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The inability of Turkey and Istanbul in institutionalisation of children's participation in urban planning: A policy analysis study

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Abstract

Children's participation in the decision-making and design of urban public spaces is crucial for achieving inclusive cities. International covenants have recognized the importance of participation as a right. Having adhered to these agreements, Turkey is obliged to enable children's participation in all public matters that concern them, including shaping urban spaces. This paper analyses national and local legislation in Turkey and Istanbul to distil how children's right to participate is legislated and institutionalised. It shows that lack of integrated child-responsive legislation, accounting for children's individuality, and lack of collaboration between national and local governments are the root of the problem.

KEYWORDS

capability approach, children, participation, right to the city, urban planning

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INTRODUCTION

Children's participation is pivotal in creating cities for children (Carroll et al., 2017; Chawla & Driskell, 2012; Derr et al., 2013; Derr & Tarantini, 2016; Horelli, 1994, 1997). Recent international treaties, such as New Urban Agenda (UN-HABITAT, 2016) and Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015), specifically Goal 11, promote a vision for inclusive and participatory cities. The right to participate in the life of the polity is an important component of urban citizenship. However, when it comes to children's participation, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) remains strangely silent on children's rights to shape the urban environments they inhabit (Karsten, 2016). Recent developments, such as the UN Child Friendly Cities initiative, seek to remedy that oversight. Still, children's right to participate in matters related to their cities has been insufficiently implemented worldwide because children's rights as human rights does not yet consider the spatial dimension (Reuter, 2019). Urgent action is needed to promote better urban planning for child-focused urban environments. Identifying the barriers that children face in influencing decision-making about their living environment is the first step towards more inclusive planning. Thus, analysing policies in terms of enabling children's participation in planning processes becomes critical, as policy defines the prevailing practices and vice versa (von Solms & von Solms, 2004).

In Turkey, contemporary urban policymaking showed belated acknowledgment of the need for public participation by adding public participation in the latest national urban development strategy and action plan within the list of issues that should be integrated into urban planning (Republic of Turkey, 2010). Furthermore, even though Turkey is one of the major signatories of the critical child-focused policy documents and has shown prompt action in ratifying these international pacts, channelling supranational policies to national, and local scales is less straightforward. In practice, setting a participatory environment for the public, including children, is still not seen as a strength of urban administrations (Kayasü & Yetişkul Şenbil, 2014). Thus, the city of Istanbul, which holds a prime position to showcase children's participation in urban planning, not only fails in promoting children's participation (Akıllı, 2019; Çakırer Özservet, 2014), but also fails in providing children with urban environments that support their well-being (Severcan, 2015).

Drawing on qualitative policy analysis, this paper briefly analyses the supranational context framing children's participation in urban planning and then zooms in to how nationally Turkey and locally Istanbul have responded to mainstream discourses regarding children's right to participate through policy and planning. We address the following questions: (1) How do supranational policies conceptualise children's participation? (2) How does Turkey respond to supranational policies in national legislation about children's participation? and (3) How does Turkish legislation adopt children's participation in urban planning at the local (Istanbul) level?

The paper is structured as follows: We first develop a theoretical framework for understanding children's rights to participate in urban planning decisions. We build on the capability approach to human rights (Dixon & Nussbaum, 2012; Nussbaum, 1997) and on theories of right-to-the-city (Dikeç, 2001; Lefebvre, 1968) that distinguish the right to difference and appropriation for urban citizens, including children. Next, we briefly analyse supranational policy documents, to which Turkey is one of the signatories, to demonstrate the late recognition of children's participation in urban planning and the lack of distinct individuation of children. Moving to the national and local level, we show the lack of inclusive and integrated child-responsive legislation based on children's individuality and citizenship and the lack of collaboration, as in the form of capacity building, between governmental organisations within the national and local level to

implement children's right to participate. Finally, we argue there is a need for a contextualized child-responsive approach in national and local policymaking, embracing children's capabilities not only to empower children, but also to strengthen the state's role in enabling children's involvement.

APPROACHES TO CHILDREN'S CAPABILITIES, URBAN CITIZENSHIP, RIGHT TO THE CITY AND PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PLANNING

Children constitute a unique (heterogeneous) category with evolving capabilities (Ballet et al., 2011; Biggeri & Karkara, 2014). Mainstream children's rights discourses are dominated by vulnerability and protection tropes (Brems, 2016). Accordingly, adults commonly recognize children as 'becomings' as opposed to 'beings,' which leads to broader misconceptualisation issues. Namely, they focus on children's future capabilities and their current interdependency and incompetency rather than on accepting children as social actors (Cockburn, 2005; Perry-Hazan, 2016; Uprichard, 2008). This controversy is a significant challenge for children's political representation (Skelton, 2007). In practice, children are conceptualised as innocent victims of political life rather than agents of political change (Lee-Koo, 2019) because of their non-voting status. Consequently, children's urban citizenship commonly appears to be politically postponed to a moment in the future, not because they are physically invisible in their cities (Karsten, 2016), but because they are politically disregarded (Cockburn, 2005). Yet, citizenship is a continuous process, not a final destination of childhood, and children's participation and involvement serve as an opportunity to exercise citizenship (Jans, 2004).

Being limited in exercising their rights generates a marginalised status for children (Manouchehri & Burns, 2021), inhibits children from being the target of the broader policy agendas. Also, this results in tokenistic approaches (van der Graaf, 2020) since urban planning is an adult-centred discipline requiring technical knowledge and language (Horelli, 1998). Accordingly, children's unique category needs attention to their citizenship and capabilities to enable their participation and effort to make them a part of the decision-making related to their living environments. Otherwise, children are kept being treated as conditional citizens whose citizenship depends on intentional action by external factors, such as caregivers and teachers (Ayerbe & Báez, 2007).

Children's right to participate, similarly to their other fundamental rights (Dixon & Nussbaum, 2012), can best be understood by employing the capability approach (CA). CA relies on a notion of 'substantive opportunity', targeting those who need support to be capable of functioning (Dixon & Nussbaum, 2012, p. 571). Three types of capabilities are introduced by Nussbaum (1997): (1) basic capabilities, which are the basis from which to build more advanced capabilities, (2) internal capabilities, which are the condition to fulfil desired functions and (3) combined capabilities, which are a combination of internal capabilities and external conditions to exercise any given function. Within the combined capabilities approach, public policy works as the 'external condition' or 'enabler' (Cockburn, 2005, p. 113) by providing the necessary environment, such as a participatory environment. This approach highlights context-dependent public resources (Sen, 2005, p. 159) not in terms of quantity of resources but by how these resources work to enable people to function (Nussbaum, 1997).

CA acknowledges children as social agents placing the agency of children in the centre. This means children should be provided with 'freedom consistent with their actual [as in the present]

or potential [as projections expected to be exercised in the future] capacity' (Dixon & Nussbaum, 2012, p. 560). On the one hand, based on their actual capabilities, children show unique capabilities when their individuation and agency are supported. Children as 'problem-solvers and agents for positive change' could help cities and countries address sustainable development challenges (Malone, 2015, p. 422). They can contribute to creating new perspectives on urban environments (Nordström, 2010) as well as to maintain urban neighbourhoods (Brown Rosier, 2009) with their capacity to observe and examine urban contexts (Nordström & Wales, 2019) from a different vantage point than adults. On the other hand, the potential capability approach in CA terminates the controversy of 'becomings' by its potential of recognition of children as actors in the combined capabilities (Golay & Malatesta, 2014). Zeiher (2009) defines this as the individuation of children through equal inclusion in society. This ability to claim comes with influencing the decisions that concern children (Clark & Ziegler, 2014).

Additionally, children's urban citizenship and right to participate, especially in urban planning, can be supported by highlighting children's right to the city (RTC). RTC is a vital right, one that should be bestowed on all 'urban citizens' (Lefebvre, 1968), namely all those who live their everyday lives in cities regardless of their legal status (Dikeç, 2001). And in Lefebvre's (1968) conceptualisation, participation is a comprehensive approach to strengthen the definition of citizenship rather than a basic representation. Concordantly, citizenship and participation are inseparable; the right to participate is an enabling right of citizenship through political struggle, and the city is the space of political struggles (Dikeç, 2001).

Most importantly, RTC inhabits the right to the difference and appropriation through participation and requires 'social support and political forces to be effective' (Lefebvre, 1968, p. 61). As Dikeç (2001) states, the right to difference is a right to resist simply homogenising powers and to resist being trapped in established categories. For children, the right to difference strengthens their position against adult biases or labels of incompetency (Cockburn, 2005; Perry-Hazan, 2016) and the institutional setbacks of practicing citizenship through participation (Whitzman et al., 2010). And the right to appropriation reinstates control over urban spaces on behalf of citizens by restating the vitality of the use-right (Purcell, 2002). In the context of children, having the autonomy and power to use and control their environments and the right to appropriate urban space attributes power to them as political and social agents of shaping cities regardless of their non-voting status.

Also, participatory urban planning research, which provides environments for children to exercise their right to participate, promotes a specialised methodology focusing on four interrelational domains within participatory processes with children (Ataol et al., 2019). The first domain marks the importance of the conceptualisation of children within the participatory process as given credits to children defines the approach as well as the outcome. The second domain presents the approaches that define children's involvement level (from tokenistic to genuine involvement) in the participatory process. The third requires a high level of communication, a high degree of diversity among the stakeholders, and a high level of collaboration among multi-organisations (governmental and non-governmental) and -disciplines. Lastly, the fourth domain highlights the initiatives provided to children with the help of multi-level (national and local) policies.

Therefore, enabling children's participation in urban planning requires specialised methodology and attention to children's unique category as a combination of their actual and potential capabilities powered by their RTC.

METHODOLOGY

Study design

To address the research questions, we performed a qualitative policy analysis, utilising a framework analysis method that combines inductive and deductive approaches. The qualitative policy analysis consisted of two steps explained below:

First, to position supranational policy in the scope of their support to create child-focused urban environments, we performed a deductive framework analysis to supranational policy documents by following the steps described by Gale et al. (2013). The categories were defined based on the five-goal framework of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (UNICEF & CFCI, 2018). The framework of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative visions the creation of urban environments in which every child can enjoy their childhood through the realisation of five goal areas: (1) protection, (2) inclusion, (3) environment, (4) participation and (5) play/leisure. Deductive framework analysis based on the five-goal framework was utilised to induce an exploratory conclusion around goal areas supported or not by the supranational treaties; especially in this paper, the main aim was to explore participation goal area. Therefore, supranational policy documents were further analysed through an inductive framework analysis applied to articles of policy documents accumulated under the goal area of participation to explore how they conceptualize children and their participation. Hereby, our methodological approach critically serves as a platform for comparing results (Gale et al., 2013) with a different set of policy documents from other contexts and understanding their support to create child-focused urban environments.

Second, we performed framework analysis and used the combination of the deductive and inductive approach to categorise articles of national and local policy documents into a policy analysis model that we modified based on prior research. We did not apply the five goal-framework since the preliminary scan of the policy documents revealed that participation is not an approach commonly adopted not only concerning children, but also all citizens in national and local legislation. Instead, regarding our goal to find the roots of this neglect of the participatory right of children in urban planning at the national and local levels, we adopted the triangle model of Walt and Gilson (1994). Their model, which holds the potential to explaining why the failure of policies emerges based on a comprehensive policy inquiry, covers four areas along with their sub-focus areas: (1) content (goals, definitions, etc.), (2) context (social, political, cultural, etc.), (3) actors (governmental and non-governmental organisations) and (4) process (policy formulation, policy evaluation, agenda-setting, etc.). They argue, based on prior policy analysis in different contexts, that only content is not sufficient to define a policy reform; therefore, actors in different levels, not just the state, followed by how the approach is described within the form of process and context delivers supplemental data which is critical in policy reform (Walt & Gilson, 1994). The adaptation of the triangle model, which is commonly used in policy analysis (such as Mokitimi et al., 2018 and Heidari et al., 2021), provides a simple model to enable researchers and policymakers to understand better the process of policy reform in the context of developing countries (Walt & Gilson, 1994). To be able to offer a pathway to national and local policymaking from a comprehensive perspective, we modified their model at the sub-focus level accumulated under each area based on a prior research (Ataol et al., 2019), which reports results from a systematic literature review on children's participation in urban planning and design, highlighting four critical aspects of children's participation (Figure 1): (1) content (conceptualisation of children), (2) context (approaches in participatory decision-making), (3) actors (roles and relations

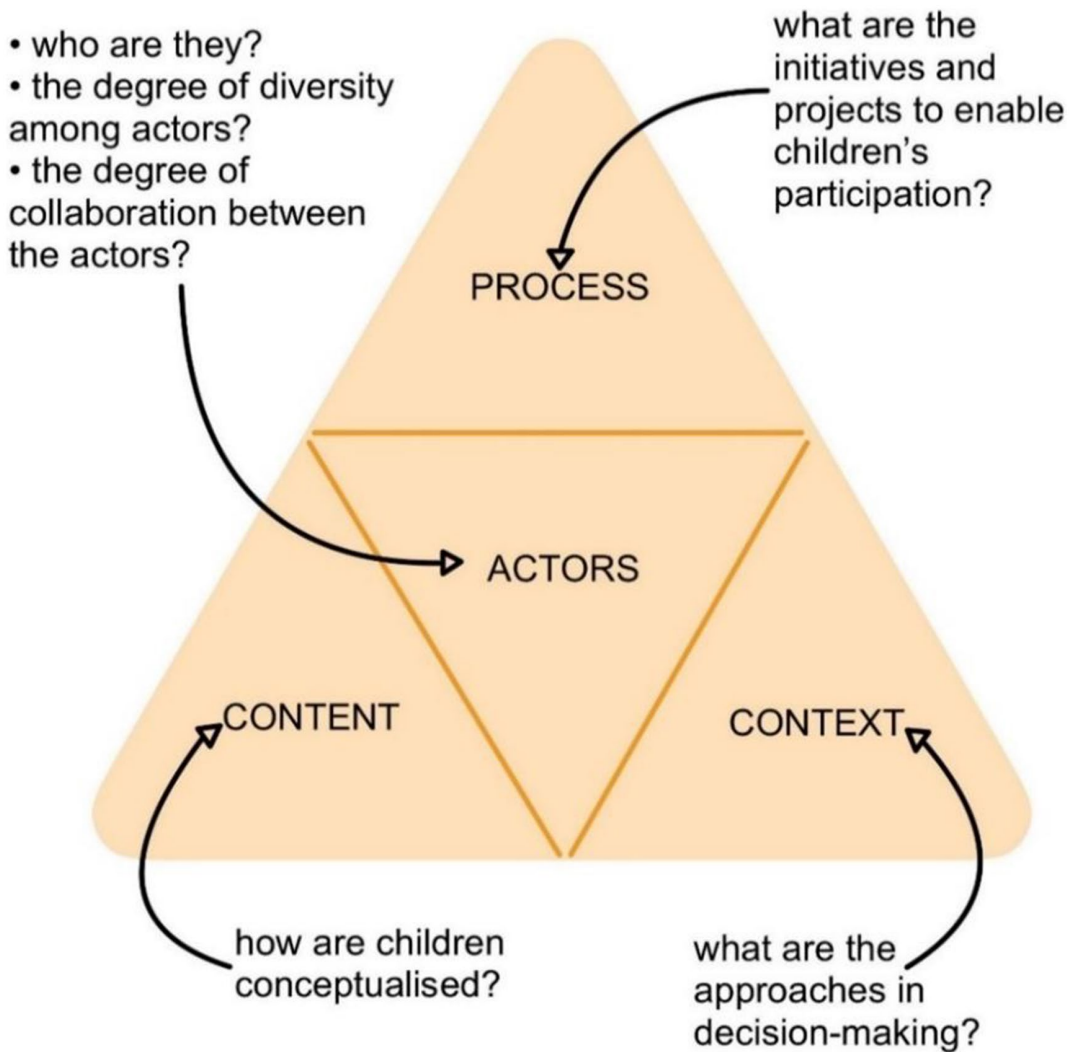


FIGURE 1 Adapted basic policy analysis model based on Walt and Gilson (1994)

in promoting participatory decision-making) and (4) process (initiatives and projects promoting children's participation).

Document selection protocol

We secured the validation of the chosen papers by following the approach suggested by Krippendorff (2004): finding evidence of the correlation between the documents and their capability of answering research questions. The list of the selected policy documents from the supranational, national and local scale can be seen in Appendix A.

On the supranational scale, the starting point was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), being the key document in child-focused policymaking. We collected more policy documents through forward and backward snowballing. Out of collected policy documents on the supranational scale, 10 were found to be relevant to the research since

these were signed and ratified by Turkey and therefore could be connected to Turkey's mainstream national child-focused policymaking. These 10 policy documents include five documents exclusively addressing children and their rights and five documents indirectly conceptualising children's rights. These documents are the pioneer definers of human rights, children's rights and the creation of the urban environment.

On the national scale, we performed a search on national legislation information database, database of official newspapers and websites of related ministries by using keywords such as 'children or child,' 'rights of the child,' and 'participation.' Forty-nine documents were selected from the national scale, including the last five five-years development plans (plans after the ratification of UNCRC). Twenty-nine of them were exclusively interested in children and their rights, and 20 of them indirectly covered their rights and concerned their well-being. The selected policy documents cover three ministries: the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS), the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The documents consist of legislation, regulations, guidelines, directories, national reports, internal letters and action plans. Documents produced by UNICEF Turkey were also added to the research since this office is primarily responsible for the implementation of supranational frameworks related to children's rights in Turkey.

Regional development plans, which guide local authorities' strategic planning, were included in the research due to their structuring role connecting the national plans, policy, strategies and local implementation. Therefore, the local scale's policy documents include the last two Istanbul Regional Plans prepared by the Istanbul Development Agency (IDA), the last two strategic plans of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) and national legislation of Metropolitan Municipality. In total, five documents were included in the framework, and all the policy documents from the local scale are indirectly interested in children's right to participation.

Analysis and reporting protocol

This research was collaboratively performed among four authors. The lead author performed a purposive sampling of policy documents later discussed among other authors before performing analysis. Directed framework (the five-goal framework) and the theory for the triangle model were suggested by the lead author. After the lead author performed the combination of inductive and deductive coding, utilising ATLAS.ti software, adjustments were applied to the codes under the areas of the triangle model together with other authors. The analysis was reported by the lead author adhering to qualitative research reporting standards recommended by O'Brien et al. (2014).

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION WITHIN SUPRANATIONAL POLICY

The supranational policy analysis showed that children's right to participate coagulate at a late stage in the development of children's rights. This is due to the well known fact that vulnerability and protection discourses dominated international debates on children's rights in the early 20th century (Brems, 2016). Since then, other responses to the issues related to children have emerged, but children's protection has never dropped from policymakers' agenda (Figure 2, second column). Later responses covered the issues concerning the five-goal area of the Child

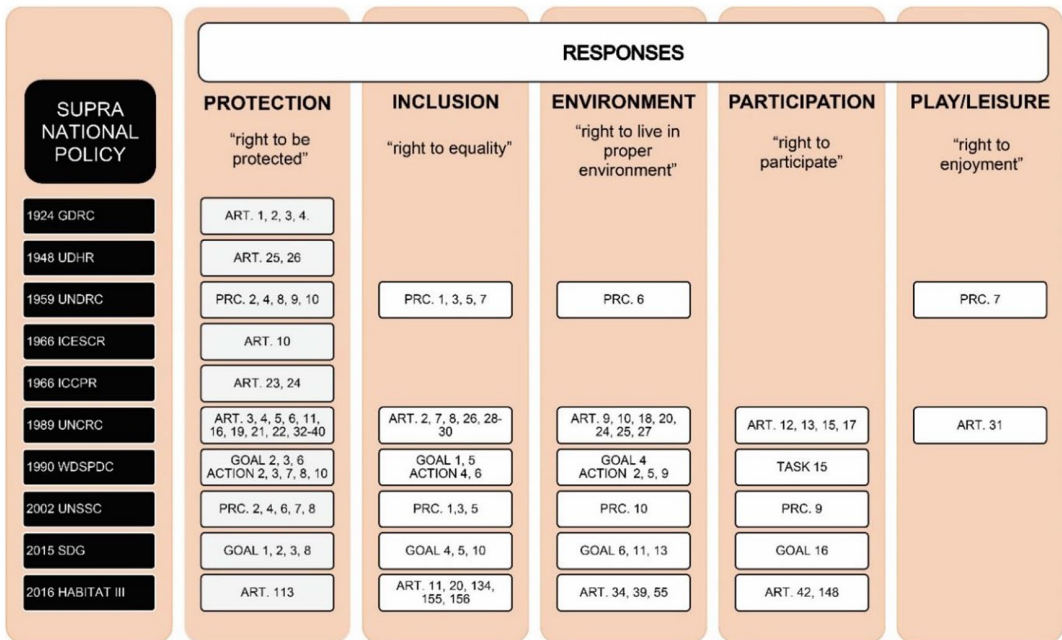


FIGURE 2 Transition of responses in supranational policy last 10 decades based on the five-goals areas of UNICEF and CFCI (2018)

Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), such as children's rights to equality (Figure 2, third column), live in a proper environment (Figure 2, fourth column) and enjoyment (Figure 2, sixth column); however, not yet the right to participation. As shown in Figure 2, it took almost seven decades, until the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, for policymakers to admit the requisite of children's engagement with the world around them by expressing their views (ART.12 and 13, UNCRC, 1989) and by accessing information (ART.15 and 17, UNCRC, 1989). By the agency of all the articles in UNCRC (1989), the status of children has changed: Children became bearers of rights. This means for children that they hold the right to urban citizenship, attributing the right to participation as an opportunity to exercise citizenship (Jans, 2004). Yet, the content of post-UNCRC (1989) and post-CFCI (in the 90s) supranational policies do not lend sufficient support to children's urban citizenship. For example, within supranational policy documents regarding the development of urban areas, such as the New Urban Agenda (NUA) by UN-HABITAT (2016) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by UN (2015), children, regarding their right to participate in urban planning, face misconceptualisation issues, disregarding children's unique category (Ballet et al., 2011; Biggeri & Karkara, 2014). For example, within the articles of supranational policies that require community participation in decision-making, children are commonly included within the vulnerable groups. Even though this vulnerability approach broadens the attention to enhancing cities, especially for children (such as Goal 11 and 13 of SDG, and Article 34, 39, and 55 of NUA), in participatory decision-making, children get lost in this vulnerable group. The broad use of vulnerability approaches affects children's active citizenship, suggesting that children are still kept invisible in decision-making. Also, in the current situation, in which children are still conceptualised as future citizens in child-focused urban policymaking (as in CFCI & UNICEF, 2019) appears as a reflection of being seen as 'becomings' (Skelton, 2007).

Therefore, given that post-UNCRC (1989) supranational policies do not embrace the unique category of children, it is inevitable that these policies overlook a basic approach for capacity building that enables children's participation in decisions regarding their cities. For example, NUA promotes capacity-development programs in planning to local and national governments with explicit attention to age- and gender- responsiveness (UN-HABITAT, 2016, ART.151). However, this results in that children are suppressed in a generalised age-responsive approach since their specific needs to actualise their capabilities (combination of actual and potential capabilities; Dixon & Nussbaum, 2012) regarding their involvement in participatory urban planning processes are not acknowledged in capacity-development programs.

Given the inadequate approach of post-UNCRC supranational policies to children's urban citizenship, it becomes apparent that children's right to participation is not comprehensively embraced in urban planning. This regards that children's right to participate in decision-making regarding their cities would tend to be missing or applied insufficiently in the creation of cities for children, even though other goal areas of UNICEF and CFCI (2018) have been extensively acknowledged through multiple articles, goals and actions of supranational policy documents (Figure 2). Therefore, the creation of child-focused cities reflecting the needs of children cannot be fully achieved.

Under the leadership of supranational policies, the failure of signatory states, including Turkey, in enabling children's participation in urban planning can be discussed from this perspective. But still, the initiative of signatory states on their own is distinctive in enabling children's participation in urban planning at the national and local levels.

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION WITHIN NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY

In this section, we showcase the roots of nationally, Turkey- and locally, Istanbul's- inability to institutionalise children's participation in urban planning. The findings were reported based on the adapted policy triangle model, which covers four areas: (1) content (conceptualisation of children), (2) context (approaches in participatory decision-making), (3) actors (roles and relations in promoting participatory decision-making) and (4) process (initiatives and projects promoting children's participation).

Content: Children's conceptualisation

In the Turkish legislative system, the child is defined as 'anyone below 18 years old' (ART.3; 5395 Child Protection, 2005) and 'bearer of rights on the condition that he/she was born alive, starting from the moment of being conceived' (ART.28, 4721 Civil Code, 2001). At first glance, it seems their citizenship is protected by law in their entitlement of bearer of rights. However, their rights are not specified explicitly; some are mentioned in the Constitution (1982 ART.41) under a section called 'protection of the family and children's rights'. This section extensively covers family unity and entitles children with only the right to be protected. Article 41 of the Constitution reads,

Every child has the right to protection, be provided with care, and unless this is contrary to his/her best interest, maintain a personal and direct relationship with his/

her parents. The state takes measures to protect children against all kinds of abuse and violence.

Along with other articles within the Constitution (1982) that refer to all citizens, children are entitled to participatory rights defined by UNCRC (1989), such as express views (ART. 13 of UNCRC is embraced in ART.26 of Constitution), receiving information (ART.17 is embraced in ART.28 of Constitution) and freedom of association (ART.15 is embraced in ART.33 of Constitution). However, Article 12 of UNCRC ‘right to be listened to and taken seriously’, which is the core of children’s right to participation, is not explicitly adopted for children.

Given that children are entitled to only the right to be protected under the section called ‘children’s rights,’ the domination of vulnerability and protection discourses is ineluctable within national and local policy discourses, mirroring the mainstreamed concepts in the supranational policy, which disregards children’s unique category (Ballet et al., 2011; Biggeri & Karkara, 2014). Within national political discourses, children are commonly identified as the disadvantaged group that needs protection (MoFLSS, 2015). Besides, unique to the Turkish context, children are treated as members of the family who are obligated to listen to their parents (ART. 339; 4721 Civil Code, 2001). In detail, this article reads,

The parents take necessary decisions regarding his/her care and education and implement them by considering the child’s interest. The child is obligated to listen to the words of his/her parents. The parents give the child the opportunity to organize his life to the extent of his/her maturity; they take his/her opinion into account as much as possible on important matters.

As a result of losing their status of being a unique category and being left dependent on caregivers, children become the actual vulnerable and dependent group. This is being the core of treating children as conditional citizens whose citizenship depends on intentional action by external actors (Ayerbe & Báez, 2007), such as caregivers in the Turkish context, resulting in greying children’s individuality in society.

In theory, the right to difference of children (Dikeç, 2001; as, at least, in the form of freedom to have entitled in a unique category for only themselves) strengthens their position against adult biases or labels of incompetency and against the institutional setbacks of practicing citizenship through participation at the local level. Given the state’s inadequate approach to children and their rights, the root of the prevailing culture that is an account for underestimation and the absence of children’s participation at the local level (Akıllı, 2019; Çakırer Özservet, 2014) becomes apparent. At the local level, this prevailing culture towards children has externalised in the same conceptualisation that children are the members of the disadvantaged group, which is only mentioned in the prevention of social exclusion in the context of participation in social and cultural activities and services (IDA, 2010, p. 85). Simultaneously, finding a solution for the social exclusion of children is not foreseen through children’s participation, and their urban problems are framed by the general problems of the disadvantaged group (IDA, 2010).

Context: Approaches in participatory decision-making with children

Since the conceptualisation of children within the national level serves as the foundation of the state’s general approach towards children, it is common to find participatory approaches that

seldom utilise children's contributions as informants at the local level (IMM, 2015, 2020). For example, within the strategic plans produced by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), which envision the big picture of Istanbul's future, changes in the diversity of stakeholders and how the plans approach citizen participation have recently become visible. The current strategic plan frames its participatory approach around strengthening the role of local authorities in providing participatory opportunities to citizens (IMM, 2020 AIM.9, ART.6) and visions a participatory, people-oriented and inclusive future for Istanbul (IMM, 2020). Participation as the fundamental principle of the current strategic plan is defined as the inclusion of city residents in existing processes and the establishment of new mechanisms that will enable citizen participation in making decisions regarding municipal services (IMM, 2020, p. 11), yet does not define a mechanism for enabling children's participation. Since then, the only approach of children's participation described for children's involvement was their participation as partners independently from the general group of citizens in preparing the current strategic plan. This initiative calls attention to children's participation by having focus group workshops with children, resulting in children claiming green and inclusive urban environments (IMM, 2020).

So far, children's right to participation could not go beyond the analysis of the situation of children in urban areas and an attempt to create a modicum of awareness for children's rights as it happened as well in the process of UNICEF's CFCI project (2014–2015) in Turkey (MoFLSS, 2015). These kinds of approaches are, however, identified as tokenistic (van der Graaf, 2020) since they disregard children's remarkable capacity to, such as observe and examine urban contexts (Nordström & Wales, 2019) and create new perspectives on urban environments (Nordström, 2010). Despite exhibiting a participatory approach based on the establishment of new mechanisms that will enable citizen participation, the fact that local legislation still does not provide a specialised and contextualised mechanism for children's participation is an indication that children and their capabilities are ignored, as is the case in the tokenistic approach.

Actors: Roles and relations in promoting participatory decision-making

In the current legal setting, the state performs two prominent roles: supporting and protecting children. The state employs a central board under the presidency of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS), called 'Child Rights Monitoring and Assessment Board' (Republic of Turkey, 2012), which is responsible for determining child-focused agendas, strategies and policies (Republic of Turkey, 2019). The board predominantly plays the protecting role as the national approach follows the mainstreamed vulnerability and protection approach (Brems, 2016).

Since the freedom of children to participate is context-dependent (Horelli, 1994; Sen, 2005), local authorities play a critical role in enabling children's participation in urban planning. However, within the scope of the ministry's role of supporting children, although the previous child-focused strategic plan stated insufficient cooperation with other public institutions as a problem (MoFLSS, 2017, p. 35), in the current strategic plan, local governments are still not listed in the stakeholder list (MoFLSS, 2018, p. 28). Thus, the supporting role of the state in enabling participatory environments for children appears ad-hoc due to the lack of collaborations with local governments.

This ad-hoc approach becomes even more unsolvable due to the centralised authority within the ministry for supporting children. For example, upper-level development plans and policies attach various roles to local authorities in the context of children and urban environments,

yet not attach a role in enabling children's participation. These roles consist of 'creating child-friendly, safe environments' (Republic of Turkey, 2013, p. 193), 'providing recreational activities for children' (MoFLSS, 2013, p. 48) and 'implementing programs for the participation of youth in urban life' (AIM.17.3.3, Republic of Turkey, 2010, p. 43). Besides, the duties of local authorities, defined by local legislation (5216 Metropolitan Municipality, 2004; 5393 Municipality, 2005), do not include creating any type of participatory environment for children. Thus, based on the lack of jurisdiction at the local level and the lack of collaboration between levels, the support from the national to the local level is insufficient and the local authorities are left weakened regarding their capability in creating participatory environments for children in the decision-making of urban planning. As a result, this causes dispersed (supporting) service supply at the local level for children and inefficient implementation of the child's rights (as criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child) (CRC, 2001, 2012), including the right to participate with some impact in changing the life and living environments of children.

Process: Initiatives and projects promoting children's participation

The state has taken some actions in promoting children's participation, such as paying some effort to create a behaviour called 'culture of respect for children' (MoFLSS, 2011, 2013, 2018) and providing children with one, yet not a very active participatory platform (Çakırer Özservet, 2015, p. 55), where they can somewhat contribute to decision-making in urban planning: Children Assembly under City Councils.

The State, in general, has been trying to create awareness on children's right to participation by distributing information on media (UNICEF Turkey, 1991), regulating public TV and radio to broadcast about the rights of the child (Republic of Turkey, 1999) and organising workshops and conferences (e.g. Policies for Children Conference) on the rights of the child (Republic of Turkey, 1999). However, visioning to create a behaviour called 'culture of respect for children' falls by the wayside within society since underestimating children's competencies is endemic in national institutions and political circles. For example, the responsible ministry for the creation of the culture of respect for children, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services does not include children as stakeholders in collaborative policymaking in their strategic plan (MoFLSS, 2018, p. 28).

Besides, even though there is an effort to create awareness for children's rights, within the reports of the National Children Forum, children indicated that they came across the parental attitude of disregard, disrespect and repression (UNICEF Turkey, 2000, p. 16):

'In our group discussing the 'Right to Participation in the Family,' we elaborated on adult behaviors that disturbed us the most at home. We discussed everything we encounter in our family life, from not being consulted when making decisions that affect us to inconsistent behaviors of adults along with the pressure to study at home, and disrespect to our opinion and our voice [...].'

Likewise, children are dissatisfied with adults in schools as they are not treated as competent enough in decision-making for educational environments (UNICEF Turkey, 2000, p. 12):

In our group discussing the 'Right to Participation in Education, the most emphasized issues are that students cannot criticize the school and teachers, discipline

regulation, and the constant changes in the education system without asking students' opinions and thoughts.

This suggests children are still facing challenges in exercising their right to participate in society, even though adults are required to give children a voice in matters related to them (ART.339.3; 4721 Civil Code, 2001). These collectively reflect that adults need to be convinced that children are bearers of this right (ICC & DGCS, 2007); even the state's effort to create a culture of respect for children is insufficient as the prevailing culture approaches children as conditional citizens (Ayerbe & Báez, 2007).

In addition to the failed vision of respect culture, another state initiative was the foundation of Children Assembly under City Councils that provides the environment for children to gain skills to express themselves and access information related to their cities (Çakırer Özservet, 2015). According to regulation, City Councils are obligated to activate children, youth, women and people with disabilities in social life and ensure their active role in local decision-making mechanisms (ART.6; City Council, 2006). However, Children Assembly does not have legal legislation for itself except being a sub-group of City Councils. According to City Council regulation, Children Assemblies hold the right to direct their views to be discussed in Municipality Council through City Councils (ART.12; City Council, 2006). There is, therefore, no power of sanction defined for Children Assemblies, which suggests that Children Assemblies actualise only tokenistic participation (van der Graaf, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Our research aimed to analyse supranational agreements regarding children's participation (in urban planning) and the ways in which Turkey's national and Istanbul's local legislation adapt these concepts into actually implemented legislation and administrative practices. To do so, we performed a qualitative policy analysis that adopts the conceptual framework of the five-goal area of the CFCI (UNICEF & CFCI, 2018) and a theoretical framework that defines critical aspects of children's participation (Ataol et al., 2019).

Our supranational policy analysis shows that children's right to participation is not comprehensively embraced in post-UNCRC supranational policies, overlooking a basic capacity-building approach that enables children's participation, which could be leading to children's voices not being heard in open public debates (Lee-Koo, 2019) regarding their cities. Given that children's participation is one of the goal areas of the CFCI (UNICEF & CFCI, 2018) in creating cities in which children can enjoy their childhood, the lack of comprehensive understanding of children's participation could disrupt the process.

Turkey has ratified many international agreements regarding children's rights, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Turkey is also a participant nation in the CFCI of UNICEF. So, it is expected that national and local policy frameworks would, to some extent, mirror the concepts of these supranational agreements. However, the analysis of the national legislation shows that Turkey has been making very little progress towards enabling children's participation and what is more, the conceptualisation of children in Turkish legislation misses on essential aspects related to children's unique category and individuality. The State lacks inclusive and integrated child-responsive legislation but also fails to foster the collaboration necessary for capacity building between governmental organisations at national and local levels. Consequently, this stunts the ability

of local governments to implement participation since there is no framework in which children's voices can be taken into account in decision-making, and all the initiatives, such as the Children's Assembly, become tokenistic.

Considering the policy context in which Turkey is operating, there are elements in the supranational documents that are going against the state-of-the-art understanding of children's participation. Tropes of vulnerability in policy discourses (Brems, 2016) and misconceptualisation of children's unique category (Ballet et al., 2011; Biggeri & Karkara, 2014) underestimates children's internal capabilities, which can be dedicated to combined capabilities (Nussbaum, 1997), such as ones in critically analysing social and spatial aspects of their urban environments (Brown Rosier, 2009; Malone, 2015; Nordström, 2010; Nordström & Wales, 2019). Likewise, children's right to difference, as in the form of resisting homogenising powers and being trapped in established categories (Dikeç, 2001) is overlooked, which can result in children being impoverished in their position against adult biases or labels of incompetency (Cockburn, 2005; Perry-Hazan, 2016).

Considering the failure of Turkey in actualising a respect culture towards children, endemic underestimation of children's capabilities in national institutions stands as a major problem of children's participation in Turkey. The lack of a specialised and contextualised mechanism for children's participation that embraces children's individuality compounds the problem in terms of the absence of a framework to follow. Furthermore, Turkey's own legislation compounds these lacunae of supranational agreements by making children's citizenship subsumed to the family's authority. Thus, in adapting supranational concepts of children's rights, Turkey is pushing the status of children to the status quo before the UNCRC. Instead, children need to be empowered by recognising their agency and individuality (based on their actual and potential capabilities) in capacity-building approaches to influence decisions (Clark & Ziegler, 2014).

To conclude, it can be said that the status of children becoming more vulnerable in practicing their right to participation, described by Manouchehri & Burns, 2021, in the context of Iran, is visible in Turkey as well. This regards that children have been left vulnerable in practicing their participatory right in urban planning not because they are incapable but because policies do not provide them with proper participatory environments as 'substantive opportunity' (Dixon & Nussbaum, 2012). For the local audience, this research supports policy change leading to changes in the content of policy-making, such as addressing children's conditional citizenship and, therefore, contextual changes towards diluting endemic underestimation within political circles by introducing a specialised mechanism for children's participation that embraces children's individuality. Broadly, these efforts carry the possibility of creating a culture of participation, which is lacking nationally in Turkey and locally in Istanbul, that should be utilised in creating cities for children and all.

Also, for the global audience, this research furthers the global debate on children's citizenship and their right to participation. This study has offered insights on the defined citizenship of children that illuminate how children are involved in participatory urban planning processes from the Turkish legislation perspective. Given that, we argue that policies that do not internalise children's unique category and individuality in conceptualising their citizenship would lead to the underestimation of children within institutional organisations, resulting in disgracing of necessary collaboration for the capacity building in the form of collaboration across different levels of governmental organisations in enabling children's participation. Therefore, it can be said that policies, paying attention to the fact that children need (supplementary) support through a child-centred approach to their citizenship and participation, play a critical role in enabling children's participation. And exploration within different contexts of the connection between the conceptualisation of children's citizenship and their participation can bring interesting and

complementing direction to the role of policies in enabling children's participation in urban planning and design.

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APPENDIX A

The list of policy documents

#	Year	Type	Document name	Relevancy
• Supra-national policy document list				
1	1924	DECLARATION	Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child	Direct
2	1948	DECLARATION	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Indirect
3	1959	DECLARATION	United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child	Direct
4	1966	COVENANT	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Indirect
5	1966	COVENANT	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Indirect
6	1989	CONVENTION	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	Direct
7	1990	DECLARATION	World Declaration on the Survival, Protection, and Development of Children	Direct
8	2002	SPECIAL SESSION	A World Fit for Children	Direct
9	2015	GOALS	Sustainable Development Goals	Indirect
10	2016	AGENDA	HABITAT III – New Urban Agenda	Indirect
• National policy document list				
1	1949	LEGISLATION	5387 children in need of protection	Direct
2	1961	LEGISLATION	222 primary education	Direct
3	1962	REGULATION	Children who need special education	Direct
4	1963	DECLARATION	National Declaration of the Rights of the Child in Turkey	Direct
5	1973	LEGISLATION	1739 National basic education	Direct
6	1982	CONSTITUTION	Constitution of the Republic of Turkey	Indirect
7	1983	LEGISLATION	2828 Social services	Indirect
8	1983	LEGISLATION	2872 Environment	Indirect
9	1987	LEGISLATION	3359 Basic health services	Indirect

#	Year	Type	Document name	Relevancy
10	1991	REGULATION	Children nature clubs	Direct
11	1991	ACTION PLAN	Turkey & UNICEF 1991–1995 Implementation plan	Direct
12	1995	REPORT	7 th Five-Years Development Plan	Indirect
13	1997	ACTION PLAN	Turkey & UNICEF 1997–2000 Implementation plan	Direct
14	1999	NATIONAL REPORT	Initial report of Turkey under the article 44 of UNCRC - 1999	Direct
15	2000	REPORT	8 th Five-Years Development Plan	Indirect
16	2000	REPORT	1. National Children Forum (the right to participate)	Direct
17	2000	REPORT	World Children's Summit (1990) National Monitoring Report	Direct
18	2001	LEGISLATION	4721 Civil Law	Indirect
19	2004	LEGISLATION	5253 Association	Indirect
20	2005	LEGISLATION	5302 Provincial special administrations	Indirect
21	2005	LEGISLATION	5393 Local Government	Indirect
22	2005	LEGISLATION	5395 Child protection	Direct
23	2006	REGULATION	Citizen Council	Indirect
24	2006	REPORT	9 th Five-Years Development Plan	Indirect
25	2007	HANDBOOK	Children Participation Handbook	Direct
26	2007	REPORT	8. National Children Forum	Direct
27	2007	REPORT	Children First Project report	Direct
28	2007	ACTION PLAN	Turkey & UNICEF 2006–2010 Implementation plan	Direct
29	2009	NATIONAL REPORT	Initial report of Turkey under the article 44 of UNCRC – 2009	Direct
30	2009	ACTION PLAN	National Integrated Urban Development Strategy and Action Plan	Indirect
31	2011	DIRECTORY	Child Rights Provincial Adult Representative	Direct

#	Year	Type	Document name	Relevancy
32	2011	ACTION PLAN	Turkey & UNICEF 2011–2015 Implementation plan	Direct
33	2012	INTERNAL LETTER	Child rights monitoring and assessment board	Direct
34	2012	INTERNAL LETTER	Child Monitoring Center	Direct
35	2012	LEGISLATION	6284 Family protection and prevention of violence against women	Indirect
36	2013	ACTION PLAN	2013–2017 national child rights report and action plan by MoFLSS	Direct
37	2013	INSTRUCTION	Establishment of provincial child rights committees	Direct
38	2013	REPORT	10 th Five-Years Development Plan	Indirect
39	2014	REGULATION	Land Development	Indirect
40	2014	NATIONAL REPORT	HABITAT III national report	Indirect
41	2015	REGULATION	Child support center	Direct
42	2015	REPORT	Family-friendly cities research by MoFLSS	Direct
43	2017	REPORT	Protective and preventive policy for children by MoFLSS	Direct
44	2017	ACTION PLAN	Turkey & UNICEF 2016–2020 Implementation plan	Direct
45	2018	ACTION PLAN	2018–2022 national child rights report and action plan by MoFLSS	Indirect
46	2018	REPORT	11 th Five-Years Development Plan	Indirect
47	2019	REPORT	20. National Children Forum	Direct
48	2019	NATIONAL REPORT	Initial report of Turkey under the article 44 of UNCRC - 2019	Direct
49	2020	DIRECTORY	Monitoring and evaluation directory of healthy life center by MoH	Indirect

• **Local policy document list**

1	2004	LEGISLATION	5612 Metropolitan Municipality	Indirect
2	2010	REGIONAL PLAN	2010 – 2013 Istanbul Regional Plan	Indirect

#	Year	Type	Document name	Relevancy
3	2014	REGIONAL PLAN	2014 – 2023 Istanbul Regional Plan	Indirect
4	2015	STRATEGIC PLAN	2015 – 2019 Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Strategic Plan	Indirect
5	2020	STRATEGIC PLAN	2020 – 2024 Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Strategic Plan	Indirect
