Faces of Citizenship: A social representational inquiry to understand how citizenship as social imagery is described in Turkey

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Reflecting on the legal relationship between the individual and the nation-state, citizenship has long been considered a framework consisting of rights and obligations. However, in the last two decades, it has become intertwined with individuals' meaning-making processes of their social world as well as with the dynamics of constructing group boundaries and (re)producing the hierarchies between groups. In this paper, we will present how the lay representations of citizenship prevailed on social media through publicly sharing visuals after the issuance of an amendment for a regulation stating the new conditions for granting Turkish citizenship to foreigners. After thematically analyzing the tweets containing visuals with hashtags related to citizenship, which were sent within the six months following the amendment, we extracted two main themes of citizenship in Turkey as "legal boundaries" and "sentimental citizenship". The study enabled us to show how visuals are used to communicate the social and political aspects of citizenship that are represented around objective and subjective meanings while also indicating how the lay meanings of citizenship are utilized to reproduce the inequalities.
Keywords: citizenship, social representations, thematic analysis, visual analysis, social media

INTRODUCTION

As a reciprocal bond across political institutions and individuals within the confines of a country, citizenship has received much interest in nearly all the social sciences, except psychology until a few decades ago (Condor, 2011; Condor & Gibson, 2007; Kadianaki & Andreouli, 2017; Shotter, 1993). In its 'infancy' in social psychology (Stevenson et al., 2015), citizenship has not been studied much from a social and group-based perspective. It has been generally seen as a legal status. Still, how individuals understand and give meaning to citizenship within their daily experiences is as essential as its normative and legal framework. One of the main drawbacks of the broad and interdisciplinary citizenship literature is that it generally overlooks the importance of what 'citizenship' is to typical citizens and what the 'banal' representations of citizenship and nationhood are to them (Billig et al., 1988). It is difficult to detach citizenship from its overarching ideological, nationalist framework, but a social-psychological perspective that considers its daily uses and meanings from collectively shared symbols would be enriching. Moscovici (1984) explains that objectifying is the act of recognizing the visual or iconic aspect of a vague concept or entity, transforming an idea into a tangible image.

Additionally, as a result of emotional objectification, certain media visuals can evolve into symbols representing broader, more abstract issues, like citizenship in the present context. There has been a growing emphasis on the significance of visual content and communication in shaping the formation of social representations (Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2016; Martikainen, 2020). For example, Martikainen and Sakki (2021) investigated newspaper images associated with the social representations of the COVID-19 pandemic within the context of Finland, where they revealed specific roles for individuals in four distinct age categories: children, youth, adults, and the elderly. The images seemed to create a separation between adults and the remaining age groups, emphasizing disparities in how they were conveyed and disseminated.

Turkey has been receiving vast numbers of refugees, mainly from Syria, since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, and citizenship has been one of the hot topics publicly debated regarding the integration of refugees. Following the recent changes in laws and regulations on citizenship, these debates have become more heated. In the present study, we follow a social representational approach through visuals that can help with understanding the perceptions of Turkish citizens regarding the concept of citizenship. To this aim, we first provide a conceptual framework to understand the content of citizenship as a legal and meaningful category. This

framework is vital to understanding how individuals make sense of citizenship and its resultant behaviors, attitudes, ideas, and feelings about their citizenship status. We will then present a brief historical context about the emergence and development of citizenship in Turkey. In this study, to understand how citizenship as social representation is disseminated as a lay definition, we focus on visual images shared on social media following a political agenda on the changing conditions of granting Turkish citizenship to non-nationals. We will present our study in detail after historical and political accounts of Turkish citizenship.

Citizenship as a Multidisciplinary Construct

The classical sociological approach developed by Marshall (1950) defines citizenship as "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal concerning rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (p. 28-29). Here, citizenship is seen as an attempt to overcome the class-based inequalities in societies. This approach is criticized for ignoring social inequalities and social struggles, treatments, and daily experiences of citizens (Christensen et al., 2014) and for deducing his claims only from British society (de la Paz, 2012; Turner, 1990). Eventually, Turner (1993) reconceived Marshall's theory and redefined citizenship as a concept that consists of specific legal, economic, and cultural practices that relate more to the effective participation of the people in their social lives, which, in turn, contributed to the increased interpersonal and intergroup dynamics like contact. de la Paz (2012) claims that Turner's definition allows us to consider the differences between individuals and groups regarding citizenship understanding, which leads citizens to feel a sense of belonging. Depending on the daily experiences or interactions, individuals and groups may perceive citizenship from different angles, which is sometimes manifested through inclusion and exclusion.

Still, despite the enhancing conceptual contributions to citizenship by diverse disciplines, psychologists' limited interest in citizenship studies has been remarkable. Condor (2011) empirically demonstrated this limited interest through a systematic review and found only 35 published articles in psychology journals between 2001 and 2011 directly related to citizenship from a social psychological perspective. Yet, recent years witnessed a growing interest in social psychology focusing on citizenship (Andreouli et al., 2016; Kadianaki & Andreouli, 2017). Hence, considering what has generally been done so far, studying citizenship from a state-centric or legal perspective comes short of understanding citizens' daily views and

experiences (Andreouli et al., 2016).

In this light, the present paper examines citizenship as a socially constructed and negotiated concept reflecting citizens' ideology and daily discourse rather than a given status. Considering it beyond its legal and macro-political frameworks as a category with its boundaries and its use as an inclusion-exclusion apparatus, citizenship is best understood through shared symbols and collective meanings. Therefore, we aim to explore whether lay people living in Turkey have common representations of Turkish citizenship. Here, we will present a framework where we take citizenship as a social representation and scrutinize its symbolic content through visuals.

Social Representations and Citizenship: The everyday aspects of national membership

Understanding citizenship from a social and political psychological perspective involves looking at how people perceive it, not just as a legal status but as a collectively constructed category. This approach allows the use of the social representations theory to grasp how citizenship is collectively viewed as a symbolic concept and how it reifies in daily communication, demonstrating the meanings attached to it that are collectively shared. Social representations are built with communication that points to shared historical and notable sights between people in a symbolic exchange (Doise & Staerkle, 2002).

Adopting a political psychological perspective, we can describe citizenship as a legal framework of the bond between individuals and the political system in their countries as a practical execution of a national identity flagged into people's daily lives (Turner, 2001; Uyan-Semerci et al., 2017). Beyond its political, historical, and legal definitions, individuals have their subjective conceptualizations of what citizenship means and who should have it. As a result, citizenship is fundamentally a collective symbolic concept that allows people to give meaning and position themselves within their national political systems. Therefore, both the individual and collective perspectives on citizenship can be examined and comprehended through the lens of social representations. This framework not only helps uncover the shared meanings related to social identities and boundary-setting but also considers the historical and political context in which these interpretations are situated. It avoids solely focusing on prevailing interpretations, emphasizing a more holistic understanding. In a broader sense, the normative framework of citizenship is primarily produced in societies with relatively stable structures and democratic regimes (Haste, 2004), and it was initially formulated as a statement of equality that might cure the structural inequalities immanent in modern social and political

systems. Yet, the collective symbolic content of citizenship, which often functions as a boundary-maker between different groups, might instead evoke and encourage inequalities both in stable and changing societies with vulnerable democratic regimes. That is why Turkey, as a country experiencing a serious backslide in democracy within the current decade, can be a convenient context to understand how the symbolic content of citizenship functions as a boundary maker between different social groups.

Individuals are psychologically bonded with citizenship as a normative category involving social, political, and historical accounts. While citizenship and national identity are sometimes used interchangeably in legal contexts (Billig, 1995; Haste, 2004), some researchers have argued for the independence of these constructs (Abell et al., 2006; Hussain & Bagguley, 2005). For example, Hussain and Bagguley (2005) show how British Muslim individuals struggle with adopting their English identity and how discrimination occurs in various aspects of Britain, primarily due to factors like race and ethnicity. The bond between individuals and citizens, therefore, is most likely to be influenced by both the citizenship practices in legal terms and by the meanings assigned to citizenship as a social and political psychological process.

So far in social psychology, the concept of citizenship has been studied by generally relying upon Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, Brewer (2009) argues that citizenship as legal status can be understood in relation to individuals' social identities, especially in ethnically pluralistic societies. In their study, using the implicit association technique, McNamara et al. (2011) examined the relationship between individuals' identification with their residing place and their understanding of citizenship. Looking from a more collective identity-focused point of view, Hopkins, Reicher, and Kahani-Hopkins (2003) highlight the importance of examining the mobilization of group identities to appeal to and protect their citizenship. However, SIT is primarily interested in the outcomes of individuals' categorizations to certain groups, but why individuals want to see themselves in these categories or which meanings are shared within the content of these categories remains unexplored, which can be explained with the help of social representations (Duveen, 2001).

de Rosa and Farr (2001) argue that the value of visual materials in social representational research lies in their ability to initiate (anchoring), convey (objectification), and disseminate (naturalization) social representations. Images' tangible nature and capacity to stir emotions render them influential tools for communication and making sense of things (Blair, 2004). In this study, with an overarching aim of understanding the conveying and disseminating nature of Turkish citizenship, we tracked the representational content of citizenship as shared collectively in the social networks by using the visual images attached to the tweets as the data.

Keeping the importance of the internet and social networks as the carriers of the representations about the world (Moreira et al., 2023) in mind, we approached social media networks as spaces of political communication in which the shared meanings of legal normative categories such as citizenship are disseminated. The content regarding Turkish citizenship shared on social media will likely convey the simplified and everyday understandings of citizenship. The visual elements accompanying these posts contribute to a richer exploration of circulating meanings associated with citizenship. Here, moving from the premise that visual images are used as tools in public debates through reproduction or censorship (Awad, 2020) about social and political issues, we traced how these visuals, attached to the political communication of citizenship on social media, are circulated to (re)produce certain narratives of citizenship.

Citizenship and Belonging in Turkey: A Relationship Beyond Civic-Ethnic Dichotomy

Although citizenship has been publicly rediscussed from the beginning of the 1990s, particularly centralized along social, civic, and political rights and active participation of the society (especially the young people), this content is occasionally overshadowed by historical and sentimental narratives, produced and reproduced by the nation-states (Yeğen, 2004). Considering that nation-states are the deciding bodies for defining the boundaries of belonging and loyalty (Kadıoğlu, 2005), citizenship, as the execution of the national identity, naturally involves a national sentiment. Yet, these national identity narratives are settled in the very definition of citizenship, which modifies the rights-obligations aspects by building essentialized belonging discourses, like Turkish citizenship.

Modern citizenship in Turkey, as a legal membership to a nation-state, begins with the foundation of the Republic. Kadıoğlu (2005) defines Turkish citizenship as a state-constructed, top-down entity that is conceived as a category that includes the duties -to serve the aims of the Republic- rather than the rights or freedoms that would be a function of equality. She argues that although different ideological fractions may have differentiating practices regarding citizenship, "Turkish men and women first and foremost perceive themselves as Turkish citizens who are responsible for performing certain duties" (Kadıoğlu, 2005, p. 106). Yet, taking citizenship as a legal bond between the state and the individual describing the rights or the duties is insufficient to understand its scope as a lay experience of individuals or as a narrated social category constructed within the individual-state relations. Citizenship also taps into a process of political and social recognition (Isin & Turner, 2002), apart from being a subjective sense of belonging and a series of daily practices. For Turkey, the social and political

recognition of thousands of minorities living in the country had been a profoundly problematic process due to forcibly constructing ethnic Turkishness as the common in-group identity and also as a marker of citizenship[1].

The Turkish national identity narrative is constantly being reshaped by a dual process of securitization, which involves framing certain issues as ongoing threats to in-group cohesion and the glorification of ethnic Turkishness. This dynamic reconstruction has lasting implications for citizenship within the country. Therefore, both the civic content, mainly defined by duties and obligations, and the ethnic content, which relies on an essentialist hierarchization, demonstrate a citizenship concept strongly tied to national identity narratives. This construct proves to be highly exclusionary in nature (Goalwin, 2017). Accordingly, we expect that citizenship as a social representation in Turkey will be built on these two dimensions and will function as a boundary-maker between those who are eligible and those who do not qualify for granting citizenship based on civic and ethnic content.

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

This paper will theoretically and empirically demonstrate the prevailing social representations of citizenship in Turkey as a tool to reproduce structural inequalities. To this end, we first have described the historical accounts of the citizenship phenomenon in Turkey above, to trace how it was legally developed and utilized to create a homogeneous society with a cohesive national identity narrative. This will enable us to picture how the normative framework of citizenship, which emerged to alleviate the inequalities, was contextually adopted from an exclusionary perspective. Then, in an attempt to see how this legally constructed citizenship is received, reconstructed, and shared by the members of society, we will present a social media study focused on the public discourses about citizenship which ascended just after the issuance of a regulation declared by the presidency regulating new conditions for the acquirement of Turkish citizenship by foreigners, in the first months of 2022 (Official Gazette, 2022). According to this regulation, the previous law titled the *regulation on the implementation of the law on Turkish*

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[1] Before the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, the conflict between the Allied Forces of World War I and the Ottoman State (then represented by the Turkish National Movement, institutionalized as the Turkish National Assembly) was ended with the Lausanne Treaty, signed in July 24th, 1923. The Treaty is essential for determining the legal state of the minorities. Hereof, despite all have citizenship; non-Muslim communities were recognized as minorities while others like Kurds were not. Yet, Turkishness as a top-down constructed common identity entailed both the recognized, non-recognized or misrecognized minorities to be 'less acceptable citizens' who do not enjoy the same rights but still have the duties (see Üstel, 2004; Saracoğlu, 2009; Ünlü, 2016; Yeğen, 2004 for further discussions in terms of the inequalities within the citizenship).

citizenship will be amended, and foreigners that fulfill certain conditions can be granted Turkish citizenship, such as:

- *Those whom the Ministry of Industry and Technology legally confirms to have made a fixed capital investment of at least 500000 USD or equivalent foreign currency,*
- *Those who purchase real estate valued at a minimum of 250000 USD, with the condition of not to sell for at least three years,*
- *Those the Ministry of Labor and Social Security confirmed to have employed at least 50 people.*

The period following the publication of this regulation is characterized by hot public debates about the shared meanings of citizenship with its normative (how citizenship is framed legally) and experiential (how citizenship is subjectively understood and practiced by the individual agents) contents. The above regulation declaration quickly became widespread on Twitter under the hashtag *#TürkVatandaşlığı* (Turkish Citizenship), and it remained among the trending topics for almost three months (March 2022-June 2022). Twitter has been found to be quite influential in terms of forming and influencing laypeople's naive theories about ongoing political phenomena (e.g., de Rosa et al., 2021), primarily through short-term effects like breaking news or setting the political agenda (Su & Borah, 2019). For this paper, we will qualitatively explore and analyze the content of the tweets that contain the *#TürkVatandaşlığı* hashtag, have visuals, and are in Turkish[2]. Adopting an inductive approach, we performed a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) of the visual images, meeting these inclusion criteria along with the textual content, by which this paper can provide insight into how Turkish citizenship is described, how its boundaries are socially constructed, how the legal normative dimension is interpreted, and the lay people in Turkey communicate the everyday experiences.

We expect the study will provide knowledge on different levels. From a macro-political perspective, we can demonstrate how citizenship functions to enable a common in-group identity that promotes (in)equality. On the other hand, the group perspective will empirically indicate how it is socially constructed as a boundary-maker and what the contents of the shared meanings of citizenship are.

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[2] It is also important to note that our data was basically determined by availability (Braun & Clarke, 2021), therefore, it is limited by the number that was possible to reach as a result of the code we used to extract the tweets. Here, we first started the search in three hashtags as *#turkvatandasligi* (Turkish citizenship), *#vatandaslik* (citizenship), and *#Türk*, but we eventually limited our analyses to *#turkvatandasligi* to be parsimonous in terms of the coherence between our research questions and methodology through centralizing our focus on the visuals targeting the political agenda created with the publication of regulation.

Data and the Analytical Strategy

We obtained the tweets through Twitter's application programming interfaces (APIs), using the library 'Snscrape' for Python with the *TwitterSearchScraper* function. We then searched for tweets that include "Türk vatandaşlığı" (Turkish citizenship), both with Turkish and English characters and their hashtagged versions, and we excluded user retweets and replies. The first extraction provided 3480 tweets, including the keywords, between 01.01.2022 and 30.06.2022, this time period corresponds to the issuance of the changes in the citizenship regulation and the relevant public debates. We extracted 968 tweets with visuals (including videos and GIFs) through the first screening. After eliminating the tweets with videos (113), GIFs (11), and eight tweets no longer available, 844 tweets met the criteria. Then, after eliminating the irrelevant and duplicated tweets, a total of 793 tweet visuals were counted as suitable for further analysis[3]. Following the data organization, we grouped the same visuals together that are used for more than one tweet, which made our data corpus of 203 visuals, consisting of 51 images, 115 image-macros (containing both image and text; Awad et al., 2022) and 37 texts. Yet, we did not consider different data formats such as image, image-macro, or text during our analyses.

The analytical strategies for visual images indicate a great diversity in political psychology research, and this naturally depends on the theoretical stance that the researchers stand on for answering their questions. For example, Awad et al. (2022) follow a multimodal approach to present how the far-right Danish People's Party communicates the Danish national identity through the use of visual images on social media by creating an us-them distinction, and they apply political visual iconography as an analytical strategy which enables them to show the political and cultural aspects through visual imageries. Focusing on a social representational approach, Hakoköngäs and Sakki (2016) explore how social representations of history have been expressed through visuals in history textbooks in Finland. Their analysis approach draws on Roland Barthes' three meaning levels: denotation, connotation, and myth, and they apply content analysis to the images to identify these meanings. Also, Acar and Sandal-Önal (2022) examined how the military coups and the state of emergency processes, which disrupted democracy in Turkey, shaped the narratives of national identity, by analysing videos, audio, and public images using qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012).

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[3] The consistency between the researchers for the irrelevant data was quite high, and only nine visuals were differently categorized in terms of relevancy. A further discussion provided a consensus.

For this study, our purpose was simply to understand the prevailing meanings of Turkish citizenship communicated, and we limited our focus to a particular time and context. From a political psychological perspective, the lay definitions of citizenship in Turkey are pretty much depending on the peculiar historical and political context of the country; therefore, we need an analytical strategy that can emancipate us from the theories of citizenship when necessary. Therefore, we integrated data science with qualitative methods for the analysis. We employed Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021) instead of content analysis for the visuals, which are mainly socially constructed, and followed the processes they suggested in their original paper (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Accordingly, the processes of identifying the format and organizing the data enabled us to familiarize ourselves with it. Following this, we coded the data based on a system that could give us clues about the meanings in further steps. Because our data mostly comprises image macros (images and texts together), we first classified the codes for each visual image as *image* and *text*. Then, we separately coded images and texts in image macros. Before identifying the themes, our initial coding scheme included the entities in the visuals from the most explicit ones – like the actors – to relatively implicit ones – like the symbols – (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

The Systematic of the Codes
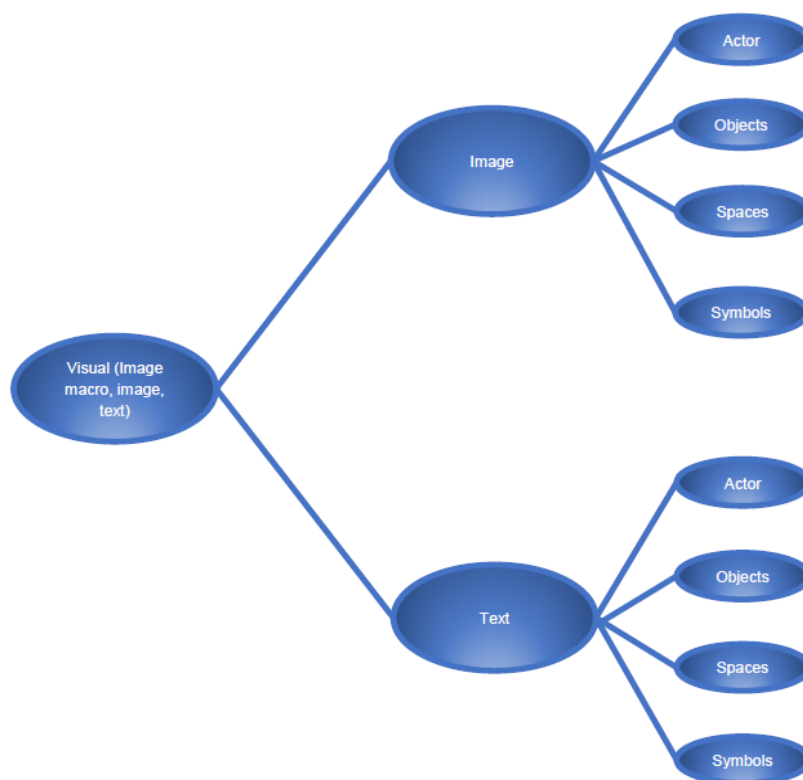
During the coding process, which we performed separately and did not use any software for the analysis, there were very few instances where the visual did not give any clue for the explicit or implicit codes or did not enable us to identify any themes or sub-themes related to citizenship. In these instances, we turned back to the first version of the visual, checked the tweet it was attached to, and tried to continue the coding based on the tweet content. After coding the data, we found out the interrater reliability is satisfactory (>.95). The following section will provide detailed information about the themes and subthemes extracted from visuals through thematic analysis and how these were refined, defined, and exemplified.

## FINDINGS: HOW TURKISH CITIZENSHIP IS DEFINED IN LAY REPRESENTATIONS

The public reactions towards the regulation are primarily mobilized by anti-immigrant and nationalist discourses constructed and disseminated by the political opposition of the current government, while in few visuals, the representatives of the government attempt to defend the regulation and, most of the time, try to refute the claims uttered by the opposition. The visuals with an actor code mostly include the political actors who negatively react to the regulation (such as the leader of the ultranationalist Victory Party, PMs of the main opposition Republican People's Party) or the government officials and the relevant institutions (such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs or the Presidency of Migration Management). From time to time, the actors in the visuals are the people who were newly granted Turkish citizenship, and usually (literally or symbolically), they are figures that carry traditional Arab outfits (such as thawab, abaya, or keffiyeh wearing men or hijab-wearing women). The most visible objects in the visuals were Turkish passports, Turkish ID cards, and items related to real estate, such as apartments, keys, or banknotes. Spaces were fewer compared to the objects, while the most frequently encountered spaces were the Turkish Grand National Assembly or big cities like Istanbul with skyscrapers. The most commonly used symbol, as the final category of coding, was the Turkish flag, followed by the map of Turkey.

The period in which the data was collected indicates a harsh increase in the anti-immigrant discourses in the country. As background information, it is crucial to restate that Turkey currently hosts the most populated refugee communities in the world. According to UNHCR (2021) statistics, in 2020, nearly 3.6 million Syrians were living with temporary protection, with 300,000 asylum seekers from different countries of the Middle East. The

increased flow of migration to Turkey after the outbreak of the civil war in Syria initiated a strong anti-immigrant discourse and an increase in prejudice and discrimination toward Arabs, who are considered to be a source of threat to society (Çoksan, 2020). The visuals, therefore, mostly targeted refugees who were thought to take advantage of the regulation and have Turkish citizenship easily. Restating the regulation involves reminding of the original Turkish citizenship law. The visuals often include images of passports and Turkish ID cards, reflecting the objective and legal representations of citizenship. Following the coding process, in order to generate themes of the lay definitions and meanings of citizenship, we reviewed the coded visuals and assigned them initially to two main themes, indicating how citizenship is represented based on the theoretical background we used: (i) Objective and Legal Representations, (ii) Subjective and Sentimental Representations. The former refers to the legal boundaries of citizenship settled by the constitution and the law, state institutions, and relevant representatives and symbols. The latter involves the subjective meanings of citizenship, constructed and prevailed by the lay people, including the emotional dynamics attached.

Objective representations: Legal Boundaries of Citizenship

The visuals with this theme involve two different perspectives on the legal aspects of citizenship, which constituted the two subthemes of these representations, tapping into a view of the legal boundaries of citizenship that enable granting the rights to non-Turkish people through highlighting that the state has the ultimate power and control over these processes and another view reminding that the legal boundaries of the citizenship should be closed to refugees, yet the government is taking the advantage of granting citizenship. The former subtheme, *state-controlled citizenship,* was available in the objective citizenship representations of the government representatives or officials, mostly communicated to refute the claims on social media about the number of citizenships granted to refugees. The exemplified image below (Image 1) is a text shared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship as a response to a member of parliament from an opposition party who questioned whether the government issued a classified regulation to grant refugees citizenship.
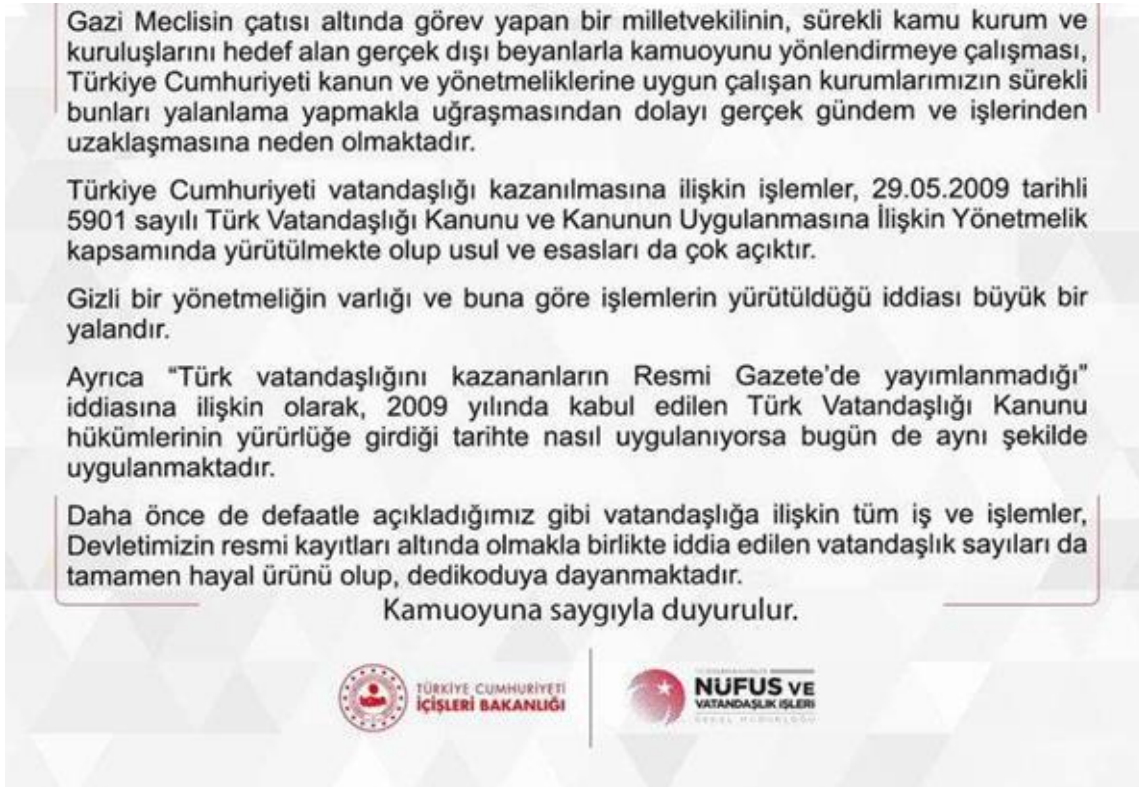
Image 1. State-controlled citizenship (text)[4].

Similarly, the below image (Image 1a) is also shared by a pro-government Twitter account, refuting the claims communicated by Ümit Özdağ, the leader of the ultranationalist Victory Party, who stated the government is issuing a hidden regulation to facilitate the citizenship granting processes of refugees, and more refugees granted citizenship than the number formally declared by the government. The visual involves two main parts: "Lie" (under which the claims of the politician are exposed) and "Fact" (under which the abovementioned Image 1 is shared). Although these visuals are primarily produced by the state institutions or Twitter accounts known for making government propaganda, they were disseminated by lay people, contributing to the collectively shared meanings of citizenship in daily encounters.

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[4] Briefly, "a PM working under the ghazi (veteran) National Assembly misinforms the public with false statements. The procedures of citizenship acquirement are operated through the Law of Turkish Citizenship issued in 2009, and there is no hidden, classified regulation about it. As we numerously stated before, our state controls all the procedures about citizenship, and the number of granted citizenships claimed are all imaginary".

Image 1a.

State-controlled citizenship[5]

The other subtheme communicating legal boundaries of citizenship through objective criteria but communicated by the opposers of the citizenship granted to refugees, namely, *exclusionary citizenship,* includes reminding/citing the laws to emphasize it is not actually 'legal' to give citizenship to refugees. These visuals also involve the images of Turkish passports and Turkish ID cards and the visuals of the relevant laws and regulations. Image 2 depicts an invitation by the ultranationalist Victory Party to the press conference that the party leader will make to declare the real number of refugees that have been granted Turkish citizenship, which is claimed to be higher than the formal numbers displayed by the government. The visual background involves an image of a Turkish passport, symbolizing the objective Turkish citizenship document. In another example (Image 2a), a historical visual is depicted, celebrating the anniversary of the issuance of the Turkish Citizenship Law in 1928. In the visual, one can see

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[5] Briefly: Lie and facts; the statement published by the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship indicates that the processes of citizenship are totally carried out by the state.

the people who were probably government officials back in the 1920s. The content of this visual shares the items of the citizenship law one by one through a thread, and in the first tweet, the "legal" condition of being a citizen is stated:

> *May 23rd, 1928 - The Turkish Citizenship Law was accepted in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Accordingly, lineage or kinship was accepted as the basis for determining citizenship.*
>
> *(...)*
>
> *FIRST ARTICLE – The children of a Turkish father or mother born in Turkey or a foreign country are Turkish citizens.*

The *exclusionary citizenship* subtheme generally takes the legal boundaries of Turkish citizenship as a set to determine who is included and who is excluded from this category. The visuals of passports and ID cards are used to objectify citizenship, while the law texts are restated to emphasize that Turkish citizenship is only for those who are born in the country and who have ancestral bonds here. This subtheme gives no information about the performative indicators of citizenship, such as participation or achievements. Still, it sets an essentialist boundary that rejects the culturally or ancestrally dissimilar ones to be included. As stated by Kadianaki & Andreouli (2017), migration plays a crucial role in the production and dissemination of essentialist representations of citizenship, and, in this case, we can see how essentialism infiltrates the legal framework of citizenship.

Image 2.
Exclusionary Citizenship[6]

Images 2a.
Exclusionary citizenship[7]

BASINA ve HALKIMIZA DAVET

Genel Başkanımız Prof. Dr. Ümit Özdağ,
yarın (22 Haziran 2022 Çarşamba) saat 11.00'de
Nüfus ve Vatandaşlık İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü önünde
yapacağı basın açıklamasıyla,
Türk vatandaşlığı verilen sığınmacıların gerçek sayısını açıklayacaktır.

Basın mensuplarının ve kamuoyunun bilgilerine sunarız.

www.zaferpartisi.org.tr   ZaferPartisi

TARİHTE BUGÜN
23 MAYIS 1928
1-) Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu kabul edildi.
2-) Tekke ve zaviyeler kapatıldı.

Subjective Representations: The Sentimental Citizenship

The second main theme, subjective representations of citizenship, outnumbered the first one, so most of the visuals we coded communicated citizenship as a social construction, usually with an emotional expression attached to it. The visuals displaying citizenship as a subjective construction have more codes, particularly the symbolic ones. Here, depending on the content of the regulation that sets the political agenda, the most prevailing subjective representation we extracted has been the one stating that the historical, moral, and national value of citizenship cannot be converted into a material amount. This representation was anchored to the condition of investment required for granting the citizenship; therefore, we named this subtheme *citizenship for sale.* The following image (Image 3) is the one that we encountered most frequently throughout the dataset. This image depicts a billboard hanging in a market in Kenya, with the visuals of a Turkish passport, Turkish flag, and skyscrapers. The billboard belongs to a company offering to help make investments in Turkey (through purchasing real estate) worth 250000 USD and gaining Turkish citizenship. Here, the reaction to this billboard not only involves the criticism that the government sells Turkish citizenship but also promotes this in a

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[6] Briefly: Invitation to the press and our people: Our leader, Prof Dr. Ümit Özdağ, will hold a press conference to declare the *real number of refugees granted Turkish citizenship*.

[7] (Briefly, the visual celebrates the anniversary of the Turkish Citizenship Law, first issued on May 23rd, 1928).

marketplace (here, the flea market is probably emphasized to downgrade the context) in an African country, which is considered a humiliation for citizenship. As the accompanying emotion to the reaction towards citizenship as a marketable commodity, anger has been quite evident in most tweet texts that used this image.

Image 3.

Citizenship for Sale[8]

In a similar line, the following image macro (Image 3a) depicts the negative reactions in a more detailed manner. This visual is titled "Turkish citizenship is on sale in a Kenya flea market," the text defines Kenya as a country with the highest number of citizens that emigrate. So, the location where the citizenship purchase advertising takes place is an unwanted country by its citizens, and it is even more indignant to exchange Turkish citizenship for money in this context.

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[8] Text: A billboard for the sale of Turkish citizenship for 250000 USD in a flea market in Kenya.

Image 3a.

Citizenship for Sale[9]

In communicating the negative reactions within the *citizenship for sale* subtheme, the symbols and objects do not only include Turkish passports or real estate images. Banknotes accompanying the passports or Turkish ID cards were another notable symbol in the visuals. These images mostly depict US dollars together with the legal objects of citizenship and include sentiments expressing anger, rage, or resentment towards the government for enabling citizenship for sale. An example below indicates a Turkish passport with US dollars and Turkish lira, while the text is comparing the government-determined amount for the value of Turkish citizenship with other countries like Antigua and Barbuda or the Dominican Republic, which are claimed to have the cheapest amount for granting citizenship.

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[9] Text in brief: Turkish Republic citizenship has been advertised in a flea market in the African country Kenya. It was AKP that enabled acquiring Turkish citizenship for 250000 worth of real estate.

Image 3b.

Citizenship for sale[10]

En ucuz vatandaşlık sunan Antigua ve Barbuda'da bir ailenin bu ada ülkesinin pasaportuna sahip olabilmesi için 140 bin dolar ödemesi yeterli. 2'nci ucuz ülke Dominik. Bir kişinin 200 bin doları ülkede oluşturulan fona yatırması ailesi ile birlikte ülke pasaportuna sahip olmaları için yeterli. Üçüncü sırada ise Türkiye var, ülkemizde halen 250 bin dolarlık gayrimenkul alımı ile vatandaşlık sahibi olunabiliyor. Üstelik bu vatandaşlık hakkı tüm aileye tanınıyor.

The visuals predominantly center on subjective representations of citizenship, particularly revolving around the subtheme of *citizenship for sale*. However, within this context, some images convey a depiction of citizenship, emphasizing why it should not be exchangeable for money and highlighting the argument that individuals purchasing Turkish citizenship are not genuinely acceptable citizens. As with the objective representations, this subtheme signals who is eligible to be included and who should be excluded from the boundaries of Turkish citizenship, which are determined by essentialism and inequality. Because this subtheme gives clues about the categorical definition of citizenship, it is named the *symbolic citizenship boundaries*. The content of the visuals in this subtheme is not limited to the ethnic or civic aspects of Turkish citizenship but rather involves why citizenship cannot be an equalizing, common category in Turkey that people from different identities can enjoy. The content within this subtheme, focused on inclusion and exclusion, ignites comparisons between individuals eligible for citizenship and those who are not. Image 4 is a typical example of this subtheme. The image does not contain a textual description, but the tweet content reveals the basis of

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[10] Text in brief: The top three countries offering the cheapest amount for citizenship are Antigua and Barbuda, Dominican Republic, and Turkey. In addition, Turkish citizenship is also granted to the whole family.

comparison here:

>*History witnessed those who left their wife, daughter, and country to the enemy and fled, and also witnessed those who gave their life to their country before they hit 15.*

Here, the Turks are glorified for joining the army and fighting for their country at younger ages, but the Syrians cowardly left their countries by leaving their significant ones behind instead of fighting the enemy for their country. A similar message is given in Image 4a, where a coffin covered by a Turkish flag is depicted. The tweet text is again comparing members of the Turkish and Syrian nations, giving credit to the former for fighting for their country while humiliating and delegitimizing the latter:

>*On one side, those who lost their lives for their homeland. -On the other side, Turkish citizenship for those who sold their homeland and fled... and those who bought Turkish citizenship with money are invading the country.*

In another image (Image 4b), a well-known Turkish actor is depicted and -allegedly- declares:

>*A nation's citizenship, which had written its history with blood, cannot be granted to those who escaped from war.*

Image 4.
Symbolic citizenship boundaries[11]

Image 4a.
Symbolic citizenship boundaries (A coffin from the funeral of a martyr).

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[11] The image in the upper part is the children wearing the Turkish army uniforms that date back from the first years of the Republic or earlier. The lower part depicts young people allegedly escaping from Syria.

Image 4b.
Symbolic citizenship boundaries[12]

Through a process of negative differentiation, the symbolic citizenship boundaries clearly describe an us-them distinction between the actual Turkish citizens and those who acquire it later. The comparison pictured through the visuals and the texts glorifies Turks while delegitimizing the refugees; therefore, anti-immigrant references are also quite apparent in this subtheme. The eligibility for Turkish citizenship is selective and depends on the performativity people display for their countries to declare loyalty and allegiance and fulfil their obligations.

However, performativity by displaying loyalty to the country is not always sufficient for being included in the citizenship category. The boundaries for citizenship are only permeable for those born in Turkey or -as also stated in the exclusionary citizenship subtheme of the objective representations- for those who have kinship bonds with the country. Therefore, outsiders and foreigners cannot be eligible for Turkish citizenship. The following visual (Image 4c) includes students holding a placard written: "*How happy we are that we were born a Turk*" and a Turkish flag. While the textual content of the tweet states that selling a nation's citizenship is equal to losing a part of the Turkish soul, the criteria for being a Turk are completely essential, and it is not possible to be eligible for Turkish citizenship unless one has historical, essential bonds with Turkey. Similarly, image 4d, with Atatürk's image and signature, describes who the Turkish nation is; the textual content of the tweet states that Turkey belongs to the ones who founded the country, so the citizenship cannot be sold.

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[12] The text is put in the mouth of Turkish actor Cüneyt Arkın, who is particularly famous for the historical, nationalist movies).

Image 4c.
*Symbolic citizenship boundaries
(Student holding a placard and Turkish
flag)*

Image 4d.
Symbolic citizenship boundaries[13]

Finally, the same subtheme also involves visuals that communicate the values attached to citizenship, again, accompanied by anti-immigrant sentiments and describing who is eligible for Turkish citizenship. Image 4e depicts a military zone and a soldier holding a rifle, standing under the gate with the inscription 'border is the honour'. The textual content of the tweet basically states that Turkish citizenship belongs to the ones who fought for this country with their blood, and citizenship cannot be given to those who betrayed their country. Here, utilizing comparison again, honour is communicated as a value attached to Turkish citizenship.

Image 4e.

Symbolic citizenship boundaries (Border is the honor).

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[13] Text in brief: The Turkish people who founded the Republic of Turkey are called the Turkish nation).

CONCLUSION

Images, owing to their visual clarity and capacity to evoke emotions, are potent tools of communication (Blair, 2004). Consequently, it is crucial to investigate how media images related to citizenship representations shape the stances and understandings of groups of individuals. Social media, in general, and Twitter, in particular, have been widely used contexts for testing social and political psychological theories (Bayrak & Alper, 2021). For the present research, we used Twitter to investigate the visuals to reveal how the lay meanings of Turkish citizenship are constructed and disseminated using the theoretical framework of social representations. Citizenship, as a crucial political psychological concept, is still understudied as a social representational dynamic, and we believe focusing on it through utilizing the power of the images disseminated on social media would contribute to this line of research. In this study, we used the visuals attached to tweets under a specific hashtag about Turkish citizenship as our dataset. The dynamics in social media platforms highly influence social representations, and particular agendas set by political actors enable the representations to be more salient.

Consistent with the relevant literature on the social representations of citizenship (Condor, 2011; Sarrica et al., 2010), we found that citizenship is commonly shared as a legal construct with objective representations and as a sentimental construct with subjective representations. However, the lay meanings of citizenship cannot be grasped without considering the historical and political context. Considering the current increase in anti-immigrant rhetoric towards Syrian refugees in public and political discourses in Turkey, both the objective and the subjective representations of citizenship in our study have traces of an exclusionary citizenship definition, except for the objective representations propagated by the government manifesting citizenship as a state-controlled entity and process. The meanings of citizenship in Turkey are almost completely intertwined with nationalism and national identity, while historically, Turkish citizenship has been considered one of the symbols of the modern Republic which grants the members of the country equal rights and responsibilities, as opposed to the 'subjects' of the Ottoman Empire. However, since the early years of the Republic, the concept of citizenship in political discourse has always been framed in terms of loyalty to the existing regime (Üstel, 2020), with the glorification of the Turkish ethnic category added to this. As such, particularly in the symbolic level, Turkish citizenship has become a selective and exclusionary category rather than an equalizing and inclusive one.

Although we identified objective and subjective representations as the main themes in our study, the subthemes demonstrated that these categories are neither mutually exclusive nor

independent. Condor (2009) eloquently explains that citizenship is a multifaceted, dynamic, and complex construct that goes beyond the simple definition of being a member of a political unit. The subthemes of citizenship representations in our study indicated that the well-known distinctions of civic vs. ethnic or rights-based vs. obligations-based citizenships might be melted in the same universe of meanings while expressed in various forms and contents. The objective citizenship representations in our study reflect the legal boundaries of citizenship and include reminders that the state has the ultimate authority for determining who is included in the citizenship category, but it is also evident that the regime's discourse on citizenship is, to a large extent, based on a patriotic, essentialist narrative (Caymaz, 2007; Üstel, 2020) which is expected to be manifested in lay meanings of citizenship (Öztürk & Yeşilbursa, 2021).

The objective representations of citizenship were characterized by the visuals of law, regulations, passports, ID cards, or the institutional bodies as citizenship authorities. We identified two subthemes here as state-controlled citizenship, which is disseminated through the visuals with legal texts and communicates that the state has control over all procedures and processes relevant to citizenship. This subtheme is quite context-dependent since granting citizenship to refugees has been a hot political debate in Turkey for a long time. The objective indicators of citizenship were also shared to remark on those excluded from citizenship boundaries. The second subtheme, exclusionary citizenship, displayed how the legal, objective indicators of citizenship are utilized to accentuate who should be excluded from the legal boundaries of Turkish citizenship. This finding can be read through the lenses of a current political tension in Turkey between the dissident secular and the ruling religious fractions, in regard to the (particularly Syrian) refugees. The political discourse of the ruling political parties frames the reception of refugees to Turkey through tolerance and benevolence. The content of this discourse is filled with the glorification of the diverse communities living under the rule of Ottoman Empire and with the reawakening of the *Ansar spirit*, referring to the supporters of Prophet Mohammad who helped the migrants from Mecca (Şahin-Mencütek et al., 2023, p. 83). Unlike this political-religious discourse, the secular and nationalist opposition frames the refugee reception as a collective economic, security-based, and cultural threat in the country, which scales up to xenophobic attitudes. The exclusionary citizenship theme under the objective representations reflects this fragmentation.

Subjective representations of citizenship show how individuals or collectives socially construct citizenship. In our study, we also focused on the sentimental dimension of citizenship by trying to understand which emotions are attached to the meanings of Turkish citizenship. Depending on the political agenda, the most frequently used subtheme here was citizenship for

sale. This subtheme included visuals that harshly criticized the content of the issued regulation, setting new conditions (such as making investments and purchasing real estate) for granting citizenship. The regulation is interpreted as "putting citizenship on the market" and is considered to devalue citizenship. Considering citizenship as a market entity invokes negative emotions such as anger, in relation to the values attached to citizenship. While honour, in our findings, is mainly emphasized as a key value attached to citizenship, it is expressed in both subthemes of subjective representations. Advertising citizenship as purchasable, particularly in the Middle Eastern or African contexts, is considered a way to undermine its historical dignity and equalize it with the citizenships of *underdeveloped* countries. Closely related to this, subjective boundaries of citizenship include visuals communicating how citizenship is described and who is included and excluded from this category. The performativity based on fighting for the country is not the only criteria set for inclusion, but the boundaries are also drawn through essentialist definitions of acceptable citizens, such as being a Turk. Along with the honour, traditional values accompanied by patriotic sentiments are revealed in these representations. The sentimental content of these representations also reflects how a continuous collective threat is immanent into the lay meanings of citizenship, emerging with expressions of anger towards the commercialization of citizenship and concerns about the deterioration of its traditional pillars. Rubin (2017) mentions the continuity of instrumentalizing a national security threat as a way to define the boundaries of Turkish citizenship.

We believe our study is important both for providing a social representational perspective towards Turkish citizenship and for focusing on the shared meanings by using socially disseminated visuals. However, it is also limited to a specific time frame and dataset from only one social media channel. Social representations of Turkish citizenship are a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, where using limited data sources and periods would not be sufficient to discover a rich stock of shared meanings. Future studies on this issue might consider multiapproach study designs ranging from cross-sectional surveys to historical archive studies to understand the content and processing of the shared meanings of Turkish citizenship. We based our study on the thematic content of the visuals. Still, considering the rich political and historical context of the citizenship concept, a narrative-based approach can also be adopted for future accounts focusing on visuals or memes (de Saint Laurent et al., 2021). While centering our research on the meanings, we did not consider utilizing data science and adding the user profiles to our research focus but, particularly for the hotly debated political topics (like anti-immigrant sentiments, for example), quantitative methodologies can be accompanied by the qualitative contents for understanding how shared social meanings of

specific social and political issues prevail on social media (e.g., de Saint Laurent et al., 2020). Yet, regarding our case, we believe studying social representations of Turkish citizenship would enable researchers to understand better the past and current societal dynamics of intergroup conflict, political polarization, and the patterns of belonging in Turkey.

Acknowledgement

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