Political participation and civic engagement among native German, Turkish migrant and re-settler youth

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Research question

• What motivates young people to become politically or civically active and engaged?

• Part of the PIDOP-Project: Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation
  (PIDOP; http://www.fahs.surrey.ac.uk/pidop/)
Backdrop of Study

- Growing political apathy among (young) people (International IDEA, 2004; Putnam, 2000)

- Are people changing from traditional forms of participation to civic and social engagement and e-Democracy? (Zukin et al., 2006)
Existing Research

- Macro factors (historical, political, institutional): Kind of voting system, political history of a country
- Sociodemographic factors: gender, age, migration background, education, SES
- Social and psychological factors: social capital, trust, political self-efficacy, social identity
Research Gap

- A lot of knowledge about single factors, but not about processes
- How are these factors interrelated?
- What social and psychological processes can explain these relations?
Study Goals

• Look at the processes of how young people build up their political knowledge and consciousness,
• Look at impact of different life contexts: family, peer group, school, media, associations, political institutions
• Target groups: adolescents and young adults, migrants
What we wanted to know

• Their understanding of civic, environmental and human rights
• With whom they talk to and where they get information on these topics
• How they evaluate this information
• What others expect from them
• Which opportunities/hurdles for participation they see
The groups under study

- **West- vs. East German Natives:**
  - different history -> different political socialisation?
- **Turkish migrants:**
  - biggest ethnic minority in Germany (2.8 M)
  - facing high levels of discrimination and poverty
  - many do not hold citizenship
- **Ethnic German immigrants from Ex-USSR (Re-settlers):**
  - big minority group (2-3 M)
  - most hold citizenship
Method

• Sample: 28 East-, 29 West German, 28 Turkish migrant and 18 ethnic German immigrants (N = 103; 65 % männlich)
• Sources: Vocational Schools (native German and Turkish), Migrant associations (ethnic German immigrants), University students (Turkish)
• 17 Focus groups (4-8 participants)
• 2 age groups: 16-18 and 20-26
Focus Groups

- Moderated semi-structured group discussion
- Questions about conceptions of citizenship, opportunities for participation, knowledge, and experiences
- Length: 30-60 Min.
- Captured on video
- Transcription
- Deductive Coding using ATLAS.ti
Focus Group: Ice Breaker
Results: Thematic relevance by age (% coded text)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Adolescents</th>
<th>Young Adults</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/Unemployment</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Migration/Integration</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New technologies</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
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<td>Women's rights</td>
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<td>10.00%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results: Thematic relevance by ethnic groups (% coded text)
Results: Conceptions of citizenship and human rights

- **Turkish**
  - Double citizenship,
  - Treatment of terrorist subjects
  - Freedom of religion
  - Discrimination/Pressure to integrate
  - Forced marriage
„But I don‘t understand the point, what use is it to me if I live in Germany, was brought up here and for example have never been to Turkey but I have the right to vote in Turkey. I have no gain if something improves or worsens in Turkey.“

(Turkish, 20-26)
Results: Conceptions of citizenship and human rights

- Resetters
  - Discrimination/identity confusion
  - Access to job market/unemployment
„When we come to Germany, we are Russian, everybody tells us. Nobody asks who were your grandparents, where were they born, like for example with me, my grandparents were born in Germany, into war and then stayed in Kazakhstan. Now everybody tells me: „You are Russian.“ You have to do a lot so that Germans will accept [you].“

(Resettler, 16-18)
Results: Conceptions of citizenship and human rights

- Native Germans
  - Integration of Migrants (Criticism)
  - Freedom of opinion (also for the right-wing)
  - Low wages vs. unemployment benefits (Hartz IV)
• Vpn 4: I find it generally awful that they wear head scarves, there is, I mean, there is also the right side, I find that awful when they are in Germany, they should-
• Vpn 5: that they at least-
• Vpn 2: that they adapt to things here

(Native German, 16-18)
Results: Opportunities to participate

- Young adults see more opportunities than adolescents (voting age at 18)
- Adolescents often think they are not taken seriously
- Education seen as prerequisite for participation
- The vast majority disapproved of illegal forms of participation
'Yes, but without what I have just said for example, without this education they can't engage in political issues, that's the thing. It's like that. If there's a guy and has his school certificate or not even that, or I don't know what, quits school, has only s*** in the head, then he will never be interested in political things, will never care for carbon emissions, will never care to learn another language, he would do nothing, he would also not go to vote. As I said, education is one of the things that are important.'

(West German, 20-26)
Results: How are your rights represented?

- Politicians do not care about our issues
- Not possible to identify with politicians (too old, not enough migrants)
- Politicians have to little knowledge about the issues that young people care about
'There need to be more people in politics that young people can identify with and me personally, I can't identify with Angela Merkel or with a guy around 60 and who stands there and drivels about something that I don't care about.'

(Turkish, 20-26)
Results: Who influences you in these topics? (Σ nominations by age)
Results: Who influences you in these topics? ($\Sigma$ nominations by ethnic group)
Results: Participation experiences

- Often sporadically: Demonstrating, collecting signatures, striking
- Seldom stable: e.g. membership
- perceived efficacy:
  - low for demonstrations and voting
  - higher for people with positive experiences
- Significance of migrant/religios organisations for Turkish (Milli Görüs) and resettlers
Results: Hurdles for participation

- Turkish: Voting rights/Double citizenship
- In general:
  - Fear of violence/police
  - Lack of knowledge
  - No time
  - No interest
  - Opposing social norms (friends, family)
  - Political alienation
'So with me it's like, I live in a village, and I think if I were against racism and there are a lot there that are like that. They would not understand because it doesn't exist there like that. It's the same with my relatives, so they simply cannot understand foreigners and gay people. And I think if I went in something like that, that would be against them, they would look at me very strangely.'

(East German, 16-18)
Results: Suggestions to increase participation

• In relation to migrants:
  ▫ Visit people at their homes and use same-ethnic street workers
  ▫ More migrants in public positions
  ▫ Change voting laws

• In general:
  ▫ Invest in education
  ▫ Lower voting age
  ▫ Introduce civic education at school
Conclusion

• No difference in level and perceived opportunities between East- and West Germans
• Participation levels low among all ethnic groups (educational effect?)
• No sign for a change to new forms of e-democracy (educational effect?)
• Influence of media vs. Teachers and family vs. Friends
• Successful participation experiences increase political self-efficacy
Acknowledgment

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Thank you for your attention!