Protest, Memory, and the Production of ‘Civilized’ Citizens: Two Cases from Turkey and Lebanon

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This paper studies the proliferation of discourses of rationality and responsibility among a particular elite social group in Lebanon and Turkey, as they remember student mobilization of their past. I offer these episodes of student mobilization as acts of citizenship that create and make use of rapturous moments in the histories of their countries and institutions. I extend these acts of citizenship to the contemporary context and study the ways in which they become part of discourses of citizenship in unexpected ways. I propose that these narratives draw upon a set of local practices that reflect meanings of citizenship, originating from Western discourses of liberalism, albeit following a different route. In the narratives, violence and irrationality become the defining features of politicized behavior, whereas being civilized epitomizes good manners and rationality. Such boundary-drawing exercises contribute to making conceivable exclusionary social orders based on the idea of a hierarchical distribution of reason and social utility.

Keywords: Lebanon; Turkey; citizenship; identity; political; social construction

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Introduction

This paper studies the formation of a particular ideal of citizenship based on notions of individual rationality and responsibility among the variants of an elite social group in Lebanon and Turkey. It analyzes the ways in which these actors, in their narratives of past mobilizations, associate politics with violence and civility with an adult choice of staying outside the former. Between 1971 and 1974, the campuses of the first two American universities in the Middle East, Robert College (RC) in Istanbul and the American University of Beirut (AUB), were shaken by waves of student protests. During these protests, both groups followed local issues and voiced their frustration with domestic and regional politics. Today several of these former activists occupy prominent positions in their respective societies. This article is about the relationship between their memory of this period of activism and their contemporary self-identity. I offer these narratives as a way to study how social imaginaries (Taylor 2002) of citizenship are shaped at the edges of the West today.

My aim is to make two contributions to citizenship studies. First, I intend to engage with an emerging literature on acts of citizenship – that is, deeds through which individuals become and constitute the conditions of being citizens in new ways (İşin and Nielsen 2008). The campus activism analyzed here were acts of citizenship that articulated collective demands, with reference to local and international politics, using a combination of discourses emanating from the West. As students created and acted within moments of rupture, they constituted themselves as activist citizens. These protests generated some influence *vis-à-vis* their universities and states, but, more importantly, these acts began a process of constituting the actors as citizens with particular characteristics, distinct from the rest of their respective society. I analyze these acts and juxtapose them with the specific frames through which the participants

articulate this past in the contemporary context. The re-articulation of these discourses today becomes part of a counterintuitive shift in the meanings of politics and political action. This shift constructs the actors' self-identities as responsible, rational, and more ideal citizens among a population and among institutions that seem to lack these qualities.

Secondly, studying these narratives allows us to open up debates concerning the cultural production of (ideal) citizenship norms. I am specifically interested in studies that analyze the production of self-governing, responsible, and rational individuals as the ethical subjects of Western liberal political orders (Burchell 1996, Hindess 2002, Işın 2002). I propose to extend these debates to these two cases and explore the desire for and the production of similar subjectivities in the Middle East. I document a subtle process in which the discursive framing of the protests creates a separation between 'the political' and 'the civil(ized)', whereby the former is associated with violence and irrationality, and the latter with being refined and rational. The boundaries between these two inform how these social groups articulate their identities and make conceivable exclusionary social orders, based on an idea of hierarchical distribution of reason and civility. I argue that these discourses of citizenship in the final analysis facilitate a cultural interpretation of existing class and status differences (Turner 1988, p. 66).

The idea for this paper emerged from a larger fieldwork project conducted in 2003 and 2004 among the graduates of these institutions, following their contemporary lives. The goal of the research was to explore the emergence of a transnational network of professional elites around Western institutions of education and, thus, targeted diverse segments of graduates who have established careers particularly in international business, institutions, and non-governmental

organizations (Altan 2006). The fieldwork consisted of multiple life-course interviews with approximately 70 persons who had graduated from AUB and RC in the last 15 to 35 years. In order to identify my interviewees, I utilized a purposeful snowballing sampling procedure. The diversity I maintained was on the basis of professional position/rank, age, and gender.¹ I intended to focus on interviewees with similar class positions and educational status, while approaching different career paths at different points in people's lives. In this way, I mapped out the social life of the constituents of a particular network, whose background tied them to one another across Lebanon and or Turkey. Among the interviewees, 42 were old enough to have experienced this period of campus activism or the more general political violence in which both countries were embroiled during the late 1960s and 1970s. The informants recounted many stories of the protests in such a way that they became part of their current identities and perceptions of political belonging, responsibility, and rationality.

In both cases, the participants were at the margins of the West. Yet, the history of Lebanon and Turkey's connections with the West has coincided with the long-term presence of these institutions of higher education. For most of their approximately 150 years of existence, AUB and RC have been part of local *and* transnational cultural productions (Altan-Olcay 2008). Students at these schools who participated in the protests often either came from upper-class backgrounds or substantively increased their chances for social mobility by attending these institutions. Throughout the twentieth century, AUB and RC have produced and educated a type of elite that is increasingly replicated all over the world. These social groups – which have been given names such as transnational capitalist classes, global elite, cosmopolitans, and epistemic communities – share with their counterparts class position, educational background, and professional networks (Borocz and Rona-Tas 1995, Haas 1992,

Sklaire 1997, Van Der Pijl 1998). Therefore, their narratives provide a fertile venue for studying the ways in which particular social actors in a region – often perceived as an exception to the West – are very much part of transnational, yet localized processes of knowledge-making about meanings of citizenship.

Acts, discourses, and meanings of citizenship

A new set of research in citizenship studies has approached citizenship by shifting the focus from legal status and everyday practice to moments of rupture (İşin and Nielsen 2008). Accordingly, creative imaginations of future citizenships emerge in moments of rupture, because these create splits with habitual practices. Studying acts of citizenship opens up to theorization the multiple and paradoxical ways in which subjects become citizens as they act their claims for justice, rights, and responsibilities (İşin 2008). This approach forecloses the danger of ‘arriv[ing] at the scene too late’ that happens when scholarly intention is restricted to an analysis of the ‘extent, content and depth’ of citizenship. Acts of citizenship reflect the production of citizens during the creation of the scene (İşin 2008, p. 37). I seek to understand the long-term effect of such acts, drawing out what lingers on the scene long after the act is over and the actors have left. I offer here an analysis that combines a focus on moments of rupture with attention to practices and discourses of citizenship. This is not a quest for ordering the disorderly or imposing patterns on moments of rupture, but rather an experiment in arriving on the scene early and staying longer than anyone else.

I explore the emergence of citizenship claims in past student protests on two campuses of the Middle East, with an eye to how their meanings are conceptualized today. For my informants, while this past evokes nostalgia, the contemporary context

is marked by adulthood, privilege and a claim of retreat from active politics. Approaching mobilizations in terms of their cognitive and emotional connotations for participants (Davis 2002, Goodwin and Jasper 2004) allows us to study their long-term links with identity formation. The memory of mobilization is a terrain in which struggles over content continue into the present; engage with prevailing cultural paradigms; and connect to contemporary self-identifications (Isaac 2008, p. 50–53). Thus, the question is the following: what facilitates the potential of past acts of citizenship to become part of practices and discourses of citizenship over time?

In his previous work, Işın (2002) has argued that citizenships are not teleological or static possessions, but rather practices and discourses of identity that can also construct mechanisms of exclusion and privilege. Burchell (1996), too, has contended that discourses of citizenship contain moral assumptions about who is responsabilized and capable of self-governing and who is not. Hindess (2002) has shown how liberal democracies limit participation to those actors who have internalized circumscribed roles defined in terms of rationality and civility. The critical body of literature on citizenship within which these arguments have been shaped has been inspired by Foucault's work. Foucault (1991) has drawn attention to the multiplicity of discourses, knowledges, and techniques through which populations are governed and constituted. These modern forms of government have been made possible through the proliferation of rationalities and techniques that determine what constitutes the normal, virtuous, and desirable and who embodies these characteristics (Rose and Miller 1992, Dean 1999). In this sense, political power is not exercised in terms of active prohibitions and violence, but by constituting the desirable citizens as autonomous, rational, and efficient subjects. As a corollary, those who cannot achieve this transformation remain excluded.

These rationalities and techniques are integral to the limitations of sovereign exercise of power in the liberal age and the rise of ideologies of the market-based organization of socio-economic relations. There is also something to be said of the production of similar discourses and practices elsewhere, especially in the world outside Western liberal democracies. In these two cases, it is not the widespread recognition of contractual relations between citizens and the state that informs the emergence of these definitions. Instead, these discourses have become possible due to political pasts of pervasive violence; persistent socio-economic inequalities overlapping with educational distinctions; and political traditions of duty-oriented citizenship ideals. I follow the proliferation of a counterintuitive logic among local elite networks in these two countries: narratives about these protests reveal seemingly apparent, but rather flexible definitions of what constitutes politics and whose actions are to be understood as outside of these definitions. These overlap with ideas of desirable and responsible citizens as opposed to the masses who lack these qualities. In the interviews, the graduates' self-representations shared a pivotal contrast between existing domestic politics and their own characteristics. On many occasions, both groups described everyday politics in their countries as irrational, violent, and uncivilized. For them, their past defeats in political encounters as well as their implied capacity to approach social problems in different ways rendered them civilized, located outside of ordinary politics, and distinct from the rest of society.

For over a century, RC (now Boğaziçi University) and AUB have educated the regional elite in English, relying on curricula outside the national education systems. In fact, both have their origins in affiliates of the American Protestant missions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although later they became national pillars of secular upper-class culture (Makdisi 1997). Historically, these institutions have

produced leaders of various nationalist movements and the bureaucratic elite of countries, from Eastern Europe over the Middle East to East and North Africa. They have been associated with plans for (Western) modernization in their localities. Even though their graduates' participation in active politics is not significant in the contemporary context, it continues to be noteworthy in business and civil society networks, especially those with international connections. This education has continued to pass on legacies about what constitutes 'ideal' and 'modern' men and women. The missionaries and teachers who established and ran these institutions worked to produce leaders, well-versed in Western civilization with its ideas of liberalism, tolerance, freedom, scientific objectivism, and belief in progress, while remaining patriotic enough to use their skills for the benefit of their own nation (Anderson, forthcoming; El-Shakry 2007). These discourses have continued to shape graduates' self-perceptions well into the twentieth century.

Later in life, the articulation of this ideal of a responsible and self-governing citizen overlapped with existing status and class inequalities and produced the effect of normalizing the latter. Bourdieu has explained how a wide range of cultural practices and dispositions expresses one's position in a field of power and distinguish social groups from one another (Turner 1988, p. 67). While cultural capital encompasses educational performance and cultural practices that economic inequalities cannot explain (Brubaker 1985, p. 757), one's ability to convert these different capitals into one another produces symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1985b, p. 724). Symbolic capital creates legitimacy and contributes to the exercise and perpetuation of power (Bourdieu 1977, Bourdieu 1985a, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). As my informants remembered their past acts, they also drew on their present identities and positions in their societies. Producing discourses of responsible and

rational citizenships as opposed to uninformed, violent and unpredictable versions, they facilitated the stabilization of past moments of rupture. Claiming ownership of the former characteristics generated symbolic power because these were not perceived to be widely practiced.

Discussions of citizenship in Lebanon often draw out the contested nature of political belonging. Historically, the political elite have shared government positions on the basis of their power in confessional groups, corresponding to the multi-sectarian make-up of the population. On the one hand, sectarianism has made it common practice for citizens to attempt to mobilize as many relationships as possible in achieving access to state resources (Joseph 1997). On the other hand, it has created multiple practices and discourses of belonging to Lebanon. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has also informed the controversies about who rightfully belongs to Lebanon and who does not. When the former student leaders looked back at their political activism, they often drew attention to international problems, multiple ideological divisions, and sectarianism. They also spoke of the period in hindsight, in anticipation of the civil war between 1975 and 1990. Their constitutions of themselves and their acts reflected a desire for civility, for the absence of violence, and for an unfragmented, secular state.

In Turkey, Kemalism – taking its name from the founder of the republic – has reproduced two interrelated legacies: the first is the idea of a ‘citizen-subject who is willing to defer his/her right to the point where he or she finishes his/her duties to the state’ (Keyman and İçduygu 2003, p. 231). Üstel has shown historically that the dominant trend in political culture has been one that advocates a militant and dutiful citizen. She has also illustrated how this became more pronounced after the 1980 coup (Üstel 2004). Secondly, this ideal of the duty-bound citizen has reflected the

ideology of the paternalist duty of the political elite to modernize the rest of the country, the former always suspicious that the latter is not sufficiently capable. When people spoke of the 1970s, there were several tensions that surfaced in relation to existing cultures of citizenship. First, they talked about the chaos in the streets and state violence, interpreting their absence on campus in terms of a different socialization they experienced. Secondly, although their self-descriptions of civility and rationality came closer to a desire for liberal citizenship, they continued to compare who and what would serve the nation the best. Thus, they oscillated between individuation and a national service in their implicit understanding of citizenship (Kadioglu 2007)

There are three key differences between the groups. First, the campus activism in AUB was more multicultural, with an emphasis on the Arab World. This activism was also more central to ongoing struggles in Lebanon than was the case in RC/BU. These were the result of a visibly international student body on campus. Second, my informants' life stories revealed humble beginnings more frequently in RC/BU than in AUB. In other words, privilege and status were impacted by class, but those who came to RC/BU during this period seemed to benefit more from their diplomas in achieving upward mobility. Finally, even though both groups asserted distance from everyday politics, in Lebanon several informants had held positions in government and bureaucracy, and in Turkey, several worked in well-known non-governmental organizations, lobbying the government. These differences informed the stories in which a tension between past activism and present identities emerged. However, what remained constant was the salience of the tension and its articulation in terms of a series of contrasts.

As these groups remembered their past acts of citizenship, they generated a desire for another way of being. They aspired to more rational and dialogical relations among citizens, and between citizens and the state. A kind of deliberative politics to come informed their articulations, both in the moment of the protests, and, later, in their remembrances. Yet, for them, this other way of being, whose locus was rationality, civility, and deliberation, seemed never to spread widely in these countries. Violence, defeat, as well as their own privileges, which accumulated over the years, informed how acts of citizenship were transformed in more restrictive ways into discourses of citizenship. Interviewees' experiences served as filters through which they enacted other ways of being as claims of identity and distinction. While, for them, deliberation and dialogue became a non-political sphere to which only those sufficiently rational and civil were to have access, 'politics' was shunned. The arguments that my informants articulated, concerning the restricted number of persons, who could be rational, civil and outside of politics, created an exclusionary understanding of citizenship.

Contesting meanings of the political in Lebanon

In this section, I will focus on student protests at AUB during the late 1960s and 1970s. I will describe the ways in which defeat is explained and how 'political' comes to signify certain actors and events and not others, even though they often are interrelated. I will show how underlying assumptions designate the boundaries of 'civilized' behavior.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were student protests in all universities in Beirut. AUB was one of the focal points for various reasons. First, it received close attention from international spectators and the American government.

This had been especially the case since the 1948 appointment of a university president who, as the former head of the Office of Strategic Services in Cairo, had close connections with the US government (Munro 1977, p. 100). Moreover, the university made increasing use of US government funding. Secondly, the campus already had a famous history of political mobilization around Arab nationalism (Rabah 2009, pp. 23 – 31). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this mobilization steered in the direction of the Palestinian struggle. The leftist groups at AUB enjoyed ties with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and *Fateh*. Contesting them were groups, such as the nationalist Jordanian *Tanzim* and the Lebanese Student League (*Rabita*). The progressive student groups rallied for student movements elsewhere, for Palestinians, academic freedom, and against American interference in the region as well as tuition increases. They followed international student protests in Paris, New York, and San Francisco.

Two strikes in 1971 and 1974 marked the memories of those who were on campus during this period. Following on the heels of a confrontation between the National Union of Lebanese University Students and the Lebanese government, the strike in 1971 started out as a protest against a ten-percent increase in tuition. It began on May 12 and escalated over the next two weeks. When the council's demands for canceling the increase and enhanced student representation in the administration were not met to satisfaction, a general vote rejected the university president's proposals,² and students began occupying the buildings. Yet, the strike received a blow when the members of the *Rabita* and *Tanzim* withdrew, accusing the student council of 'politicizing' the strike. All buildings were evacuated by June 4. The university senate decided to dissolve the student council because it did not 'provide an adequate avenue

for student representation and dialogue'.³ Student leaders were suspended, but most re-enrolled after a sympathy strike.

In the course of these events, participants contested one another, based on shared assumptions of what appropriate actions entailed. Those who withdrew distanced themselves from the leftist voices in the student leadership. Accordingly, the latter was politicized, while the original goal of canceling the tuition increase was based on solidarity. Furthermore, when the university president announced the decision to dissolve the student council, his rationale contrasted appropriate with inappropriate functions for the organization. In response, the student council issued a memorandum accusing the university administration of disparaging their strength by calling the strike political.⁴ A student leader reminded everyone that the struggle was for academic freedom and not for politics. Another accused those who withdrew of collaborating with the political aims of the administration.⁵ The meanings of freedom, democratic conduct, and responsible activism were intensely debated as each group claimed their exclusive ownership. On the part of the students, the strike was an act of citizenship that took place at a moment of rupture, both in Lebanese and institutional histories. Students creatively brought to halt all university operations and claimed a voice in administrative decision-making. Yet, at the same time, all opposing groups used parallel formulations about proper behavior, freedom, and politicization. They took the connotations of these formulations for granted and assumed that 'politicized' did not do justice to their acts. Thus, there was a tension between the students' attempts to create a break with existing campus practices and the habits of 'proper' citizenship.

Over the next three years, the student movement on campus became more radicalized and more fragmented. Amidst strikes at other universities and clashes with

security forces as well as among the students themselves, the second strike took place in the spring of 1974. The administration introduced a further ten-percent increase in tuition. Previously, students had been made aware of growing financial problems of the institution, and the student newspaper had published several pieces calling for constructive solutions.⁶ Several letters went back and forth between the administration and the student council. The student council repeated their demands to cancel the increase and to allow more student participation in administrative decisions. They also voiced concerns about political motivations behind the tuition increase. The administration refused to negotiate with them. The strike gradually took over the campus; no administrator was allowed entry, and the university was shut down for the second time in three years. One activist explained years later that the USAID money was being used to purchase supplies from US companies. He reasoned that, if local suppliers had been used, the available money could have been stretched more and the tuition raise would not have been necessary.

Already AUB was the most expensive university in Lebanon, if not in the Middle East. So we called for a meeting ... and we said that this increase was not acceptable. It is already an elitist university. If you add ten percent to the tuition, you are making it even more inaccessible to talented students ... [who] don't have enough money.

This act of citizenship opened to question the limited access to an education of AUB's caliber. As this informant continued to explain, it overlapped with the indignation they felt when they saw the growing poverty outside the campus and the adult political actors' indifference to it. Students invoked responsibility to serve a wider range of youth and created answerabilities to those who were not on campus yet (İşin 2008, p. 37). These were political acts that aimed to interrupt existing routines, but,

ironically, they also continued to utilize the above-mentioned dichotomies, which placed anything that was called ‘political’ or ‘politicized’ on the questionable end of the spectrum of acts on campus. For instance, a former leader of the Lebanese League remembered that, as long as the issue was not allowed to spread into ‘political’ demands, Camille Chamoun, the former president of Lebanon and their patron, said that he would allow their participation in the strike. This irony reveals the continual tensions between aspirational acts of citizenship and the tendency on the part of society and citizenship for self-preservation (White 2008). Acts and habits co-exist, creating unpredictable possibilities for restoring and/or renouncing existing citizenship arrangements.

The actors of these stories were not limited to student groups and administrators on campus. The Lebanese and the US governments were also in the picture. Following Lebanese independence, those groups who had advocated economic liberalism had won over the calls for protectionist policies. Point Four of the 1949 Truman program gave further impetus to this development, turning Beirut into a regional center of commerce, finance, tourism, and education (Picard 2002). During this period, ARAMCO and the Iraq Petroleum Company (nationalized in the 1970s) owned and operated pipelines and terminals in Lebanon; all major US banks and brokerage houses had branches in Beirut, in conjunction with the oil-based capital market; and the US private sector possessed significant shares in Middle East Airlines and Trans Mediterranean Airways (Farsoun 1973, p. 9).

These developments had also benefited AUB’s popularity and rising prestige. During the 1950s and 1960s, grants from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations and the US State Department had made possible the establishment of several programs and covered a significant part of the operating expenses (Daniel 1970, pp. 241 – 245).

Also, the Point Four program had begun sponsoring students from countries in the Middle East and North Africa to be educated at AUB, starting in 1951. Between 1954 and 1971, US government grants and contracts increased from 29% of the university income to 61.9%.⁷ However, by the beginning of the 1970s, the Cold War was coming to its ideological end, and the Vietnam War had drained the US treasury. As a result, USAID funding to universities such as AUB began to phase out.

This contraction in funding coincided with the university board's decision to raise the tuition. It also overlapped with the rise of anger against the American government's involvement in the region – especially through aid to Israel. AUB students were no exception to these sentiments. There were forums, discussions, editorials, and protests in which students voiced ideas about what they saw as connections between American imperialism and their university.⁸ One of the student leaders of the time remembered his political and intellectual frustration in the following words:

We were in a sense in a schizophrenic situation whereby we did not appreciate the policies of the American administration and at the same time we were greatly appreciative of their educational system, of their values as far as debates and liberties are concerned. So it was unsettling.

Although the protest erupted in response to an administrative decision in the university, it had intricate connections with international politics, the role of the US government in the region, as well as wider intellectual contestations over particular values and conducts. In this confrontation, the students were using the language of freedom and participation as they had learned from this institution (Anderson 2007). They were socialized into forming critical opinions and voicing them. But they hit a

wall when other factors came into play. In the process, even though the events involved prominent political actors from the beginning, they seemed to be described as ‘politicized’ when agendas multiplied, clashes occurred and students were exposed to violence. Ultimately, whenever things became too ‘political’, students learned that they could easily lose their ground. These were more than moments of closure for the acts (White 2008, p. 55). They also impacted how the lived experiences would be narrated in later years.

Eventually, several rounds of negotiations took place between student activists and university administrators. By this time, the leftist students were advocating an all-or-nothing strategy. Eventually, the rightist and centrist groups backed down. People with whom I spoke from these groups all expressed their anxiety over the ‘politicization’ of the strike that induced them to leave it. Finally, Yasser Arafat, who was the primary guardian of the striking students and under pressure himself, told them that they needed to back down or that they no longer would have his protection. They refused; over two days the army raided the campus and arrested protesting groups. Although many were released on bail, dozens of students were refused re-admission to the university. Some had to move to other places to complete their degrees. In the words of one of the participants,

I thought maybe the idea was to finish with all of us. Of course I was very bitter. Here I was, a student getting ready to graduate in three months and they threw me out. ... Many of us were lost. We didn’t know what to do, where to go, how to complete our education ... it is incredible how isolated you can become, how lonely, how defenseless you can feel and it hits you. It was a terrible feeling.

These feelings of being lost lingered, along with the jubilation with which they had started acting on their beliefs. Another former student leader described the strength of their feelings and aspirations for justice in the following words: 'Then we were revolutionaries. ... We believed in armed struggle... We thought that through revolutionary ardor and struggle, we'd get a catharsis'. They were empowered by their anger and became political subjects by articulating their defiance against what they perceived as injustice (Hsu 2008, p. 248). However, the same informant continued: 'we were idealists and we were wrong ... We wanted to change the world then. Now our ambitions are far more mediocre and reasonable. We don't want the world to change us.' The previous quote and this conclusion reflect the sense of defenselessness one may experience as stakes become higher. This vulnerability would eventually translate into disputable and uncivil connotations for the political sphere.

These remembrances also speak to the way in which the civil war impacted the country. About one year after the second strike, the civil war began, ravaging Lebanon for the following 15 years. One informant, in laughs, repeated a conversation with a visiting friend, who observed that people in Lebanon looked tired and stressed:

I said, yes, of course. ... If you take a northern European, at your age and ask him what happened in his life, he will tell you 'I was an alcoholic, then I got treated, and then went back to becoming an alcoholic; I was married and my wife divorced me ...' and that's it. I'll tell you, at my age, I saw the ... the '56 war; the '58 war, '67 war, the '73 war, and then the civil war from '75 until 1990 ... it can hardly not show. You know the Chinese say, may God make you live in interesting times. I am fed up with interesting times.

In this devastation, the emerging lesson was the general ‘civility’ to which one had to adhere in political engagement. But in general this lesson was not put to practice; there were too many vested interests, ideological clashes, and potential for violence. Several former student leaders who explained how it was almost natural for them to be political in those decades said that today they stayed away from active politics:

I am not interested in ... what you can call the small alleys of politics.

Of course, I am interested in major events but not in the political ...

like minister of this said this against that; for me, this has never had an impact on the way I think.

This coupling of politicization with a growing distance from civility, which reached its extremes in violence, points to several demarcations. There is the blurred line drawn around ‘the political’. In fact, asserting one’s position outside this realm almost constituted a stance of being anti-political because of the connotations of the former. Another is between those who have the capacity for responsibility, rationality, and tolerance in dealing with political matters and those who lack it. Everyone was apprehensive of the potential for violence outside, creating suspicions about whatever was denoted as ‘political’. The absence of violence was one of the major aspects that made these campuses as well as the people there unusual. The disruptions to this pattern only emphasized the usual civility that the actors were expected to have internalized. They were to be capable of deliberation, but because this was seen neither in the rest of their societies, nor in the political actors, they stayed away from ‘the small alleys of politics’. Thus, the two demarcations overlapped. Being able to recognize what was wrong with everyday politics and assuming a position outside of it became part of one’s civility.

The Politics of the Civilized

Among my informants in Istanbul, similar meanings of politicization and civil behavior emerged. Their stories added another layer to the differentiation between the ‘political’ and the ‘civilized’. In their remembrances, particular definitions for the rational prioritization of issues came up. Avoiding violence necessitated recognizing limits as to what could be demanded and how. This section draws on the memories of the former student leaders of RC/BU to develop further the ways in which the meanings of ‘proper’ activism and ‘civilized’ citizenship became established.

During the 1950s, demands for a strengthening of the agricultural and trading bourgeoisie, the disillusionments with the state-led economy, together with the increased American aid to Turkey had accelerated transition to a market-oriented economy (Keyder 1987). However, after an initial period of economic boom, by the end of the decade, the GDP growth had run out of steam. In response to spreading unrest, the government had begun resorting to authoritarianism. The birth pangs of a student mobilization on university and college campuses preceded and coincided with this period. In fact, one of the famous walkouts from Istanbul University in April 1960, followed by protests and clashes in Istanbul and Ankara, became a turning point in the days leading up to the military coup of May 1960.

Throughout the 1960s, urban student mobilization also gained pace. Like their counterparts in Lebanon, Turkish students protested US regional policies. They also watched the events in Paris, Berkeley, and Berlin. Cuba, Vietnam, and Palestine captured the revolutionary imagination (Kürkçü 1998). The university students and professors saw themselves as vital, *vanguard* political actors because they had played a significant role in the events that triggered the 1960 coup. These convictions tallied with early republican ideas of revolution from above (Zürcher 1998, p. 267 – 268).

In this period, the RC student union had also become a member of a national student federation. Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, an increasing number of students on campus identified with anti-imperialist movements. There was also a visible presence of Maoists. Student groups kept calling for strikes, and a national leftist group called the Revolutionary Youth staged protests in and around the campus. Students occasionally ventured outside. There was one killing outside the campus with which a few RC students were associated (Freely 1996, p. 44 – 48). In early 1968, several students partook in anti-American demonstrations in the city, when tensions about the Cyprus issue were rekindled. A number of RC students participated in the demonstrations, protesting the arrival of the US Sixth Fleet in Istanbul (Freely 2000, p. 164 – 166). Despite such instances, in their narratives people emphasized the absence of violence on campus. They contrasted the relative peace among them with the escalating clashes between right-wing nationalists and leftists elsewhere. According to them, people with opposing ideological convictions could sustain a dialogue instead of planning each other's demise. The following excerpt describes such an incident during these days:

One day we are in a demonstration: The communists are shouting, 'the name of this university will be Mustafa Kemal' and the social democrats are refusing, 'no, it will be Atatürk'. We got pretty close to each other! (laughs).⁹ Ok, this is serious: a friend ... accidentally hit another while he was raising his hand. The demonstration is going on, but this guy stops and goes to the other side, 'I am really sorry, you know that I did not mean to hurt you, don't you?' And the other is sulking! 'I cannot take this! Go away!' You know, he is acting spoiled: I mean he was really hurt! We're talking about a time when hundreds

of people are killed. Imagine the absurdity of this dialogue in that context. ...

This was the period we lived in: you could not cross the same street or stay in the same dorms with opposing factions. When a leftist greeted a rightist he knew from his village, his own friends would beat him to death. These were tough times. On the other hand, we were always able to stay friends throughout. ... In fact we were as if in nine-to-six jobs! ... We were communists until six, and after six, we would go out drinking altogether. This was our communism. But I am telling you this as a very positive thing.

This story was used as an example to show how people participating in these demonstrations knew civilized behavior, far from what was happening outside the campus. It also elicited laughter. The portrayal of an altercation between those who wanted to name the university Mustafa Kemal versus those who preferred Atatürk was endearing because it captured the innocence of their demands, which were essentially the same. Another informant emphasized the youthfulness and what she called the typical student tendency to cut classes as significant factors in their mobilization. They were the same, even when they positioned themselves on opposite sides contesting over a non-issue.

What makes this portrayal even more interesting is that it also paved the way for coalescing non-violent political action and ‘non-issues’. Several of my informants emphasized the distinction of their socialization that taught them to be practical and target-oriented, rather than ideological. Explaining the existence of the small number of reports of events involving students from RC in the media during the 1960s (Feyizoğlu 1993), a former student union president described the following scene:

Our student union represented three different institutions, so in terms of numbers, we had power. One day, I said to my friends that we should go to the meeting of the federation. ... The meeting was in a coffee shop in Beyazıt: many had never been in Beyazıt,¹⁰ more had never been in a coffee shop before. The others saw that our voting power was a lot so they began to filibuster. Hours passed and my friends were sitting in utter amazement, as if they were in outer space or something. Eventually, they said to me: 'Listen man, we are leaving.' I lasted for another hour ... We heard later that all decisions were made after us.

He went on to interpret this anecdote in terms of the characteristics and experiences of his friends: they had other social activities and were serious about their studies because it was more realistic to plan for fulfilling careers. They were flabbergasted by the waste of time. Instead of what seemed to them as convoluted debates going on for endless hours and producing nothing tangible, the RC students went back to their scholarly and extracurricular activities. One NGO president remembered how she had been assigned to a dorm room where all other residents were communist activists. They had initially tried to recruit her, but after seeing her disinterest they left her alone. After her graduation, her career took off, but she could not remember what happened to any of her roommates. The lesson was that, while politicized students could not receive their degrees, those students, who were more practical-oriented, graduated on time and went on to have successful careers. Thus, everyday politics was not only associated with violence, but in their descriptions seemed to stand in the way of individual aspirations, collective co-existence, and practical results.

Even as the students acted, they situated the meanings of these actions in contrast to the violence outside. One former student leader proudly remembered how they organized a week of cultural events, well attended by students from other universities, despite ongoing boycotts on all campuses across the country:

And the university administration allowed this. ... In that day and age, they could have easily prohibited it. That is how things happen in many universities today. Ours was an intelligent administration, giving us responsibility, pushing us to engage with matters not through physical force, but through our intellect.

According to the informant, this responsabilization (Burchell 1996) had taught them to avoid extremism and focus on attainable goals instead. Another interviewee, when explaining how he had become a communist in the early 1970s, said that the RC library was one of the few places where one could access Marxist literature. These anecdotes emphasize a distinction in their socialization: they had access to intellectual sources banned elsewhere, thereby developing the capacity to formulate educated opinions. For them, the trust that the university administration put in them allowed them to develop a distinct cultural capital, contributing to ‘reasonable’ and ‘practical’ acts of citizenship. These stories reveal two interrelated aspects of criticizing everyday politics. First, as in the AUB case, the ability to recognize and stay clear of pettiness, violence, and irrationality is core to emerging meanings of civility and the interviewees’ self attributed distinctions. Second, the choice to focus on other, more specific, target oriented actions — such as academic studies as well as extracurricular activities — has produced more possibilities for upward mobility in time, producing the class and status differences, explained in cultural terms.

One of the students' major practical goal, as in the case of AUB, was to influence the future of their college. Similar to the AUB-USAID relations, the aid from the US government to RC had totaled USD 18,000,000 between 1964 and 1970. This meant that the USAID had underwritten half of the operating budget (Freely 2000, p. 164). However, in the late 1960s, AID officials increasingly warned that these funds were going to phase out (Kuran 2002, p. 24). In the meantime, new legislation concerning private schools was passed in the Turkish national assembly in 1965, making it virtually impossible for private institutions of higher education to sustain themselves (Kuran 2002, p. 4, 25). The board of trustees and administrators began discussing a range of solutions. Among them was merging the women's and men's high schools in the original campus and transferring the campus used for the women's high school to the Turkish Ministry of Education, to be refashioned as a public university (Freely 2000, p. 165 – 172).

The students had contesting demands regarding a possible new organization of the college, where it should be located, how students should participate in administrative decision-making, and so on. Initial boycotts were related to the board's decision concerning the campus location. At this time, there were also student marches in Istanbul and Ankara outside the campus. All of these were assertive and exuberant declarations of claims to participate in decisions that would affect their lives. Even so, both the administrators at the time and the student participants described their innocence in these demonstrations. They asserted that more radical student groups from other universities, who co-opted the demonstrations and were responsible for clashes, easily outnumbered them (Freely 2000, p. 182 – 183). These protests were deemed innocent, because they were about a very specific issue which did not have much potential for overflowing into larger questions. Thus, as in the

previous case, these enthusiastic breaks with existing orders had simultaneous tendencies of habituation (White 2008), reinstating ethically informed acts in terms of their adherence to responsibility.

Nevertheless, there was a palpable tension underlying the equation of goal-oriented activism concerning not-so-controversial issues with discourses of responsible citizenship. One person who had identified with the social-democrat students on campus said that there wasn't much that they could protest:

Yes, we protested many things. But then we were always on this side: we didn't need to make money; we didn't have problems of unemployment ... It was nice to vent in those events. Countering everything is fine, but then these were the protests of young people who did not have much real responsibility on their shoulders.

Even though there were a good number of scholarship students, many came from wealthy families able to afford this education. Moreover, the range of facilities and options that RC could offer its students was far larger than at other universities. One activist who had participated in the organization of these street protests remembered how humbled they felt every time they encountered students from other universities. They even envied them the extent of the latter's integration with society, in contrast with the exclusivity of their experience at RC. These emotionally charged encounters with the other broke down indifferences (İşin 2008, p. 34). The students asked uncomfortable questions about justice. Yet, this discomfort could also recede into the background after these moments of eruption. The same informant continued: 'Now, looking back, I don't envy them a bit. We were already steps ahead of them. We were not aware of this but we already had the capacity to lead them, instead of the other way around'.

In those moments when students acted on their desire to correct what they saw as problematic about their university, they created a break with the ordinary ways of being a student. In these moments, there was also another kind of rupture: one that made them face their privileges in comparison to the majority of students in the country. Yet, over time the opening that this encounter created overlapped with discourses of cultural distinction. Bourdieu's analysis provides ways to understand the connections between power inequalities and the production of seemingly disinterested principles, in this case about responsible citizenship practice. In this sense, the self-acclaimed merits of their activism stemmed partly from their class positions, because there was not much they could demand to begin with. However, narratives about the acts came to emphasize the uniqueness of their citizenship practices and produced their social distinction in these in cultural terms.

According to these narratives, access to a variety of intellectual traditions bestowed on these actors not only more choices, but also the capacity for meaningful, educated decision-making. Accordingly, their socialization emphasized a responsible exercise of their freedoms. One component of this responsibility was continuous dialogue and an avoidance of violence. Violence was likely to occur when issues became politicized. This discourse ended up demarcating political contestations, on the one hand, and more restricted activities, on the other. The latter set became part of characteristics of civility. Ultimately, and without necessarily aiming to do that, these formulations constrained both the actors who could be considered as having these characteristics and the issues that could be opened to contestation. The acts were creative breaks with existing routines on campus and its relation to the outside; however, when their narrations overlapped with existing discourses about violence, politics, and social distinction, the moments of rupture stabilized.

Conclusion

Focusing on lived experiences of acts of citizenship, with their incense against injustices in the existing social orders and exuberant hopes for other ways of being, allows us to theorize how actors become citizens in new ways (Işın and Nielsen 2008). Here, I have attempted to lay out the multiple meanings a specific set of acts that variants of an elite-network-to-be generated. During the eruptive conflicts on and around the AUB and RC campuses, these groups enacted two ways of being that had not been there before. First, they utilized their erudition of rationality and participatory engagement in order to question what they perceived as irrational and unjust in the decisions of the administrations and their links with the state. They demanded answerability, which had not been there before. Secondly, encounters with others unlike them created humility and the desire for engaged citizenships, more in tune with the rest of society. At the same time as these openings took place, there were habits of citizenship that continued to play a part. These closed the range of ‘acceptable’ behavior and reinstated cultural distinctions between those on and off campus, based on dichotomies such as ‘politicized’ versus ‘civilized’, dialogical versus violent, rational versus irrational.

The tense relationship between the acts and these discourses had a temporal component as well. This paper has also focused on the ways in which specific actors generated ideas and discourses for today, based on remembrances of the past. On the one hand, we can think of the act of remembering their university activism as part of nostalgia for the days of youth. On the other hand, memory connects and transcends the past and the present. The meanings of nostalgia emerge not only as a claim to and yearning for a lived past, but also as discourses of identity. As my informants narrated their memories, they also articulated their identities and framed their contemporary

self-distinctions. In this process, episodes of campus upheaval became proof of the ways in which they situated themselves within their societies. These were by and large elite networks. The ways in which they demarcated between political and apolitical, politicized and civilized characteristics also ended up providing cultural explanations for their current nodes of authority. While speaking about one's youth may not necessarily entail a deliberate attempt to provide a rationale for current social roles, it does become attached to relevant logics and makes all sound more commonsensical in the process.

According to these stories, collective issues and decision-making, when civilized, could involve productive deliberations and rational solutions while guaranteeing personal safety. In essence, my informants in their narratives expressed a genuine desire for liberal cultures and practices of citizenship of the West. Truly, whatever exclusions such practices generated, they were preferable to fear of violence and state repression. A former activist would lean forward and speak in a lower voice every time he wanted to say something that he considered polemical. A businesswoman who first began talking about her campus activism, without being prompted, later became upset with me for bringing up the topic. Some asked to remain anonymous or asked me to turn off the recorder at points. The same discourses that asserted rationality and civility on their part ironically produced a 'neurotic citizen' (İşin 2004), afraid of the backlash of the 'uncivil' and the 'irrational'. Politics, accordingly, was messy; political mobilizations inevitably ended up producing violence from the out-of-control masses. At the same time, the army or the police were very likely to repress any mobilization threatening to the political order. My informants situated themselves as distinct from these violent encounters, and when they became involved, their defeat signaled how they were incapable of matching this

irrationality. Former exuberance disappeared, substituted by a sense of distance and social distinction.

For many, this did not necessarily mean defeat or retreat from the public scene. Many of the former student leaders held powerful positions in business networks; worked in influential non-governmental organizations and institutions of international governance; or served as consultants to the government. Nevertheless, they considered themselves outside everyday politics. As I write this, I keep thinking about the many occasions on which my informants drew out their *private* fights against what they saw as corruption, incompetence, petty irrationalities, and the like. They frequently offered their technocratic expertise for public but defined it as non-political. Being anti-political, in fact, had the effect of legitimizing their authority (Altan 2006). The answer to the question that one informant asked me – “do you need to become a politician to save the country?” – had already been provided. For them, contrast between their desire for civility, rationality and the capability for self-governing, and how everyday politics transpired persisted.

There is yet another effect of the emphasis on this contrast. On the one hand, models of duty-oriented citizenship and patronage relations persist; on the other hand, these articulations signal desires for other ways of being. The latter end up making possible moral assumptions about who is capable of self-governing and who is not. In effect these discourses articulate self-distinctions and social orders in which those self-distinctions make sense. They contribute to the construction of characteristics such as responsibility and rationality as an integral part of ‘desirable’ citizenship, differentiating populations on the basis of their capabilities in these terms (Ong 2006, p. 75 – 118). These discourses of desirable citizenship create hierarchies that overlap with existing status and class inequalities. My goal has been to elaborate on such

discourses to suggest that seemingly unrelated everyday narratives, even those about past political mobilization, can seep into normalizing inequalities based on such binaries.

Finally, whatever was transpiring on these American campuses in two Middle Eastern countries allows us to complicate an imaginary disjuncture between ‘the West’ and ‘the non-West’. We can also see how the social actors in this region reflected Western knowledge productions about political action, responsibility, and citizenship. Furthermore, paying attention to the local nature of these processes points out the messiness of these acts and discourses. These narratives combine themselves with other existing logics and cultural tools in local contexts and produce social stratifications. This analysis pushes us to consider these networks and their stories as representative of diffuse cultural discourses within various kinds of power relations, which undercut geographical dichotomies. It allows us to link acts and discourses of citizenship in ways that simultaneously question and affirm existing social orders in multiple locations.

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Notes

¹ Fieldwork in Beirut and Istanbul was conducted over 11 months in 2003 and 2004. Of the entire pool of interviewees, 51 fell into this category; the rest were with current students and professors. This number included 20 women and 31 men. Especially members of the older generation had changed sectors several times, or were active in several fields. Counting only their current primary occupations, 19% worked in NGOs; 12% in international organizations; 15% in multinational companies, 11% in local companies; 9% in the public sector; and 21% owned their companies. (Percentages add up to more than 100% because some were involved in more than one position). I identified 11 as occupying mid-level positions and 40 as occupying high-level positions.

² *Outlook* 1971a, cover page.

³ Open letter by the president of the university Samuel Kirkwood, 26 July 1971.

⁴ See the letter in a publication entitled *Lookout*, 11 October 1971.

⁵ *Outlook* 1971b, p. 5.

⁶ *Outlook* 1972, p. 4–5, *Outlook* 1973, cover page.

⁷ For USAID funding in the university budget, see Khalaf (1977). *The Economics of the American University of Beirut: A Study of a Private University in the Developing World* (Beirut: The American University of Beirut Press, 1977), p. 37–47 and 90–91.

⁸ See *Outlook*, 14 December 1971, cover page, p. 2; *Outlook*, 21 March 21, p. 3

⁹ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is one person.

¹⁰ Istanbul University, where most of student action took place, is located in Beyazıt.