. Expectations of more activism by the FCTA for the community are not matched by action due to the voluntary, not-for-profit characteristic of this association limiting its realm of activity due to constraints of human and financial resources. Such difficulty persists despite availability of funding opportunities, which are offered by various governmental agencies in Canada. Second, accountability and credibility of the umbrella association is consistently questioned. Such skepticism emanating from the community is reflected in negative reporting about the executive members and the associations themselves in various community media.¹⁵ Third, members of associations, including those of the umbrella organization, are divided along the lines of how close they would like to situate themselves and their activities vis-à-vis the country of origin as well as its representatives. Such tension leads to concerns of how and to what extent the community in Canada should cooperate with Turkish authorities or engage in matters emanating from issues in Turkish foreign policy. Despite rendering associational activity and ethnic mobilization as problematic, a common concern seems to prevent the dissolution of all these associations in general, which is that Turks in Canada would like to raise the next generation in an environment in which peaceful relations with all other ethno-cultural communities are paramount. However, this goal did not serve to trigger or sustain substantial political participation. It is in recent times that the community began to engage in political participation, albeit to a limited degree.

Media Linking Associational Lives

In terms of communication within the community concerning political matters, the print media serves as an extensive channel for sharing information on community matters as well as Canadian politics. For example, the monthly newspaper printed in Montreal since 1994, *Bizim Anadolu / Notre Anatolie / Our Turkey*, reports regularly on political affairs in Canada, including elections and changes in legislation in addition to community activities and other news related to the community with content presented in three languages (Turkish, French, and English). *Bizim Anadolu* is distributed widely across Canada and the United States. Similar content is provided by *CanadaTurk*, which is another widely read publication acting as a news channel on topics ranging from politics and economics to community news across Canada. A survey conducted in March 2008 by this newspaper to observe the political tendencies of the Turkish Canadian community in terms of political parties at the federal level attests to increasing activism and awareness within the community

concerning political participation. Additionally, Turkuaz TV broadcasts from Toronto weekly on community news and cultural events.

Political Participation: A Tale of Testing Limits?

Despite a long presence in Canada, relatively widespread associational activity, and largely open access to citizenship all facilitating the use of political rights, political participation and ethno-cultural mobilization by the Turkish community have generally remained rather limited. Such a finding is in stark contrast to the activities of the Turkish community in Europe. There have been exceptional instances to these relatively lower levels of participation and mobilization such as those when Turks engaged in protest during the “March to Ottawa” for promoting their demands for asylum in 1986 and in the 2000s when immigrant groups mobilized against the bills that were brought to the federal parliament concerning the Armenian issue. Some of the reasons for the limited nature of collective action are rooted in the size and dispersed nature of the Turkish community across Canada, internal group dynamics stemming from group heterogeneity, different expectations of members of the group from the political system, and other challenges faced by groups such as limited financial resources and experience within the political system in Canada. However, such challenges do not completely rule out options of or activities around political participation; they repeatedly act as reminders of the limits of political participation, even in a relatively open domestic institutional context.

The Turkish Community’s efforts at ethno-cultural mobilization and political participation exploiting access channels available in the Canadian system can be classified around a set of activity themes and levels of government targeted. The activity themes generally relate to the topics that originate from political and other affairs of the country of origin, Turkey. As a result, similar to most other communities, the instances when diverse groups within the Turkish community unite and act include occurrences of natural disasters, threats or episodes of adversarial politics, and promotion of Turkish culture. In terms of the levels of government targeted, it is interesting to observe that the Turkish community conducts activities at different levels of government (local, provincial, and federal), as is the case in various federal settings in Europe.

First, with respect to natural disasters, the 1999 earthquake in the İzmit-Istanbul area mobilized all Turks in Canada in that they engaged in various activities ranging from fundraising to clothing and food drives from within the community and Canadian sources to assist those in need in the home country. Similar to these efforts, during the earthquake in Pakistan they mobilized to help those in need in that country, reinforcing their emphasis on peaceful intercultural relations.

Second, with respect to threats or episodes of adversarial politics, the Cyprus issue and the Armenian issue seem to be the key themes that are perceived to constitute sources of adversarial politics and around which Turkish communities in Canada mobilize to articulate their voice to have the Turkish views and opinions heard in the Canadian debate. These activities range from letter-writing to key

public officials and the media in Canada to organizing and participating in information seminars on these matters. Though far from being classified as well-designed lobbying activities, and limited to the efforts of a few dedicated and capable individuals, the voice of the Turkish community joins the Canadian debates as a result of these ventures. These endeavors overcome within-group heterogeneity as the community aims to invest in peaceful relations among ethno-cultural communities in Canada.

Third, in addition to instances of natural disasters and adversarial politics, among the central themes that trigger mobilization is, again, culture. One of the most striking examples at the local level has been the founding of the Peace Garden in Montreal in 2000, organized and led mainly by the community elite and supported through the dedicated work of fundraising and coordinated activities by a large majority of the Turkish community in Montreal. Such an initiative serves to point to two important characteristics of the community and marks a new era in terms of how and why the community organizes and plans to organize in the coming years. First, this initiative is an indicator that the community could unite and act on the cultural/political cause of marking the Turkish community's place among the ethno-cultural communities in Canada through a permanent art exhibition in an ultimately multicultural space in the city. Second, while collaborating for this project, the Turkish Community in Montreal not only began to overcome differences among themselves but also financial difficulties, including those involved in engaging in fundraising activities, giving opinions on the design and form of monuments, and collaborating with the municipal authorities in the host society as well as with architects and officials from the country of origin.

In terms of the levels of government targeted, in addition to the cultural activities at the municipal level mentioned above there remain other activities at the provincial and federal levels, again, mainly around issues of adversarial politics. An example from the federal and provincial levels is the mobilization of the Turkish community for protests through writing letters and electronic mail and visits to members of parliament to protest the passing of a bill on the Armenian issue both at the federal parliament in Ottawa and at the provincial parliament in Quebec. The efforts brought the entire community together and encouraged them to participate as stakeholders in the debate and to demand what they believed to be the right policy move. They engaged in researching and printing pamphlets and handbooks on the issue, introducing the Turkish side of the debate to different politicians, members of parliament, and policymakers. In fact, the mobilization around this issue goes back to the late 1980s, when the Turkish embassy was attacked in 1985 during the hostilities perpetrated by terrorists against Turkish officers in Europe. Though the outcome of the lobbying activities of the Turkish community has not satisfied their expectations and demands, this mobilization effort served as an invaluable learning experience for engaging in politics. Such attempts also pointed to the perceived needs of the community with respect to developing the methods and instruments employed, planning for the timing of the activities, and designing the strategies adopted when articulating their community's demands. This experience also led to the strengthening of internal ties

within the umbrella organization, the FCTA. Additionally, increasingly younger generations participate in internships in the parliaments and serve at the municipality level or join government offices, which may prove significant assets for the community.

Moreover, in the 2007 provincial elections in Quebec the Montreal Turkish community mobilized and actively worked in the campaigns of the candidates they supported and joined the promotion of membership drives as well as other activities in the campaigns of political parties. Different members of the community worked in a dedicated manner for weeks and have secured experience and visibility for the Turkish community as part of the politically mobilized and aware ethno-cultural groups in the province. The outcomes of such efforts have been closer relationships with representatives in parliament, for example with those in the Liberal Party.¹⁶

This brief examination of the content and extent of political participation and associational life of the Turkish community in Canada helps to identify several similarities to and differences from political participation and associational activities toward political ends when compared with those of other ethno-cultural communities in Canada on the one hand and also of Turks in Europe on the other. First, the Turkish community in Canada organizes for political action usually around helping those in need as a result of natural disasters and against adversarial politics requiring lobbying in Canadian politics. Under these circumstances, the Turkish community mobilizes with considerable levels of solidarity and dedication toward having their voices articulated. Such exceptional circumstances facilitate unified effort and allow for overcoming collective action problems.

Second, in contrast to Turks in Europe, the Turkish community in Canada experiences integration and immigration challenges at relatively lower levels, and these challenges are generally directed at individual members of the group rather than the group as a whole. This is partially due to the immigration and integration experience of Turks in Canada, which enables them to integrate into the labor market and social/cultural life of Canada as opposed to isolationist tendencies, which would highlight differences among themselves and the people in the receiving country from other ethno-cultural communities or from Canadian-born. Moreover, the Canadian citizenship regime, which allows for relatively uncomplicated acquisition (which is in stark contrast to most European cases), alleviates most of the legal barriers to active political involvement. Last but not least, the more recent attempts at political participation suggest that the Turkish community is indeed interested in and is likely to engage in continued efforts due to the accumulated knowledge around the workings of the political system and networks in Canada. The activism of the 2000s may be attributed to the increase in numbers of Turks in Canada, availability of financial resources, or awareness of possibilities of fundraising as well as resentment due to consequences of limited action in the past decades as well as accumulated experience with the lobbying efforts for a variety of reasons and ends. The accumulated experience also strengthens within-group cohesion and cooperation and serves to surface challenges and opportunities of working together to promote the interest of the community and the representation of the country of origin in Canada. In parallel,

interviews with community leaders also suggest that perceptions of “increasing levels of threat” or “adversarial politics” in the contemporary period might have contributed to the increased involvement of the associations in politics.

Conclusion

The conventional wisdom in the literature emphasizing the centrality of the inclusive citizenship regime and relatively open political opportunities would expect the Canadian domestic institutional structures to substantially facilitate political mobilization and engagement of ethno-cultural communities. According to these expectations, collective mobilization of Turks in Canada would be more frequent and systematic than their compatriots in Europe. The evidence presented in this study, however, shows that political participation of these groups is a recent phenomenon that is in its incipient stages. Various factors account for this outcome.

First, it seems that due to the fact that Turks exist in smaller numbers in Canada and that they are distributed across the country yet only concentrated in major cities their participatory activity remains limited. This is also reflected in difficulties of sustaining an umbrella association that consistently and effectively acts on behalf of Turks across Canada. Second, instead of engaging in self-help organizations for providing services to facilitate integration, most members of the Turkish community seem to have relied on institutionalized integration channels offered through the Canadian system. Hence organizational activity for service provision remained limited and relatively under-organized for decades and therefore did not breed learning effects for extensive service provision for language courses or job searching skills, unlike their counterparts in Europe. Third, since the early period of Turkish immigration to Canada, the immigrant associations have traditionally emphasized cultural objectives over political ones. The limited emphasis on political participation with the exception for rare circumstances in times of adversarial politics can best be explained by the Canadian emphasis on multiculturalism and celebration of diversity.

Finally, two major factors hinder substantive political participation. Group heterogeneity (differences in socioeconomic background carried over from the country of origin, attitudes toward religion, reasons for migration, and the like) renders cooperation for collective demands difficult. It is only through resentments (in cases of difficulties with labor market integration, perceptions of injustice and discrimination in cases of political initiatives directed at their community, and so on) that the community engages in collective mobilization during peak times of the controversy and not as a result of sustainable socialization into the political system of the receiving country.

Notes

1. See Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Patrick Ireland, *The Policy Challenge of Ethnic Diversity: Immigrant Politics in France and Switzerland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

- 1994); Gökçe Yurdakul, "State, Political Parties and Immigrant Elites," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2006), pp. 435–53; and Saime Ozcurumez, "Immigrants and Participation beyond the Nation-state," in Oliver Schmidtke and Saime Ozcurumez (eds.), *Of States, Rights and Social Closure: Governing Migration and Citizenship* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 257–78.
2. Saime Ozcurumez, "Immigrants and Participation beyond the Nation-state."
 3. See Sirma Bilge, "Présence turque au Canada: parcours migratoires et éléments d'un diagnostic sociologique," ["Turkish Presence in Canada: Migratory Trajectories and Elements of a Sociological Analysis,"] in Altay Manço (ed.) *Turquie: vers de nouveaux horizons migratoires* [*Turkey: Towards New Migratory Horizons?*] (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2004), pp.179–208, as a rare exception focusing on their activities.
 4. See for a comprehensive list <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/welcome/wel-20e.asp#qc>.
 5. See <http://ciip.acc.ca/Default.aspx?DN=784,783,32,Documents>.
 6. See <http://canada.metropolis.net/>.
 7. Among others for Toronto, see Myer Siemiatycki and Engin Isin, "Immigration, Diversity and Urban Citizenship in Toronto," *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*, Vol. 20, Nos. 1–2 (1998), pp. 73–102; and Myer Siemiatycki and Anver Saloojee, "Ethnoracial Political Representation in Toronto: Patterns and Problems," *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (2002), pp. 241–73; for Montreal see Carole Simard, "Ethnic Minority Political Representation in Montreal," *Working Paper No. 8* (Concordia-UQAM Chair in Ethnic Studies, 1999).
 8. Carole Simard, "Ethnic Minority Political Representation in Montreal"; and Livianna Tossutti and Tom Pierre Najem, "Minorities and Elections in Canada's Fourth Party System: Macro and Micro Constraints and Opportunities," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2002), pp. 84–111.
 9. See also Sirma Bilge, "Présence turque au Canada."
 10. The debate over what transpired during World War I between Turks and Armenians of the Ottoman Empire remains as a cleavage between the two contemporary communities who live in Canada, and as a theme around which political mobilization by both communities takes place.
 11. Reported in *Bizim Anadolu*, March 2008.
 12. See http://www.canturkfed.net/tr/home_tr.html.
 13. See Article 2 of By-Law of the FCTA describing its purpose. FCTA's by-law is online at http://www.canturkfed.net/en/home_en.html.
 14. The Cyprus issue constitutes of the debate on decades-long conflict over the island's status after the partitioning of the island in 1974 and how the conflict should be resolved.
 15. See 'Surveys' section of Canada Turk's website at <http://www.canadatürk.ca/anketler.asp>. Retrieved on 10 April 2008.
 16. In fact, Massimo Pacetti, a member of the federal parliament for the Liberal Party, repeatedly acknowledges the contributions of the Turkish community in his speeches and meetings (*Bizim Anadolu*, November 2007).