The Matrix of citizen participation: leaders, civil society and coalitions in Turkish cities

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Since the 1990s, the literature on local politics has been mainly dominated by debates on participatory practices that aim at a better integration of citizens to the government of their communities. The multiplication of participatory experiences all around the world in the last decade has naturally had its reflections in the political science literature. Studies on such practices have thus become one of the most popular issues of scholars of our discipline.

These works can be regrouped roughly in three categories. A first group of researches adopts a *critical* stance arguing that the introduction of participatory experiences does not bring about any significant change in political regimes, if not accentuate the existing political inequalities among specific groups and actors. A second group concentrates mainly on the *description* of such experiences providing detailed empirical data on their constitution, composition and functioning. Finally, the last group of studies presents these experiences in a *prescriptive* manner in an effort to illustrate how they represent an adequate instrument to overcome the contemporary crisis of representative democracy as well as its structural deficiencies. According to this last group of studies, the higher the practice climbs up on the ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1967) or of empowerment (Burns, Hambleton and Hogget: 1994), the more democratic impact it brings about.

However, I can not avoid considering this rapid development of the literature on the stated three main lines incomplete since the socioeconomic and political factors that determine the positive or negative impact of such participatory practices seem to be disregarded by most of researchers. Those who adopt a critical stance towards these institutional innovations directly condemn them without considering the possibility of having varying impact on different contexts whereas the *prescriptors* (such as Pateman, 1970; Barber, 1984; Nylen, 2003 albeit with some cautions; Fung, 2004) defend vigorously the democratisation capacity of participatory practices. The *descriptors* (Abers, 2000; Bacqué, Rey and Sintomer (eds.), 2005) focus only on the structure and the functioning of the participatory mechanism, thus ignoring the impact of the socioeconomic and political environment on the process[2]. Yet, the same type of participatory mechanism or practice may bring about different democratic impacts depending on the contextual characteristics.

Indeed, due to the general negligence of this context dependency of participatory mechanisms, efforts for better associating citizens to the decision-making processes mainly represent a general mimesis of certain forms of participatory practices. Yet, the actual impact of such democratisation initiatives based merely on 'importation' of particular mechanisms has not been alike in most of the cases. Differences in the actual outcomes of the introduced participatory mechanisms may even be observed within national systems. A perfect illustration of this argument would be the Turkish Local Agenda 21 Project in which similar mechanisms led to varying political outcomes.

The Turkish LA21 Project has actually the objective of developing sustainable development plans at the local level. However, since the principle of sustainability

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[2] In fact, it would be unjust to consider these authors as mere descriptors since while describing the participatory processes, they do not remain wholly indifferent to the problems or the weaknesses related to such mechanisms. However, they appear to focus to the internal (i.e. related to engineering issues) dimensions of the participatory efforts.

necessitates the adoption of participatory techniques during the preparation of plans, the involvement of citizens appeared as one of the main aspect of the process. Yet, as the Turkish local governmental system has not been specifically designed for facilitating civic participation in decision making, the introduction of new participatory mechanisms turned out to be necessary. Consequently, the project has brought about a local democratisation dynamism through the introduction of new participatory mechanisms such as city councils, working groups and district organisations. The project was so closely identified with this participatory dynamism that its original environmentalist aspect was significantly shadowed.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to state that the democratic outcomes of the project have been similar in all of partner cities. Whereas some of the local practices of the project have been appreciated by even international organisations due to their important democratic impact, in some other cities the introduced mechanisms did not manage to bring about any significant political change if ever they could have been practically implemented. In other words, a very significant dissimilarity regarding to the democratic impact of the project has been observed throughout the country. This variety on the actual democratic outcomes of the project can be easily observed through a comparison between two cities participating to the national LA21 program.

With a population of 2.1 million, Bursa is Turkey's fifth largest city, representing a great richness in terms of historical heritage, industrial capacity and agricultural production. Being one of the early capitals of the Ottoman Empire, the city is characterised by a predominant Ottoman heritage, which renders the city very attractive for the tourists. Moreover, various industrial plants (particularly automotive and textile industry) implemented along the very fertile lands of the Plain of Bursa, provides the city with a significant economic richness. Moreover, being the pioneer of Local Agenda 21 initiatives in Turkey, the Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa (MMB) has been considered for some time as an ideal model for the implementation of Local Agenda 21s in Turkey. With its regularly meeting civic city council assembling the representatives of central and local government as well as civil organisations; nineteen working groups enabling citizens' participation in the determination of local priorities of their city as well as rendering citizens capable of contributing actively to the solution of current problems and district organisations establishing neighbourhood committees with the objective of transmitting local demands and needs to upper levels of LA21 and to local government as well as rendering the neighbourhood residents capable of developing projects destined to solve their specific problems, Bursa's LA21 experience represented a non-negligible democratic impact on local politics.

On the other hand, Mersin, a city of 1.6 million inhabitants at the Mediterranean coast of the country, can be considered as the anti-thesis of Bursa not only with her very short historical past – in 1840 it was only a little coastal village- but also in terms of socioeconomic development. In a total contrast with the rapid and impressive socioeconomic development in 1970s, the city has been passing through a troublesome period for the last two decades. However, our principal motif when juxtaposing Mersin with Bursa is actually her failed attempts of introducing new participatory mechanisms and practices of the LA21 project to which the city adhered in 1999. In spite of the formal launching of the project and the introduction of new participatory organs, their actual democratic impact has been quasi negligible, if ever even present. The city council suffered (and still suffer) from internal conflicts and personal confrontations that impede the effective functioning of the mechanism. Working groups have been quasi absent except two, one on environment and the other on women, both of which has not ever managed to realize considerable activities that would bring about a significant impact on local politics. Last but the least, there has been no effort of introducing district organisations in the city.

In this paper, I will attempt to present the background of this dissimilarity observed between the eventual democratic impact of the similar participatory mechanisms in the respective cities. Three different analytical paths will be developed throughout the paper. First of all, the personal characteristics and attitudes of the local leaders seemed to affect the evolution and the outcomes of the participatory process. Secondly, the ability and the tendency of cooperation and collective mobilisation of the local civil society have significantly determined the functioning as well as the eventual impact of such participatory mechanisms. And finally, the presence of urban coalitions among the main actors of a city appeared as a very important factor that facilitates the democratic efficiency of new participatory mechanisms.

I shall develop seperately all these dimension before proposing a common framework where they will be combined in the matrix that I propose for analysing civic participation.

ROLE OF LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

The role of political leadership in participatory democracy is the first dimension that should be examined since, in most of the cases, the introduction of new participatory mechanisms and practices is initiated by political leaders. It is the political orientation, the vision and the methodology adopted by the leading figures that determine the actual progress of the participatory process. Depending on the attitudes of political leaders, the experience may never take place or can be simply spoiled for other ends than a democratic change. Therefore, when analysing a particular participatory experience, we ought to examine, in the first place, the role played by the political leaders involved in the process.

As a matter of fact, we recently observe a growing literature on local leadership (e. g. Berg and Rao, 2005; Haus, Heinelt and Stewart, 2005; Getimis, Heinelt and Sweeting , 2006 etc.) due to the fact that local politics has been undergoing a significant change under the influences of globalisation, public management tendencies as well as democratic requirements. We have particularly benefited from Hambleton's (2002 and 2005) 'New City Management' approach that emphasises the role of local leaders in the public service effectiveness as well as -and perhaps more importantly for us- democratic renewal.

For our particular case, since our main focus is on the experiences taking place at the city level, we argue that the attitudes as well as the personal characteristics of the most prominent political figure, namely the mayor, must have been determining on the actual impact of the initiated participatory experience.

The origin of the LA21 activities in Bursa was wholly the mayor's initiative who founds a civil city council immediately after his election in 1994. Besides this city assembly composed of associative actors, the Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa (MMB) introduced, in the same period, the District Consultation Centres (*Semt Danisma Merkezleri*) with the objective of organising intra-local activities and formations aiming at a better integration of women, children, youth, elderly, disabled and the newcomers to the city life.

Later on, the mayor who had already significant contacts with international circles before being elected as the metropolitan mayor[3] got to know the LA21 process and associated his personal initiatives to this global framework. He insisted on the absurdity to ignore what has been going on abroad and on the need to profit from the international experiences. He

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[3] Apart from being closely related with the international organisations on his domain of expertise as a technocrat, he took responsibilities in numerous international sport organisations such as the International Ski Federation as well as being a member of the National Olympic Committee. Therefore, he was quite interested in what was going on out of the national borders.

states explicitly that the projects that he undertook were significantly influenced by his personal experiences acquired while serving in the executive boards of international organisations such as International Union for Local Authorities (IULA) and International Council for Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)[4]. As a matter of fact, the launching of LA21 in Turkey first as a local initiative in Bursa, was in fact thanks to a regional meeting of ICLEI in Rome in 1995. Mr Saker who got to know the concept in that meeting, initiated the process even before arriving back to the city as one of his closest collaborators, the first general secretary of LA21 in Bursa, remembers smilingly:

> "It was a Sunday; I was going to Istanbul when my car phone rang. 'Mr. Erdem Saker wants to speak to you', they said… 'Hello O., how are you?' he said. 'I am fine thank you, Mr. Mayor. Welcome back' I replied. He immediately invited me for dinner that evening. I said that I couldn't because I was on the ferry on my way to Istanbul. Coincidentally, he was also on the ferry on the opposite direction towards Bursa. 'Ok' he said, "come to me on Tuesday then, I have things to tell you.' He mentioned briefly about LA21 but of course I understood nothing. On Tuesday, we met for lunch. He started enthusiastically telling me about LA21 that he heard in Rome. 'LA21, it's just for you. We will initiate it here in Bursa. We will be the pioneer in Turkey.' But that strange concept of LA21 did not mean anything to me. He explained more in details. The LA21 process had indeed started like this [5]."

On the other side of our comparison, the introduction of new participatory mechanisms in Mersin took place more recently than the one in Bursa, as an electoral promise of the mayor elected in the local elections of April 1999. During his electoral campaign, the mayor had engaged himself with the facilitation of citizens' participation in the local government owing to new mechanisms such as a city council, district organisations, local economic council etc[6].

However, although the mayor had personally engaged in establishing participatory mechanisms during his electoral campaign, his intention was not quite based on a personal conviction. According to some of our local interlocutors, his engagement did not represent a sincere ambition since even his electoral programme was prepared by third persons:

> "I was personally present in the electoral campaign of Mayor Ozcan. When his electoral program, his electoral brochure was prepared, he was not involved…He did not even know what the city council, LA21 signified. He signed what was proposed to him by others [7]."

It is not thus quite difficult to adhere to the assumption that the mayor was not actually convinced about the need for establishing new participatory mechanisms. In several of our interviews, it is even argued that his later hostility to the process was because he understood lately what the process would actually bring about. According to this point of view, he appeared willing to introduce new participatory mechanisms only until he became aware that this would oblige him to share his political power and in his 'conspiratorial worldview', this would mean the reinforcement of his political enemies. Therefore, he has not been actually quite aware of the new global tendency on behalf of local democracy. The motive stimulated

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[4] Interview with Erdem Saker, July 29th, 2003 ; Istanbul.

[5] Interview with an ex-municipal deputy, July 21st, 2003; Bursa

[6] "Today, the people of Mersin do not participate to the government of the city; can not let her voice be heard. That is why I propose to govern together our city, to strengthen the human rights, improve pluralism and urban rights. Let us enable the participation of our people to the government and to its control. Let us encourage their engagement in city problems, establish a democratic, autonomous and participatory city council. Let us found a council of Mersin that will meet annually; therefore get ready for the city council…" (The electoral program of Macit Ozcan in 1999).

[7] Interview with a local journalist, June 26th, 2003 ; Mersin.

by international developments is thus only decorative; it enables the mayor to develop a discursive strategy that aims at giving to his mayoralty a democratic, globally-connected and innovative image. In other words, it represents mainly a rhetorical resource for the mayor of Mersin, a resource than can be further used for other ends then a democratic image…

The rhetorical character of mayor's participatory efforts became obvious when it was time to operationalise the introduced mechanisms; even the approval of the constitution was not free of quarrels and conflicts. In 2000, the Municipality decided to integrate the platform to the LA21 process to which the city had adhered to in the meanwhile. For this purpose, the structure of the Council had been reformed to such a complicated system that it would most probably slow down the functioning of the council, if it could have functioned at all. In fact, the elections for the general secretariat in 2001 further complicated the functioning of the organ.

Against the present general secretary who was considered to be too influenced by the mayor, the vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Mersin (MTSO), posed his candidacy for the post and was elected. His election was a cold shower for the mayor since the former had been an opposing candidate in almost all the preceding elections and would most probably run in the following local elections. Considering this as a strong threat to his position, the mayor cut progressively all the municipal resources mobilized on behalf of MCC to prevent the recently elected general secretary from gaining political power by using the reputation of MCC. The municipality did not first of all allocate the budget of LA21 to the general secretariat although it was included in the annual budget. Since the utilisation of the offices and the material reserved for LA21 were also disabled for the new direction, they opened an entirely separate office financed both by the general secretary himself and other local organisations.

In such circumstances, the democratic impact of the Council on the local politics would only be insignificant. This conjuncture of immobility, if not of 'cold war', continued until the mayor found an excuse for disqualifying the general secretary in January 2003. Meanwhile, the general assembly could be brought together only once in the summer of 2002. However, even this meeting of the Council had been far from aiming at the better integration of the citizens to the government of their city since it was held with the objective of letting the governor present his project of re-defining the borders of the metropolitan municipality. Assembling the council on such a theme was problematic since even though it was not expressed explicitly, the real motive behind the modification of municipal borders was interpreted as an effort to limit the political power of the Kurdish community in the city. Concentrated mainly in one of the district municipalities, the community was thus able to influence significantly the results of the municipal elections. It was argued that by modifying the municipal borders, the governor aimed at diluting the community's political power by including some other neighbourhoods in their constituency. It was obviously unacceptable to see the city council instrumentalised for such a discriminative project totally contradictory to its essential principles. The session did not allow any kind of deliberation: the governor presented his project, the mayors (7 minutes for each) and the representatives of the political parties (3 minutes for each) expressed their opinions and the session was closed. Consequently, the only session between April 2001 and January 2003 was seen as part of a political manipulation plan; needless to say, exactly the opposite of the Council's founding principles.

The final straw that transformed the 'cold war' between the metropolitan mayor and the elected general secretary of LA21 into an actual confrontation came on January 22nd, 2003 during the fourth session of the Council. The agenda of the meeting consisted only one item "The approaching war on Irak and its consequences on Mersin and Turkey." In fact, even

without the incidents that we shall discuss below, such a session of the platform would be problematic since there seemed to be no intention of facilitating the participation of citizens in the local affairs. Instead, three university scholars were invited to discuss the eventual consequences of the approaching war. However, there was a surprise waiting for the participants of the council. The president of the university had vetoed the names determined by the executive committee[8] and proposed three other scholars for discussing the issue. Without notifying any other members of the committee, the general secretary had accepted the president's proposition.

Naturally, such a *fait-à-complit* in a platform that was supposed to promote the participatory democracy in the city was inadmissible. As anyone would expect, the session was opened by very severe critics towards the general secretary by the other members of the executive committee as well as the other members of the Council. One of the vice-general secretaries resigned immediately from his position and left the meeting to protest the decision taken solely by the general secretary. Following the session during which protests increased due to the poor quality of the presentations given by the orators, a media-war was launched. The resigned vice-general secretary accused openly the general secretary for using the Council for his own political ambitions. Responding to these accusations, the latter blamed the metropolitan mayor for attempting to manipulate the council and held him responsible for the immobilisation of the platform. The mayor, in his turn, qualified the general secretary's behaviours as a political show aiming at the promotion of his political candidacy and gathered the assembly of presidents to call for an extraordinary session of the general assembly to renew the elections[9]. In fact, these elections never took place due to the ambiguities in the constitution that allowed only the general secretary to appeal for an extraordinary session and that did not envisage a system of recalling for the elected posts. Consequently, the City Council of Mersin had been brought to an absolute immobility due to these severe conflicts among the principal actors of the local politics.

The role played by the mayor of the city in the growing tension among local actors was crucial since he has founded his political power on identity politics. Even if he did not propose a well-prepared political program, he managed to achieve a significant popular mobilisation in the city thanks to his ethnic origin. In most of our interviews, the question on the metropolitan mayor was firstly replied by referring to his Arab origin:

> "Macit Ozcan is Arab. That is a wonderful capital for him as he admits explicitly. There are native Arabs, Alevi Arabs in Mersin who make their electoral choices in referring to the logic of minority. The entourage and the actual electoral base of Macit are from this Arab community and he invests this capital successfully. He is from Karatas, thus does not have any connection with Mersin. He settled here not so long ago, but he managed to establish that electoral basis by making use of clientelist relations. He acts according to the demands of that communatarian basis[10]."

Mr. Ozcan has managed thus to create a significant political loyalty by accentuating his ethnical origins. He has also achieved to keep this communitarian influence alive by making an efficient use of patronage relations. Rumours of political corruption have turned out to be extremely widespread in the city since his election as the metropolitan mayor. He has been considered as a specialist of making use of legal gaps and/or of very complicated bureaucratic

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[8] In fact, the political tension between these three scholars and the direction of the university was no secret to anyone.

[9] The fact that this decision was the third official decision of the organ demonstrates to what extend MCC was unfunctional.

[10] Interview with a local journalist, June 26th, 2003 ; Mersin.

techniques on behalf of personal profits. In this way, he has been supposed to create an immense personal fortune of which a proportion has been distributed among his political collaborators or followers. Several projects of urban landscape improvement have particularly roused general suspicions on the accountability of his mandate.

What took place in Bursa was in total contradiction with the experience of Mersin when the attitudes of respective mayors are examined. The mayor of Bursa, Mr. Saker was appreciated by those who did not politically sympathise with him. Mr. Saker has been always identified with his openness to communication and deliberation:

> "He was a despotic manager, very despotic. I mean, an intriguing character, I would like you to know him. Someone who had worked for 35 years in the same public institution and during 25 years of this period as a regional director starts suddenly governing a municipality, an institution in which democratic principles are essential. He could not distinguish the difference in these institutions, though he could do the following: to fight on an issue, but to cooperate on another…I have never sympathized politically with him, but he is a very good friend of mine. I fought too much with him, but it is a pleasure even to fight with Erdem Saker... We could not hit each other, but we hit the table with our fists to show our anger. Nevertheless, each time, we left the room hand in hand and we could cooperate with pleasure on another issue. He was apt to such relations[11]."

Similar quotations might have been multiplied, but the idea is clear: Mr. Erdem is unanimously respected because on the one hand he is determined and confident, even sometimes authoritarian; on the other hand open to communication and discussion, and ready to defend his arguments against his opponents. Of course, it would be an exaggeration to claim that all the decisions of his mandate were made in a veritable democratic manner. However, even the local opposition acknowledges the fact that he was always ready to discuss the issues on the agenda rather than making the decisions behind closed doors:

> "We had criticized Mr Saker a lot; he always gave a response to us. We could at least share a common language; we could ultimately agree on a common position. Somehow he seemed much more sincere to us[12]."

On the same issue, one of our interviewees adds how accessible he was:

> "Everbody could reach Mr. Saker Erdem because he was in relation with the public throughout his professional career. He had a political past which had taught him how to keep in touch with the people[13]."

. As the quotations reveal well, Mr. Saker is highly appreciated in his manner of dealing with local actors independent from whether or not a common consensus is formed. Such a quality of interpersonal relations presents a very valuable personal resource that enhances Mr. Saker's leadership capabilities.

Another aspect of Saker's mandate was the importance he gave to his political autonomy vis-à-vis private interest groups as well as actors of traditional politics, his home party included. By launching original participatory practices, Mr. Saker not only managed to associate citizens to the local government and thus democratised local politics, but also used these new political instruments to resist to the particularistic demands coming from various organised interest groups. For instance, he relates his successful resistance to a very influential multinational company and to the local chamber of industry to these new mechanisms:

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[11] Interview with the president of a local association, July 18th, 2003 ; Bursa.
[12] Interview with the ex-president of the Bar of Bursa, July 24th, 2003 ; Bursa.
[13] Interview with a local journalist, June 29th, 2004 ; Bursa.

"Let me tell you something. One day, one of the most influential business groups came to me. They were willing to set up an automotive plant in the city. I objected to this idea since according to our strategic plan, there was no room left for the conventional industry in the city. They were extremely angry. They even attempted to change my opinion by asking the intermediation of some of my party members. Moreover, the Bursa Chamber of Commerce and Industry was also annoyed because I did not ask their opinion before giving a response to those entrepreneurs. Then, I reminded them the strategic plan. I asked them whether we had not discussed it all together, whether or not I had the approval of the Chamber. Afterwards they kept silent. Here you are the advantages of participation[14]."

The plan mentioned by the mayor is in fact a perfect evidence of the actual impact of the LA21 experience in Bursa. It is a metropolitan development plan of the city and her surroundings on the scale of 1/100,000 and for the year 2020. The plan was deliberated in the seventh session of the city council assembled specifically for this purpose on April 6th, 1996.

Even if the participatory process undertaken for the 2020 strategic plan of Bursa had gone beyond a singular session of the City Council given the number of stages that it had gone through, in the collective memory it is identified with the most concrete democratic impact of the latter on the local politics. The deliberations on the plan in the Council were cited by almost all of our interviewees in the city as the most illustrating example of participatory democracy in the city. Acknowledging the fact that it had not indeed enabled a participation of the totality of the local population, they seem content with at least the public transparency of the process. Local actors thus strongly associated themselves with the process and therefore, the plan is still cited as the plan of Bursa (or "our strategic plan") instead of a routine decision of the municipality. It has been strongly defended against all attempts of violation be it by the central government, the private sector, or the succeeding local governments.

The initial political autonomy from party politics when combined with the political legitimacy issued from the deliberative processes obviously reinforced Saker's position vis-à-vis other political and business actors. His efforts on behalf of the public interest were not thus degenerated by interventions from outside the municipality. Therefore, he managed to pursue urban politics determined by thorough deliberations with municipal agents as well as external experts. In short, he could continue referring to a technocratic rationality based on cost-benefit estimations rather than getting paralysed in fragile political equilibriums founded upon particularistic interests. Nevertheless, this technocratic tendency did not represent an authoritarian rule since apart from establishing a deliberative tradition within his administration, he also managed to assure public support for his policies and activities through participatory mechanisms.

Consequently, we argue that the contradiction with regards to leadership styles of the mayors is useful in understanding the dissimilar outcomes of the LA21 in the respective cities. Participatory mechanisms that are introduced by the project were perceived by Mr. Saker as adequate tools of pursuing his policies as well as supporting his political autonomy vis-à-vis both the partisan apparatus and the interest groups. On the other hand, the project introduced by Mr. Ozcan without quite being aware of its implications and impact, was undermined by himself fearing that it would weaken his political influence as a local patron of clientelist networks. The impact of local leaders on the introduction of such participatory mechanisms is thus obvious.

ASSOCIATIVE ENVIRONMENT AS A DETERMINANT IN THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

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[14] Interview with Erdem Saker, July 29th, 2003 ; Istanbul.

Independent from how or by whom introduced, a participatory experience would represent nothing if the local community is not concerned with and involved in the process. However, citizens' interest in such bodies can not be taken for granted in all circumstances and the degree of such involvement varies among different societal environments. Furthermore, even in cases where a general tendency of civic involvement is observed, the success of participatory experiences can not be taken for granted because citizens' massive presence in such practices may not bring about significant democratic impact unless it is accompanied by a culture of collective consciousness and associative engagement. Otherwise, i.e. if participants are motivated by particularistic and egoistic objectives rather than collective interests and concerns, participatory mechanisms may actually provoke the multiplication and accentuation of social conflicts. Consequently, the degree of civic activities and the vitality of associative lives have to be taken into consideration while studying the democratic effectiveness of participatory experiences.

Our comparison between Bursa and Mersin provides important empirical evidences that support this assumption. To start with, the development of associations over time in both of our cities appears to be quite meaningful in discussing the observed dissimilarity in participatory experiences. The number of founded associations per year has been greater in Bursa than Mersin in most of the years all through the republican era. Yet, given that their population sizes are not identical, this mere number of associations can be misinforming. That is why an analysis of the number of associations per habitant is also necessary. In fact, even such an analysis does not alter the observation according to which the associative life of Bursa appears to be more developed than that of Mersin. Chart 3 illustrates the validity of the observation by presenting the number of associations per 10000 habitants according to periods of republican history.

Chart 1.Associative growth per habitant
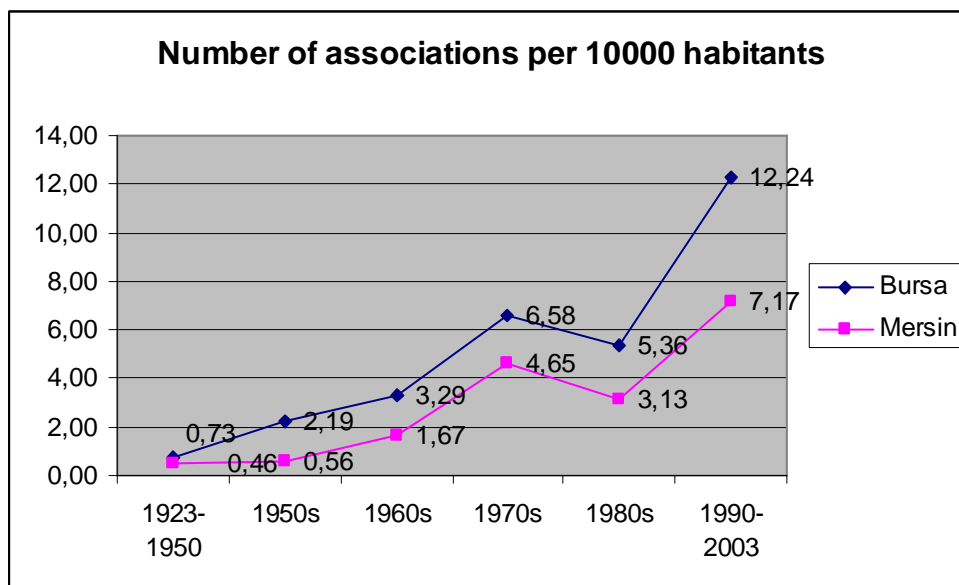
Source: author's calculations based on the Data of Ministry of Interior and the National Census Data:

It can be easily argued that this quantitative superiority of Bursa's associative life in when compared to Mersin may have facilitated the launching the participatory process as there was already an active associative life. Moreover, this quantitative observation seems to

be also coupled by a qualitative perspective, namely by the nature and scope of associative activities simply because especially since the nineties, Bursa has witnessed a very significant development of civic initiatives particularly in the name of environmental protection of the region. Associations, professional chambers as well as labour unions have mobilised massively against certain projects of the central government or private enterprises. In other words, the civil bodies of Bursa seem to manage cooperating for the general public interests.

Indeed, there are several civil formations that illustrate well this asset of collective mobilisation. The first example would be the Union of Academic Chambers of Bursa (*BAOB, Bursa Akademik Odalar Birligi*) that assembles all the professional chambers of the city. As a matter of fact, the gathering of chambers of engineers and architects is not exceptional since they already have a nationwide union (Union of Turkish Chambers of Engineers and Architects, *TMMOB -Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odalar Birliği[15]*) and represented by a Provincial Council of Coordination (*İKK, İl Koordinasyon Kurulu*) in cities. However, the gathering of all the professional chambers under a common formal roof is particular to Bursa since there is no other such example in Turkey. In this original formation, chambers of dentists, pharmacists, financial consultants, independent accountants, doctors, veterinarians as well as the Bar assemble with the seventeen chambers of TMMOB.

The impact of this common platform of professional chambers is undeniable. First of all, such a union of all local 'white-collars' represents an assembly of a major party of the local upper-middle class within the same formal framework. Therefore, socio-economically their political tendencies can not be wholly ignored. Furthermore, the demands and statements formulated by such a gathering can not be in principle simple and unfounded since the technical expertise of the members cover the quasi-totality of the socioeconomic life, from industrialisation to accountancy, from public health to judicial system, from environmental protection to urbanisation etc. Therefore, the political position adopted by the Union enjoys a professional legitimacy that can be hardly questioned.

Last but not the least, the professional chambers constituted actually very important political springboards. A very important number of political actors (deputies, mayor, municipal deputy, political candidate or member of the local branches of political parties) that we could interview in Bursa had been actively involved in the governments and/or activities of these chambers. There is indeed nothing unexpected in this observation since as we have mentioned above, these individuals could combine their professional expertise with organisational and political experiences that pave their way to a merited political career. Yet, what is interesting is that none of our interlocutors in the city attempted to disqualify or criticise the activities of the chambers on the grounds of being instruments for individual political ambitions. Everybody seemed to acknowledge that these organisations function in the name of the general interest and those who have significantly contributed to such initiatives have been naturally distinguished as potential political actors.

The passage of certain actors from the domain of professional organisations to local or national politics provides in fact an additional asset to the activities of chambers, since they represent very familiar contacts for the latter with whom they could establish a much easier and effective relationship in advocating for their positions. Therefore, the political

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[15] Founded in 1954, the Union regroups 23 professional chambers and 280263 engineers and architects (http://www.tmmob.org.tr/cr/degisiklik/2.8.%20uye%20sayilari.xls, last consultation June 22nd, 2006). The Union has been traditionally identified with leftist tendencies; a characteristics that the Union has always assumed.

implications of the local organisations do not represent a factor for discrediting local civil initiatives, a feature totally absent on the other side of our comparison.

As a matter of fact, in Mersin, associative endeavors appear to be extremely far from representing a cooperative spirit. For instance, when I ask about the general profile of associative actors of Mersin, the president of one the professional chambers of the city responds in regrouping them in four main categories:

> "1. those seeking for personal gain;
> 2. social masturbators (i.e. those who are eager to appear among the local elites);
> 3. those having a political project;
> 4. fools (i.e. those who adhere for just an idealism)[16]."

Needless to say, such a total disqualification of associative adherents may actually be too exaggerated to reflect the social reality. Yet, it is interesting to note that none of the democratic virtues of associative participation is referred to by the president. Personal interests appear as the main motif of associative adherence. Those who might aim at creating a democratic impact are considered as fools who unrealistically struggle for certain ideals. According to my interviewee, such ambitions are unrealistic because, on the one hand, the present political conjuncture would never allow the success of such efforts and on the other hand, such civil initiatives will sooner or later find themselves trapped by the political confrontations that would accentuate their 'politician' tendencies.

Exactly on the same line of thinking, one of the bureaucrats of the metropolitan municipality argues that civil organisations have been significantly affected by the political segregation of different groups:

> "The majority of the social segments of Mersin still reflect a structure defending their original region, ethnic community or the city that they emigrated. As a result, associations, political parties and civil organisations emphasise the interests of their regions and communities. Consequently, the projects essential for the city in general have been impeded or at least decelerated[17]."

Very similarly, a local journalist affirms the politicisation of civil elements:

> "In Mersin all relations refer to politics. In other words, even the most democratic and civil bodies shortly lose their identity and become an arena of political competition; they start serving for the specific interests of persons or communities. This is the main feature of civil organisations in Mersin[18]."

Listening/reading these statements, one thinks naturally of Robert Putnam's (2000: 22) bonding organisations that reinforce internal relations of specific communities. Yet, what is intriguing in the case of Mersin is that the associations that seem to adopt a 'bonding' discourse are not necessarily organisations founded for such purposes. The civil organisations that our interviewees mention are not community or solidarity organisations, but associations formally founded in the name of public interest.

Indeed, politicisation of the civil associations does not transform their objectives; they continue to claim working for the general public interest. The politicisation actually affects attitudes of the leaders of these organisations who become shortly political aspirants as most of our interviewers affirm:

> "[The civil bodies] can be used as a political springboard…I mean if you are the president or the representative of an association or a professional chamber, you meet with more

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[16] Interview with the president of a professional chamber, June 23th, 2003 ; Mersin.
[17] Interview with a municipal employee, July 2nd, 2003 ; Mersin.
[18] Interview with a local journalist, June 26th, 2003 ; Mersin.

people and everybody starts to recognize you since you appear in the local press and become familiar in the public opinion. This resource can be obviously used for political ends[19]."

"Let's leave a margin of 10% and say that the 90% of associative leaders consider the organisations they lead as a political springboard or a means of private gain. We witnessed in the past; one of the presidents of the chambers of engineers, although politically known to be somewhere else, participated to the foundation of the Party of New Turkey (YTP) just to be closer to the metropolitan mayor and indeed won some public contracts from the municipality. Maybe as an individual, he is not respected. But as the leader of thousands of members he becomes politically important. Consequently, civil organisations and chambers are used as political springboards, to appear in local press instead of discussing problems of the city. For example, as being myself or a simple citizen, nobody cares about me. But if I preside on a chamber or an association, I can give declarations to local press every two days; I can thus make a reputation within the public opinion. That is how such organisations are instrumentalised as political or economic springboards by their presidents [20]."

In light of these citations, we can easily claim an over-politicisation of civil society. At first glance, this observation may be considered as a positive feature since it may be understood as a massive involvement of citizens in politics confirming the most popular assumption on the democratic virtues of associative activities, namely associating people to political sphere. Yet, what we mean by over-politicisation is indeed the predominance of habitual conflicting struggles of the formal political arena also in the associative life rather than an exceptional involvement of ordinary citizens in politics. As a matter of fact, associations and other non-governmental organisations of Mersin seem to be either trapped by political confrontations or instrumentalised for personal political ends. In any case, the theoretical virtues of associative participation on improving citizens' presence and influence in politics do not seem to be confirmed in Mersin. On the contrary, civil society seems to become an extension of ordinary political struggles aiming at grasping positions of political power. Perhaps, this is the major problematic feature of the local civil society of Mersin.

It is normal that the activities of civil organisations reflect political implications. But, in principle, the acquisition of political power which is the main objective of classical political organisations should not be the main motif of civil bodies. Yet, as we tried to illustrate, in Mersin, they seem to be instrumentalised in the personalities of the associative leaders for power-oriented political struggles. Naturally, this characteristic of civil organisations prevent bringing about democratic outcomes in the city since first of all, the public or political actors in power do not consider such organisations as civic initiatives aiming at the solution or improvement of a local issue but rather as political instruments in the service of their actual or potential political opponents. Each opposition is thus interpreted by the former as a political attack to their power rather than a vocalisation of demands and preferences of local society. Considered as disguised moves of some political aspirants, civil organisations and initiatives lose their civic nature both in the eyes of power-holders and fellow citizens. Transformed thus to an amalgam of civic motifs and habitual politics identified by private interests and corrupted relationships, associative life remain weak both in terms of number of associations present in Mersin as well as number of citizens involved in the activities of these associations. Ordinary citizens of Mersin thus keep their distance with associations that they identified by particularistic political struggles. Therefore, we should conclude stating that the weakness of associative life in Mersin is highly related with the over-politicisation of the civil

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[19] Interview with the president of a professional chamber, June 19th, 2003 ; Mersin.
[20] Interview with a local journalist, June 26th, 2003 ; Mersin.

organisations placing them in the centre of local political power struggles. This feature of the civil society in Mersin seems indeed to impede the introduction or functioning of other mechanisms such as the LA21 organs that aimed to empower citizens' democratic influence within local politics, by generating social distrust and conflict among fellow citizens. Deprived from past experiences, thus know-how of acting collectively, inhabitants of the city may have not managed to make use of the new civic platforms. In other words, the weakness of the associative life, so the scarcity of local social capital in Mersin may be interpreted as the main reason behind city's failure in implementing the new participatory mechanisms.

On the other hand, the associative life of Bursa may have obviously facilitated the introduction of new participatory mechanisms issued from the LA21 project. Not only with their greater number and more democratic nature, the civil organisations of the city have obviously contributed to the process by either their direct institutional participation or involvement of those who have been already active within these organisations.

URBAN COALITIONS FAVOURING THE PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS

It would be too naïve to argue that the presence of an eager leader and an active civic community could suffice in establishing a well-functioning participatory mechanism since political changes can not be understood without considering the impact of the social structure on the process[21]. The presence or power of certain coalitions among major actors of the city may be indeed one essential aspect of the social structure influencing the fate of participatory efforts. Therefore, in this part, I shall examine our cities through this perspective of urban coalitions.

URBAN COALITIONS OF BURSA

The second half of 1980s witnessed local actors expressing a remarkable concern for the degeneration of Bursa's historical and natural resources because of the uncontrolled industrialisation and brutal urbanisation. From a total inertia vis-à-vis the lawless industrial and urban growth, the local actors managed to develop a remarkable anti-growth stance with the objective of preventing further deterioration of the Plain of Bursa.

This political evolution in the local context was actually the fruit of an urban coalition of local actors gathered with the objective of fighting against the destructive growth of the city. To be able to understand the background of this emergence of urban coalition, the socio-economic and political transformation that Turkey lived through 1980s and 1990s should be reminded. The impact of the country's macro-transformation can be discussed through two dimensions: economic and civic.

The military coup of 1980 represented the beginning of a new era identified by a new political climate as well as different economic orientations. The closed economy identified by high customs barriers and state subventions had led to the development of a bourgeoisie highly dependent on public auspice and resources. During the post-1980 period, the opening of Turkish business to the global markets with the liberalisation of the national economy gradually provided the businessmen with a relative autonomy from the state subvention[22].

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[21] Social structure is a notion that is differently interpreted by various social scientists. Therefore, there is no general and consensul definition of the term. Nevertheless, in our research, we adopt Mannheim's understanding of the term as "the tissue of interacted social forces from which divers modes of observation and thought are issued" (cited by Boudon and Bourricaud, 2000: 585).

[22] We ought to underline that the role of public resources in this period was still maintained, albeit in a different form. Instead of direct public subvention or protection, the central government supported the

This development was also observed in the local context of Bursa where apart from the grand industrialists, a new bourgeoisie became more and more present and influential in local politics.

The best illustration of the evolution of local business would be the foundation of the Association of Industrialists and Businessmen of Bursa (*Bursa Sanayici ve Isadamlari Dernegi*- BUSIAD) in December 1979. Even if founded before the liberal era that would open with the military coup of 1980, the objective of the association was to create an alternative to BCCI which had been the only representative of local business in Bursa for almost a century. Indeed, with numerous declarations on local and national economic policies, BUSIAD did represent an indicative evolution of the local businessmen, particularly in the post-1980 period.

A brief discussion on the personality of the leader of this new movement of businessmen, Dogan Ersoz, would be also useful in understanding the differentiation of the local capitalists. Convinced that "a definitive change of structure and comprehension in the attitudes and the habitudes of Turkish people is indispensable," (*Bursa Ansiklopedisi*, v. 2: 658), Mr Ersoz took very active roles within civil organisations for this purpose. The priority he gave to the protection of environment also marked the stance of BUSIAD that he presided over continuously from its foundation until his sudden death in 1994. Yilmaz Akkilic[23] remembers how hard he tried to influence other businessmen for the protection of Bursa's natural resources:

> "It was another meeting of BUSIAD in Celik Palas. Either a well-known politician or an economist was invited. As usual, during his opening speech Dogan managed to bring the word to the nature and said 'From time to time, give yourselves a break and relax a little bit. Take your mistresses and climb up to Uludag, watch Bursa from above. You'll see how beautiful, how relaxing the nature is. Live this."

Hence, particularly thanks to the efforts of its president, BUSIAD represented a new capitalist lobby that cared for environmental coalition as much as the promotion of local industry and the interests of businessmen. Less dependent on state resources and more interested in technological innovation than the wild development of industry, these businessmen were eager to support local policies destined to control the dangerous urban growth of Bursa. Nevertheless, their influence within local politics would be never enough to transform the city's traditional developmental scheme unless other social forces also supported these efforts.

Indeed, parallel to the economic developments, the societal scene was also going through a process of change rendering the civil organisations more visible and influential. If economic liberalisation was one side of the post-1980 period, civil awakening was the other. Repressive pressures applied by the military regime had flattened the traditional political organisations and transformed the political discourse. With the fear of returning to the days of ideological polarisation and quasi civil-wars, the new political discourse was more oriented to social issues on environment, gender, human rights and democracy. Instead of revolutionary changes, more concrete and immediate objectives were pursued. Besides the emergence of

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business interests by either creating new incentives (such as exportation incentives) or neglecting the spread of corrupted business activities (such as illegitimate privatisation or sub-contracting). Therefore, besides the independence of capital from the state resources, we witness the emergence of a new business class flourished thanks to the state's indifference (even implicit approval) vis-à-vis the vulgarisation of corruption.

[23] http://www.kentgazetesi.com/yukle.php?name=kats&kat=YAZAR_YAZILARI&h=2416&y=2

many civil organisations, the professional chambers and labour unions also started to advocate for such social issues.

The transformation of political orientations of civil organisations was also visible in Bursa. In particular, environmental concerns were loudly vocalised by civil organisations. Apart from the foundation of new and specialised organisations such as the Associations of the Protection of Natural and Cultural Environment of Southern Marmara (*Guney Marmara Dogal ve Kulturel Cevreyi Koruma Dernegi*- GUMCET) in 1990, the professional chambers became more and more active in advocacy for social issues. Notably the cooperation between the Bar and the chambers of engineers led to great achievements in the protection of environment. Apart from mobilising the public opinion on behalf of such objectives, the civil organisations and professional chambers undertook very significant juridical initiatives to avoid further deterioration of environmental problems in the region.

There was a *de facto* division of tasks among the professional chambers. The chambers of engineers assembled under the Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects of Turkey (*Turkiye Muhendis ve Mimarlar Odalar Birligi* –TMMOB) provided the technical analysis of the local problems on environment, industrialisation, urban planning, management of natural resources, politics of energy etc. With their direct professional expertise on such issues, the problematic dimensions of political or administrative decisions on urban and industrial development of Bursa and its surroundings were immediately reported and public opinion was informed with the objective of mobilising other civil organisations and residents. If this mobilisation could not be achieved or could not bring about significant changes or even simultaneous to it, juridical procedures were launched. As a matter of fact, the impact of legal endeavours became more important than the civic mobilisation.

The success of juridical procedures was to a great extent thanks to the role played by the Bar of Bursa within these initiatives. The obvious juridical competence of its members enabled the appropriate use of legal procedures as well as persuasive foundation and formulation of claims. Consequently, in most of the cases, the civil organisations managed to obtain the juridical decisions forcing the public institutions revise their decisions or policies.

In short, besides the development of local civil organisations, the professional chambers take very active roles within these struggles. Even if not so visible in these processes, the new bourgeoisie class, represented by BUSIAD, was considered to be involved in the development of these initiatives. Last but not least, the local government presided over by Erdem Saker is definitely a major actor within this *de facto* coalition assembled for the conservation of Bursa's natural and historical richness.

The emergence of such an urban coalition coincides with the introduction of LA21 in Bursa. Founded on exactly the same concerns: environmental protection, sustainable development and democratic participation, the project is backed strongly by this coalition. As a matter of fact, most of the actors cited above took very active roles in the LA21 process enabling it to bring about an important impact on local politics. In other words, the project provided the coalition with an institutional framework in which they could reinforce their initiatives by founding them upon globally acknowledged themes and efforts. For example, the city council turned out to be it the main platform where projects on a better future of Bursa was developed, discussed and realised. The elaboration of the 2020 Strategic Developmental Plan in the LA21 City Council was undoubtedly a perfect illustration of one of the outcomes of this cooperation among the local actors within the city council.

In summary, the success of the LA21 project in the second half of the nineties can be easily associated with the development of an urban coalition consisting of a new bourgeoisie, a flourishing local civil society and socially concerned professional chambers. The

willingness of the mayor to introduce global themes and to develop a more sustainable developmental scheme for Bursa provided this coalition with an institutional basis where they could develop and undertake their initiatives. Substantially, the LA21 could be established quite successfully and represented a progressive step with regards to the development of Turkish local democracy.

MERSIN: INABILITY OF DEVELOPING COALITIONS

Almost simultaneously with the emerging of an urban coalition in Bursa, Mersin was suffering from serious socioeconomic problems. Apart from ethnico-politic tension related to the Kurdish problem, the local economy represented an absolute deadlock with neither industrial development nor commercial awakening. The only economic sector relatively active was the real-estate sector, albeit to a lesser degree due to the significant diminishing of available lands. In any case, even the capital cumulated in these activities was not mobilised for industrial and economic investment and remained either in interest or reused in real estate.

The economic regression was spectacular; between 2000 and 2001 GDP per habitant decreased from $3297 to $2452 representing a fall of 25.6% where as the national economy regressed only 3.7% for the same period. The unemployment rate was 10.2% three percent higher than the national average in 2000 (DIE: 2002). Moreover, 57.64% of those who are employed worked in the agricultural sector[24]; a rate that demonstrates the weakness of the local industry and service sector. In short, the city was passing through a severe economic crisis.

By 2000, this disastrous economic conjuncture pushed the businessmen to look for means in order to organise collectively against it. However, this would not be an easy task since the traditional business culture of the city did not constitute favourable elements for such collective efforts. For instance, Ayata (1999: 207) states clearly that the local businessmen of Mersin were not used to undertaking collective initiatives due to the lack of mutual confidence among themselves. He explains that the logic of competition has been based upon personal success criterion instead of those of product, quality and management skills. As a result, "the entrepreneurs avoid getting into cooperation with others and thus prefer to reserve the decisions and resources within the family" (*loc. cit.*). He refers also to the limited number of partners in the firms and to the presence of very frequent short-lived partnerships as the main indicators of the lack of a tradition of mutual confidence and cooperation in Mersin. This managerial tradition of mutual distrust might have been further accentuated with the growing tension in the city as we have noted in the previous chapter.

Like in Bursa, we observe the foundation of a second businessmen organisation in Mersin in 1991; namely the Association of Industrialists and Businessmen of Mersin (*Mersin Sanayici ve Isadamlari Dernegi* – MESIAD). Similar to the BUSIAD of Bursa, this new business organisation also represented a differentiation among the local businessmen, albeit in a quite different way. As a matter of fact, the environmental concern of the new generation of Bursa's businessmen gathered in a way against the old group of powerful industrialists is not observed in the case of Mersin. Instead, the new group organisation seems to be identified rather with their ethnic or geographical origin. Whereas the city's chamber of commerce and industry (MTSO) has been under the control of the businessmen who are originally from the city, MESIAD has been implicitly identified with those who had immigrated to Mersin in the preceding three decades. Especially, the *alevi* businessmen have assembled in the association

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[24] http://www.dpt.gov.tr/bgyu/ipg/akdeniz/mersinPER.pdf last consultation septe,ber 25th, 2006.

with the objective of creating their local lobby against that of MTSO. A local journalist active in local politics describes the differentiation between MTSO and MESIAD as follows:

> "For example, during the internal elections of MTSO, some of the members adopt a discourse against the presumed snatch of the Chamber by those who are not originally from Mersin. If you are from Mersin or from its towns, you find yourself approving their discourse and thus joining them. The others develop a similar discourse claming that they have been excluded from the direction of the Chamber. They start attempting indeed to take-over the direction (Interview #48)"

This division based on ethnic and/or religious identities was actually confirmed by several of our interlocutors. Even the City Council founded in the framework of Local Agenda 21 Project suffered from such divisions. The mayor, who was not originally from Mersin, supported the candidate of MESIAD for the post of general secretariat. As a response MTSO encouraged its vice-president for the post. With the support of other local actors, the latter was elected although the tension between himself and the mayor would paralyse the entire process and turn it into a scene of personal struggles.

This *de facto* separation of the businessmen led naturally to the weakening of the chances for cooperative action aiming at the enhancement of local democracy as well as improvement of the local economy. The failure of the successive attempts to assemble them in the name of revitalising the local economy is the best illustration of the incapacity of local actors to unite together. The first initiative for assembling local actors for revitalising the local economy dates 2000. The pretext was a proposition about the foundation of a local Holding of United Forces (*Guçbirligi Holding)*. As its name reveals, the objective was to gather the local actors and use the accumulated capital for local investments. The idea was launched by MTSO without leading to any concrete results. In any case, the vanishing of the initiative was as sudden as its appearance since very shortly a new initiative, the foundation of a Local Development Agency (LDA) turned out to be the main objective of the Chamber.

Having "the revitalisation and the development of Mersin's economic, social and cultural life and the enhancement of its life quality"[25] as the main objective, LDA was launched in early 2001. However, except for the launching of MOSAICS Project funded by the European Union and the opening of two social centres in squatter areas, we do not remark on significant achievements realised by the Agency. The objective of the Mosaics project that had a budget of 75,000€, was to facilitate a better acknowledgement of cultural features of different communities as well as their peaceful co-existence. On the other hand, the social centres aimed at organising socio-cultural activities and formations to facilitate the integration of immigrants to urban life. Although we acknowledge absolutely the possible positive impact of these efforts in Mersin's social life, we find it quite difficult to associate them to the economic development of the city. In this perspective, LDA did not seem to manage to gather and mobilise local actors in the name of the economic development of the city[26]. Nevertheless, MTSO undertook several economic initiatives within the Collective Enterprise Group of Mersin (*Mersin Ortak Girisim Grubu)*.

The Group entered the bids of the privatisation of several public institutions (the port of Mersin, the port and the shipyard of Tasucu and a paper factory), but managed to obtain only the shipyard. Even if the Group had been successful in all these initiatives, it would not

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[25] Web site of LDA, http://www.mersin-ka.org/default.aspx?rid=909, last consultation September 26th, 2005.
[26] When revising these lines in July 2006, the AKP government introduced the LDA's to the legislation. Albeit being the first Turkish experience, the LDA of Mersin is moved to Adana after becoming a regional institution most probably due to this incapacity of gathering local actors.

represent a collective accomplishment of Mersin since the composition of the Group was far from covering all local actors. Apart from MTSO and Chamber of Naval Commerce of Mersin, the Municipality of Tasucu (a town of Mersin) as well as two private firms were the only members of the Group. As one might straightforwardly remark, other main actors of the city such as the municipalities (metropolitan or district) or MESIAD were absent in these initiatives. In other words, the Group was not indicating the emergence of an urban coalition aiming at the local development. As we may recall easily the heart of Stone's urban regime approach was the cooperation between public officials and businessmen. Yet, in the case of the Group, the municipalities were not involved; on the contrary the tension between MTSO and the metropolitan municipality was growing day by day.

The tension between these two local organisations dated the early years of the mayor Ozcan's rule. In 1997, the Chamber had managed to obtain the central government's approval for opening an Organised Industry Zone[27]. However, after his election, the mayor decided to transform the same location to a refuse dump. This decision brought about a grave tension that would continue for two years between the mayor and MTSO. The conflict became so widespread that even other public authorities took positions; while the mayor was backed by the minister of environment; the minister of interior and the prefect supported the Chamber (Turgut, 2003). Finally, after losing the juridical procedure, the mayor stepped back by cancelling the refuse dump project. However, as a quasi revenge, he managed to impede one of Chamber's most important project, namely that of an exposition centre[28].

Another climax of the tension between the mayor and the Chamber took place in May 2005 when the former accused the latter for being the local complice of AKP and for opposing all his initiatives to prevent his personal success (Ayan: 2005). In sum, the most important actors of a possible urban coalition in Mersin have been far from being able to even get along. In such circumstances, the emergence of a general urban coalition would be a real miracle.

Meanwhile, other local organisations were also trying to bring about collective initiatives. While MESIAD was launching a *Mersin Lobby* and multiplying his visits to Ankara to advocate the interests of the city, the prefect founded the Council of Cooperation for Development of Mersin (*Mersin Kalkinma Isbirligi Konseyi*- MEKIK) in February 2005. It is actually too early to comment on these initiatives. Yet, we suppose that even such an inflation of cooperative initiatives is indicative of the obstacles against the emergence of a veritable urban coalition in Mersin.

In light of the preceding observations, we can state that city's social structure has not yet permit an urban coalition among the local actors, be it economic, political or civil. Even at the summit of its economic dynamism, we do not observe the emergence of significantly influential actors in local politics. The enterprises rushing to the region were either external, thus having their directions out of the city or emigrated from Mersin as soon as they reached to a certain level of economic power. Consequently, local politics was not dominated by specific actors or groups. The only trace of urban coalition was formed at the expense of

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[27] In fact, this would be second OIS of the city since a first one between Tarsus and Mersin was legally founded in 1976 and started functioning after 22 years of construction in 1999.

[28] In 2006, the refuse dump was again one of the main agendas of the city. This time deprived of a powerful backing from national government, MTSO had little chance to be successful. As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Environment intervened directly and approved the mayor's decision on moving the refuse dump to the vicinity of the new organised industry zone despite of MTSO's strong opposition.

city's ecological and agricultural resources in the crude framework and rapid urbanisation. Indeed, this coalition was in total contrast with that of Bursa, which had the objective of fighting against the non-ecological industrial development that was menacing the fertile plain of the city. Coinciding with mayor's efforts to introduce LA21 in the city, this solidarity among businessmen, civil and professional organisations, enabled the functioning of civic mechanisms of the project. At the same time Mersin was seriously suffering from etnico-religious tensions dividing the local community among various sub-identities. Affected directly from these divisions, the local actors were also regrouped in different local camps. Thus, at a time when LA21 was introduced in the city, the local tension impeded all initiatives aiming to gather local actors around common objectives. Even when suffering from very grave economic difficulties, the latter did not manage to unite to work together for the revitalisation of local economy. It was not therefore surprising to observe local actors' indifference to civic mechanisms of LA21 at a conjuncture when they were even incapable of cooperating for such vital purposes as economic development.

THE MATRIX

The Turkish LA21 experience, as it is seen through comparison between Bursa and Mersin, provides very important clues about the importance of some contextual factors on the fate of new participatory mechanisms. I believe that the preceding discussion on Bursa and Mersin illustrates well the role of local leaders, the importance of associative lives as well as the urban coalitions in a participatory process. In the guise of conclusion of our paper, I propose thus to combine these three perspectives in a general framework by moving the focus from my specific cases to the whole process. For this purpose I shall divide the participatory process in three major stages –launching, operation and impact- with the objective of better identifying the combined influence of the three factors.

Launching the process:

The stage of *launching* indicates all preparatory activities undertaken prior to the actual functioning of the process. The role of the leadership is crucial in this stage of participatory process since the whole process will most probably develop in accordance with his/her or its (if the leadership is played by a political party or another institution) political vision. This political vision may be determined either by merely the leader's personal orientations and experiences or a response to a general popular demand expressed by civil organisations and people's gatherings. In this sense, societal environment also becomes influential in the preparatory phase.

As a matter of fact, the preceding experiences of civil mobilisations and associative activities represent a very important factor that facilitates the efforts for launching a new mechanism due to the fact that in such circumstances we might expect that local actors and population to appear to be more accustomed to act collectively. For this reason, the presence of a crowded labour class in the examined context may be also a favourable factor given that it may indicate a tradition and history of collective mobilisations[29]. Even in cases identified by a political reluctance displayed by political actors, civil society can exercise a great pressure on public authorities to push them by mass mobilisation. Furthermore, active participation of civil elements in this preparatory phase during which the institutional design is also determined, contributes also to the emergence of a more appropriate model with regards to

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[29] Nevertheless, this feature may also hinder the process in more orthodox contexts where socialist unions perceive such participatory mechanisms as political tokens serving implicitly to the interests of dominant classes.

preferences and expectations of the local society, a factor that would ultimately facilitate further involvement of citizens.

With the participation of private sector organisations and public institutions to such collective actions, a more powerful local coalition combining societal and structural forces may emerge as Bursa has illustrated throughout 1990s. Even if not directly and explicitly involved, these influential groups may support or hinder the process by using their media and opinion-making instruments. Moreover, interest groups may also intervene to the preparatory process in order to protect their hegemonic positions or to enhance it through advantageous means provided by the new mechanism. Thus, the institutional design of the process may be manipulated by such interventions on behalf of powerful pressure groups.

In the absence or insufficiency of such civil dynamism on which the new participatory mechanism could be based, it would be again the role of the political leader to assemble local actors and citizens for this purpose. In order to encourage citizens to become involved in the process, s/he might need to organise activities of information and attraction. S/he would also need to be very prominent in procuring adequate financial and logistical resources as well as gathering the required know-how for such an experience. Leader's national and international experiences as well as contacts turn out to be extremely useful in such an effort as illustrated by the mayor of Bursa in the research. Moreover, the leader's personality would also be determining simply because the credibility of the project would be to a great extent dependent of the leader's image in public opinion.

Last but not the least, the formal framework of the political system in which the mechanisms are to be launched has to provide legal bases for such an endeavour so that the risk of eventually suffering from administrative problems and tensions with public authorities could be prevented. Moreover, the legal structure is also indirectly present in the process by enabling or hindering the growing of collective endeavours by public authorities' *ad hoc* initiatives.

Well-functioning of the mechanism:

The influence of our three variables, namely leadership, social environment and structure, continue to be observed even after the mechanism is practically launched, albeit in different manners. Hence, the functioning of the process would be more or less dependent on the financial and logistical support either provided by public institutions or gathered by the political leader from other sources. If the social structure provides other financial ressources, the dependence on political and public authorities decrease and the autonomy of the mechanism is thus enhanced. Yet, the risk of instrumentalisation for specific ends remains valid this time on behalf of private interests. So, it is necessary to find an equilibrium between financial means and institutional autonomy.

Obviously, independent from whether or not they are able to raise their proper budgetary resources, citizens' active involvement in the process is vital for its well functioning. If citizens remain indifferent to the introduced mechanisms, they either disappear shortly or reproduce the existing power relations or are instrumentalised for particularistic ends. We suppose that the risk of instrumentalisation is well demonstrated in our study through Mersin's experience where different actors (the mayor, certain political aspirants, the prefect etc.) attempt to manipulate the introduced mechanisms to enhance their political influence. Yet, if the over-presence of principal actors in the process may be harmful due to the risk of instrumentalisation, their total absence is neither preferable since it reduces significantly the credibility of the process in the eyes of the public. Therefore, the main political actors ought to be not only involved but also counterbalanced by civil participants in order to prevent the manipulation of the participatory process by the former.

Nevertheless, citizens' active involvement in the process does not assure a democratically functioning mechanism since again, as the case of Mersin has illustrated, the internal conflict between citizens' groups or civil organisations may halt the experience due the disappearance of cooperative spirit of the participatory practice. Therefore, the societal environment should not only encourage citizens' active involvement in the process but also nourish a relative harmony among them. Also related with the harmony among the participants of the process, there has to be a general consensus on the "rules of the game" in order to avoid probable conflicts on procedural details and principles.

Actual impact:

Even if successfully launched and effectively operationalised, the political impact of the participatory process can not be taken for granted. Indeed, in experiences that can be qualified as *tokenist* using Arnstein's terminology, the mechanism serves only to give an image of democratic procedural without actually bringing about a significant change in politics. The legal framework represents perhaps the most important factor that determines the actual impact. If the decisions taken by the participatory mechanism enjoy a legally binding character, they would be *a priori* respected and applied.

Yet, if the process is deprived from such a legal force, it would be firstly leaders' attitudes and acts that would provide a *de facto* force to the procedure since s/he would be the one to decide whether or not to respect the resolutions issued by the participatory mechanism. Moreover, s/he can also advocate these resolutions vis-à-vis other institutions and actors in order thus to enhance the *de facto* power of the mechanism. S/he can on the other hand totally ignore the resolutions that s/he does not appreciate and thus render the process to a "democratic masquerade" as some of our interlocutors had qualified the LA21 process in their cities. Indeed, this expressed indifference or ignorance with regards to the resolutions reached by the participatory process may be also a result of the pressures exercised by the hegemonic actors to do so. Thanks to their *de facto* political power in politics, these actors may attempt to prevent the application of the decisions that they consider threatening to their interests and consequently the impact of the process might turn out to be insignificant.

It would be unjust though to associate the actual impact of the process wholly to legal framework and/or leadership since citizens' attitudes are also decisive at this stage. Indeed, if they manage to maintain their collective actions through periodical follow-ups with the objective of inciting political and bureaucratic actors to respect the resolutions of the process, the impact would be naturally great. Moreover, the degree of institutionalisation of the process is also influential with regards to its actual impact in politics. The resolutions reached by mechanisms that have been functional, stable and effective over time would thus be more respected by other actors and institutions. And this stability over time would be mainly the result of citizens' sustained interest in the process. To achieve this, the latter has to be institutionalised by endowing procedural and normative principles to the mechanism and this can only be possible with the sustained and active involvement of citizens in the process. If ever they give up participating once they obtain their specific interests, the mechanism would shortly turn into a generalised platform of NIMBY actions and thus be deprived of an institutional character.

Table 1. Recapitulation of the influence of different factors on different stages of a participatory process

		LAUNCHING	OPERATION	IMPACT
LEADERSHIP		• initial vision • actual initiative • gathering of required know-how and resources as well as participants • leader's personality as a source of credibility	• financial and logistical support • active involvement in the process to assure credibility • coordination • attempts of instrumentation	• taking the resolutions in consideration • defending them vis-à-vis other actors and institutions
SOCIETY		• popular demand • collective mobilisation with other forms • modification of the institutional design • general support to the preparation	• active presence • internal peace • general consensus on the procedural rules and principles	• active follow-ups • institutionalisation
SOCIAL and POLITICAL STRUCTURE	*Political structure**	• formal base • indirect influence through impact on associative and social domains	• financial and logistical support • legal reconnaissance	• legal consideration of the outcomes
	Social Structure	• indirect support through making of public opinion • manipulation of the design	• financial and logistical support • presence of public and private sector actors • attempts of instrumentalisation	• *de facto* influence of hegemonic actors

In the guise of conclusion: Participatory democracy as a classical music concert

In the light of all the preceding observations and arguments presented throughout the paper, I can summarise my findings in a metaphor of a classical music concert. Hence, I would argue that the answer of the question "which and how local factors determine the actual outcome of new participatory mechanisms" is metaphorically very similar to the response of the question "what are the conditions of organising an outstanding classical music concert." Three major factors come immediately into our minds: a talented and experienced maestro, an orchestra comprised of competent musicians playing a variety of instruments and an architecturally and technically convenient concert hall.

First of all, among the well-known orchestras, those without a conductor are indeed exceptional. The maestro is crucial for not only ensuring the harmony of the orchestra but also

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* In fact, there has been no such distinction throughout our actual research simply because the institutional framework is identical for our both cases. Therefore, we did not quite really deal with this dimension in our study.

determining the way how the opus would be interpreted. Hence, the same partition played by the same orchestra may appear to be quite different with different maestros. Similarly, in light of our findings, we argue that the political leaders play a role similar to that of a maestro conducting an orchestra within the process of introducing new participatory mechanisms. As a matter of fact, political leaders' "personal touch" to the process determines the nature and eventually the success of the experience.

Secondly, and perhaps most obviously, the composition and the capabilities of the orchestra is a major dimension of an outstanding classical music concert. The internal harmony among the musicians is actually as important as their individual talents. In this sense, the orchestral aspect of a good classical music resembles very much to the societal dimension of a working participatory mechanism. Just like the musicians of an orchestra, the number and the diversity of the participants present in a participatory process determine the performance of the mechanism. Therefore, without reaching out to a significant number of citizens from different backgrounds and socioeconomic profiles, there is no chance that the process brings about significant democratic impact. Moreover, the societal dimension goes beyond a merely quantitative presence since, just as in an orchestra, there has to be minimum harmony among participants. This would not mean that all participants should agree and act uniformly –play simultaneously the same note- on all issues, but rather indicate the presence of a general consent on the rules of the process that all participants sincerely respect. In short, active and collective involvement of citizens is a *sine qua non* of a participatory experience just like the musicians of an orchestra.

Finally, the physical conditions of the place where the concert takes place represent another dimension that affects the artistic value of the music as well as its impact on the spectators. It is difficult to disregard the importance of the architectural design of the hall, its acoustical characteristics, even the placement of the scene and the seats on the pleasure that we obtain from a classical music concert. In other words, the talent of the maestro and the musicians can be best appreciated in physically ideal conditions. Similarly, the structural variables determine very significantly the actual impact of the participatory process. Apart from financial and logistical resources provided to the process, the political environment identified by the institutional scheme as well as the actual relationships of power directly influence the actual democratic impact that the participatory process brings about. Therefore, independent from how the process is introduced and operationalised, from the scope and diversity of it participants, the real outcomes of the process are more or less determined by structural variables since the final decision on the quality of a musical event would be based on what we hear rather than what musicians play.

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