

CREATING COHESION FROM DIVERSITY THROUGH MOBILIZATION: LOCATING THE PLACE OF ALEVI FEDERATIONS IN ALEVI COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN EUROPE

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Abstract

This article evaluates the narratives of Alevi federation members, ranging from high officials to ordinary members, in order to analyze to what extent and how Alevi federations in Europe create social and political cohesion from the highly diversified structure of Alevi community in terms of ethnic, ideological, and political differences. In other words, the study analyses to what degree the Alevi federations are embedded in particular social movements and in general what comprises the Alevi Collective identity. The other aim of the study is to understand to what extent the federations ensure political mobilization for regenerating the Alevi collective identity in diaspora. Based on field research including semi-structured interviews and focus group studies with 30 Alevi associations, more concretely 52 members of the federations – Alevi Federation-located Lyon in France, Basel in Switzerland, Vienna in Austria, Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt and Koln in Germany – and 10 years of observations in the AABF of the authors of the study, this research sheds light on the efforts of Alevi collective identity construction efforts in diaspora through mobilization by Alevi Federations in Europe. The study tries to understand whether these organizations ensure social and political cohesion through the highly diversified structure of group between May 30, 2014 to July 28, 2014. Hence, the interviews focus on three cardinal questions: what are the elements that form the Alevi “imagined community” in diaspora; to what extent there is social and political cohesion both in Alevi Social movement identity and collective identity; what are the obstacles in creating social and political cohesion in Alevi social movement in diaspora?

Keywords: Alevi, Alevi federations, collective identity, social, political cohesion

HAREKETE GEÇME ÜZERİNDEN FARKLILIKLARDAN UYUMU SAĞLAYABİLMEK: ALEVİ FEDERASYONLARINI AVRUPA'DAKİ ALEVİ KOLEKTİF KİMLİĞİNDE KONUMLANDIRMAK

Öz

Bu çalışma Avrupa Alevi Federasyonu üyeleri ile yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlara dayanarak Avrupa Alevi Federasyonlarının Avrupa'daki farklı etnik ve politik yapılanmalar sonucunda

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bölünmüş Alevileri ne dereceye kadar politik ve sosyal uyum içine sokmayı başarılabildiğini analiz edecektir. Aynı zamanda çalışma Federasyon üyelerinin söylemlerini merkez alarak AABF'nin diasporada Alevi kolektif kimliğini ne dereceye kadar sağladığını analiz etmeye çalışacaktır. Çalışma Lyon, Basel, Viyana, Berlin, Hamburg, Münih, Frankfurt ve Köln'deki 52 federasyon üyesi ve 30 dernekle yarı yapılandırılmış ve odak grup çalışmalarına dayanarak ve araştırmacıların 10 senelik gözlemine dayanarak yapılmıştır. Araştırma Avrupa'da, diasporada Alevi kolektif kimliğinin oluşmasında ve mobilizasyonunda AABF'nin ne dereceye kadar bunu başarılabildiğini analiz edecektir. Bu bağlamda mülakatlar 3 soruya odaklanmıştır: Avrupa'da Benedict Anderson'un deyimiyle Alevi "hayali cemaatini" oluşturan etmenler nelerdir? İkinci olarak Alevi sosyal hareketi içinde politik ve sosyal bir uyum var mıdır? Son olarak Alevi kolektif kimliğini oluşturan Alevi sosyal hareketinin içinde sosyal ve politik uyumu engelleyen etmenler nelerdir?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevi, Alevi federasyonları, kolektif kimlik, sosyal ve politik tutarlılık

Introduction

Alevi, one of the largest ethno-religious groups in Turkey, have been politically visible since the 1980s in Turkey. Their identity recognition effort against the Sunni-oriented Turkish state continues not only in Turkey but also in diaspora. European Alevi Federations established in 1990s in the aftermath of the Sivas incident are not only one of the strongest political players in Alevi politics both in the homeland and international arenas but also one of the important actors in creating Alevi collective identity. This study departs from the question to what extent the Alevi Federations in Europe (AABF), one of the sole actors in Alevi diaspora and a catalyser providing Alevi collective identity, provide social and political coherency within the Alevi social movement. Unlike Kurdish movement providing social and political coherency by means of the Kurdistan Workers Party (The PKK), this question is important to understand the role of the Alevi Federation and to what extent it achieves political and social coherency in diaspora.

This article evaluates the narratives of Alevi federation members, ranging from high officials to ordinary members, in order to analyse to what extent and how Alevi federations in Europe create social and political cohesion from the highly diversified structure of Alevi community in terms of ethnic, ideological, and political differences. In other words, the study analyses to what degree the Alevi federations are embedded in particular social movements and in general what comprises the Alevi Collective identity. The other aim of the study is to understand to what extent the federations ensure political mobilization for regenerating the Alevi collective identity in diaspora.

Based on field research including semi-structured interviews and focus group studies with 30 Alevi associations, more concretely 52 members of the federations

– Alevi Federation-located Lyon in France, Basel in Switzerland, Vienna in Austria, Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt and Koln in Germany – and 10 years of observations in the AABF of the authors of the study, this research sheds light on the efforts of Alevi collective identity construction efforts in diaspora through mobilization by Alevi Federations in Europe. The study tries to understand whether these organizations ensure social and political cohesion through the highly diversified structure of group between May 30, 2014 to July 28, 2014. Here cohesion is defined with regard to common social and political objectives, social order, and sense of attachment (Letki, 2008: 99). To do so, the study was applied to Alevi Organizations leader and member narratives to what Alevism means for them and to what extent they are successful in ensuring their collective identity by and through the federations, thus engaging in movement identity. Hence, the interviews focus on three cardinal questions: what are the elements that form the Alevi “imagined community” in diaspora, to what extent there is social and political cohesion both in Alevi Social movement identity and collective identity and what are the obstacles in creating social and political cohesion in Alevi social movement in diaspora?

1. There are two different perspectives about the Alevi collective identity in diaspora in the literature. The first perspective displays the effects of Alevi traditional and political practices on diaspora in terms of their political struggle and its culture (Sökefeld, 2006; Erol 2012). For example, Kosnick (2004) evaluates Alevi media in Germany. She argues that Alevi media production practices and representational strategies strongly connected with its transnational (Turkish) context. The second group focuses on identity strategies of Alevis to define themselves in multicultural countries (Hopkins, 2011; see Sökefeld, 2002). This category indicates that, in democratic and multicultural societies, the diaspora organizations have two functions. While they strengthen Alevi identity, this environment also strengthens diversity within Alevi identity. For example, in her study, Hopkins (2011) reveals that the development in multicultural citizenship and substantive rights diversifications in Alevi identity, such as both being Kurd and Alevi, both Turkish and Alevi, or being cosmopolitan and Alevi. These two perspectives portray Alevis in Diaspora and fall short of showing directly the role of the Alevi social and political organizations in the generation of Alevi Collective identity. Although Massicard (2013) fills this gap to some extent, evaluating the subject socio-political perspective, she does not specifically focus on the relationship within the federations. This study tries to fill this gap and evaluates the role of Alevi Federations in Europe in the collective iden-

tity formation by directly focusing the relationship within Alevi organizations, specifically the AABF.

In this vein, the article consists of three sections. The first section explains the brief history of Alevis and Alevi Federations in Europe. The second section evaluates the relationship between collective identity, social mobilization, and the diaspora relationship, and the last section analyses the dynamics and obstacles in creating social and political cohesion in Alevi identity in Diaspora through Federations.

1. The Brief History of Alevis and European Alevi Federations

Alevism is a religious belief following the path of Twelve Imams, more concretely Imam Ali, Prophet's Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. In contradiction to general belief, Alevism is not part of Iranian Shiism, and it is highly distinct from Muslim Orthodoxy. Alevis in Turkey are ethnically mixed communities consisting of Kurdish Alevis, Turkish Alevis, and Arabic-speaking Alevis, which emerged in Anatolia in opposition to orthodox Sunni Islam represented by the state. The reason for this minority position can be traced back to the Shah Ismail defeat in 1514 in which many Alevis were exterminated and others ran away to isolated areas, which led them to practice their belief secretly and they consolidated their belief through the Ottoman history (Sökefeld, 2002: 133-134).

The Republic of Turkey, founded in 1923 as a secular modern nation state, to some extent equalized the Alevis position with Sunnis by controlling Sunni Islam and giving equal citizenship rights to all citizens of Turkish society, but at the same time sought a policy of national unity, mutually a continuation of the Ottoman Empire's Sunni-oriented policies which promoted the invisibility of Alevis in the field of religion (Erol, 2012: 835). This situation led to two important intermingled facts. Firstly, the Turkish state has not recognized Alevi beliefs and the identity of Alevis throughout history. Nevertheless, according to the Lozan Agreement signed in 1934, the state approached Alevis as a minority in practice, and Alevis has always suffered from this perspective, particularly in Turkey's political and social turmoil. Secondly, Alevis faced social exclusion mostly through lynching campaigns in order to decrease the power of the left-wing parties and to control them to come to power, namely the Maraş, Çorum before the 1980s, Sivas, and Gazi Mahallesi incidents after the 1980s (Massicard, 007: 64-65).

Beginning in the 1980s and particularly the 1990s, Alevis began to struggle to be recognized in the Turkish public sphere, more concretely demanding to teach their belief and culture, state services to their religion, etc. This struggle is called "Alevi Revivalism" in the literature (see Çamuroğlu, 1998: 93-100). The tension between Alevis and more radical Sunni-oriented Sunnis initiated in 1970s in the forms of the left and right cleavage escalated in 1990s as separate identity-based conflict –

Alevi versus Islamist – resulted in Sivas and Gazi Neighbourhood incidents. These situations demarcated Alevi identity borders and strengthened their identity against Islamist parties and the state.

Although the victory of the political Islam-oriented Justice and Development Party's government's coming to power in 2002 made the Alevis hesitate to approach the government, the AKP promised to make reforms in the public sphere in favour of Alevis in the name of "Alevi openings" (Erol, 2012: 835), namely to take Alevism and its history to the national education curriculum, to be represented justly in the public sphere, etc. However, the policies of the party have not satisfied Alevis yet. For example, due to the implicit moral acknowledgment, and due to the fact that legal recognition of Cemevis (Alevi worship houses) has not been approved. Rather, the party prefers to keep Cemevis within a "semi-legal" status. This perspective indicates that the party abstains from recognizing the freedom of Alevi rituals in the public sphere (see Borovali and Boyraz, 2015).

Parallel to the Alevi revivalism initiated in the 1980s and the incidents mentioned above, Alevis in the diaspora, particularly in Germany, became more organized, and the ethnic group tried to become the second power in defending, spreading, and generating the Alevi Identity. They made efforts to combine religious elements of Alevism with ethnic, national, and political elements in order to define Alevi identity. The diaspora tried to unite Alevi identity by purifying it from the elements of other ethnicities to show its homeland identity and recreate a collective memory built upon Alevi history, patterned on suffering and oppression.

2. Alevi Federations in Europe (AABF)

The foundation of AABF can be traced back to the unification of 12 Alevi associations in Germany in the name of Germany Alevi Federations in 1989 (Caba, 2014: 10, 30). These attempts were intensified after Sivas incident (2th July 2013) in 1993 and concluded in late 1993. The demolition of one of the sacred places for Alevis is *Karaca Ahmet Cemevi* by the İstanbul Municipality and *Gazi Mahallesi* incident resulting in many deaths in 1995 led to the deepening of the sensibility of Alevis and highly intensified these efforts, parallel to the rising trend of Islamism in Turkey. The federations were extended to other countries such as France, Sweden, and Austria in late 1993 and deepened with these incidents. These parties unified under the European Alevi Federations (Eke, 2015: 94).

This does not indicate that AABF represented all Alevi associations, in particular Germany and in general Europe. The FEK (The Federation of Kurdistan Alevis) comprised 20 organizations: local groups from the Kurdistan Workers Party (the PKK), some local groups with strong links to the *CEM*

Foundation having headquarters in Essen, and finally the ABAF created by European Ehl-i Beyt Foundation, which is not active. These were the other groups defending the rights of Alevis apart from the AABF (Massicard, 2013: 188-189). In addition to these organized structures, there were small numbers of various independent associations close to the ultra-Turkish nationalist associations associated with Turkish Workers party, Atatürkist Thought Associations, and small local Alevi associations set up by Alevi dedes.

Nevertheless, deep diversification occurs within the Alevi community, and the AABF renders what Alevism is and takes the role of the catalyst of Alevi collective identity. Hence, the rationale of all is to help preserve Alevi identity and meet the religious and cultural requirements of Alevis. Thus, its aim is to protect and to preserve the religious institutions, cultural traditions, and Alevi beliefs. Opening many Cemevis and putting forth effort to force federal and local governments for putting religious modules about Alevi beliefs to curriculum vitae have been one of the concrete agendas of the federations. The federations have also been successful in educating teachers applying Alevism in schools and religious leaders. It also led to the formation of open departments on Alevism at universities and facilitated the fulfilment of basic cultural needs of Alevis such as funerals and Muharrem ceremonies.

As stated above, the federations have split into various countries. Parallel to the Alevi population in Germany, comprising the largest portion in Europe, which is approximately 500,000 people, the German Unified Alevi Federations (AABF) is the strongest and most widespread one within 250 associations. The second biggest Alevi population is located in France, with approximately 100,000 Alevis. The French Unified Alevi federations were set up in 1997 and recently consisted of 30 associations. The other two countries are Austria, consisting of approximately 60,000 Alevis, and Switzerland, approximately 30,000 Alevis. The federations in Austria have approximately 7,000 members, and the federations in France have almost 5,000 members. This information was received from our interviews executed in European Federations in Western Europe.

Although the AABF is highly ambitious in including new members and associations within itself, our participants mention that the organization is successful in doing so. There are two cardinal reasons why Alevi organizations having visible numbers of members not enrolled in associations closely tied to the federations. The first is the enrolment fee of the associations close to the federations. According to our interviews with Alevi administrators in the Federation, Alevi organizations hesitate to be members of Alevi Federations in the AABF that demand 10,000 Euros as the first entry fee, which is a great amount for these associations. As described in detail above, the second reason is the ideological divergences of the associations. Some

Alevi Kurds, left-wing Alevi individuals, and Turkish ultranationalist Alevi do not attend the AABF because the Federations' philosophy is patterned on Alevi belief rather than supporting their ideologies. For understanding the role of federations in Alevi collective identity generation, the next section will depict the theoretical framework of the role of the organization in the formation of collective identity.

3. Cohesion within Collective Identity

Collective identity is an ongoing and active process involving cognitive definitions about ends, means, and motivations of mobilization conveyed through common languages and set of rituals, symbols, and cultural elements (Fominaya, 2010). It functions to distinguish the collective self from the other and is generated with regard to field of opportunities and limitations and creates solidarity between group members in the case of posing a threat to the group (Adler, 2012; Taylor and Whitter, 1992: 105).

Collective identity formation has been one of the major concerns for scholars trying to understand how and to what extent the sense of social and political cohesion is formed within social movement through collective action. For Melluci, the empirical unity of social movement is a conclusion rather than starting point (Melluci, 1995: 43). Hence, this makes understanding of how a movement achieves or fails in becoming a collective actor has been a central issue for social movement scholars. As will be seen in our example, highly fragmented structure of social movements in terms of ideologies, issues, and frames can pose a challenge in collective identity formation. Relating to the Alevi movement in Europe, we should ask how collective identity is generated in these relatively heterogeneous groups.

Snow moves beyond this point and argues that, while the process is important in collective identity formation, the product has the same weight in collective identity (Snow, 2001: 4). For Snow, the product is "*generative of a sense of agency that can be powerful impetus to collective action, but it functions as well as the orientational identity for actors in the field of action. More concretely, it is the constructed social object to which movement's protagonists, adversaries, and audiences respond...*" (Snow, 2001: 4). Snow merges two elements of collective identity: process and product. Collective identity as a process and movement identity as a socially constructed product are not the same things. For Snow (Snow, 2001:4), movement identity should not be confused with the process of collective identity. As Fominaya expresses, "*the process of collective identity is an intra movement phenomenon, even though it is conditioned and constructed in interaction with broader political field*". In only some cases, the construction of collective identity is a central explicit

goal of the movement that is strategically positioned with the movement identity (Fominaya 2010: 379).

However, these two processes – product and process – can be blurred. Relating to our topic, Fominaya remarks that the identity base movements make the construction and the preservation of collective identity building essential for themselves by which they strategically mobilize collective identity as a political tool (Fominaya, 2010: 379). The internal cohesion of the movement is settled on the construction of collective identity. They identify movement identity with the process of collective identity. However, this perspective about identity-based movements ignore the pluralist dimension of identity in that individuals are the agents of multiple and often conflicting identities as the constructivists approach support. These identities are differently motivated and invoked depending on their relative salience and their situational prevalence. Salience “refers to the relative importance of an identity in relation to other identities; prevalence or pervasiveness indicate “the situational relevance or reach any of any particular identity and the corresponding degree to which it organizes social life, including collective action” (Fominiya 2010:378). This approach rejects the primordialist and structuralists’ essentialists argument of “*the presumed link between identities and their ascriptive or structural moorings as being more indeterminate than postulated*” (Snow, 2001: 6). On the other hand, collective identities are invented and reconstituted rather than biologically, culturally, and structurally determined as the constructivist approach expresses.

Departing from this point and regarding our study, we can easily identify that identity base movements should put effort into converging their identities with their collective identities through which there can be a strong tension, for some social movements, with their social movement identity and their collective identity. Gamson answers these points by specifying three embedded layers of collective identity: “organizational, movement, and solidarity” (Gamson, 1991: 40). The organizational layer indicates the identities set up around movement carriers that, for example, the union made. This layer has a probability of being embedded in a movement layer, which is broader than any carrier (Gamson, 1991: 40). Gamson explains this as “the identity of peace activist, for example, often does not rest on any particular carrier; many support different efforts at different moments while subordinating all carriers to their broader movement identity” (Gamson, 1991: 40). Lastly, the movement layer may or may not be embedded in a wider solidarity group identity, constructed through people’s social location/affiliation. He explains as follows: “*Environmental activists, for example, may be largely white... but*

they are likely to decry narrowness of their base: their internal discourse often focuses on how they can activate more workers and people of colour” (Gamson 1991: 4-5). The existence of a collective identity at one level does not automatically integrate another level. In this vein, the next section analyses collective identity, social movement, and the diaspora relationship.

4. Diaspora, Collective Identity and Social Movements

The term diaspora originally signified the term “homeland,” expressing the dispersal of a people from its original homeland, particularly with the dispersion of Jewish people. However, the meaning of the term was extended and widespread in literature since the 1980s, “*so as to force re-assessment of its meaning*” (Butler, 2001: 1). In its recent extension, some emigrant groups have been involved in the diaspora concept due to their strong involvement in homeland politics. The term also comprises labour migrants maintaining emotional and social ties with a homeland. The other involved category is trans-ethnic and trans-border linguistic categories such as Muslim, Buddhist, Francophone, and Anglophone categories (Brubaker 2006: 2-3).

The intersection of all these definitions rests on two opposing categories of diaspora depiction. The first category comprises traditional definitions of diaspora centred on the creation of boundaries – the collective identity – and is concentrated on roots and homeland. In this classical notion, diaspora is depicted as several closed, homogenous, and stereotypical ethnic and religious entities. According to Soysal, diaspora is firmly tied to communities and solidarities between homeland and arrival, generated along the lines with the same ethnic and religious references (Soysal, 2000: 2). Space, place, and identity are perceived as stable and fixed categories, and the nation state remains unquestionable. Therefore, it primarily accepts and encourages nation state territory and identity associations (Mavroudi, 2007: 470).

This perspective is criticised on the grounds that the diaspora concept is identified with primordial belongings such as race and ethnicity and tends to homogenise and ignore cross-cutting differences within the population (Mavroudi, 2007: 468-469). That brings us to the second category, the post-modern conceptualisations of diaspora patterning on “fluidity, movement, routes, and the destabilisation of (potentially) homogenising boundaries (of identity, community, and the nation state)” (Mavroudi, 2007: 468-469). In this perspective, the nation of diaspora goes beyond confining identity solely on the nation state and feelings of home and belonging. Hence, this perspective assumes that the process of migration and globalisation has strong impacts on feelings of home and belonging, and the notion of diaspora cannot be easily theorised and analysed (Mavroudi, 2007: 473).

There is a third way, offered by geographers, of melting and comprising these two binary notions of diaspora perceiving diaspora in the context of geopolitics; they propose a definition that diaspora is an open-ended process that constructs and deconstructs the boundaries of diaspora identity. In this geographical context, diaspora is perceived as a flexible process by which displaced people recreate and negotiate their collective identity, community, and the nation state “that are static, essentialised, and fixed for political, socio-economic, and cultural reasons” (Mavroudi, 2007: 474). Meanwhile, this category problematizes and deconstructs the firm relationship between nation-state, diasporic community, and national identity and problematizes the borders of diaspora and its essentiality and purity. This category requires one to understand the dynamic relationship between boundedness and unboundedness dimensions of diaspora. It gives strong insight into how people in charge of power draw, exclude, and marginalize these boundaries (Mavroudi, 2007: 474-476).

However, these three perspectives ignore the catalyser role of the social movements in mobilization and negotiation process of collective identity in diaspora. In his seminal study, Sökefeld (2006: 276) remarks that social movements have four functions in shaping diaspora identity by mobilizing diaspora, reshaping discourses and politicizing diasporic identity. First, Diasporas do not emerge as a result of migration. Rather, social movements are catalysers to mobilize Diasporas in response to critical events and developments. Although borders of diaspora as transnational communities have strong static or, in other words, bounded features, it also comprises fluid and unbounded features in which the borders of the diasporic community can change according to the relationship with homeland and the country where they live.

Second, specific events are not sufficient to form diaspora. Rather, social movements create new discourses for community through the negotiation of a particular side of collective identity for diasporic imagination. In other words, they inculcate “consciousness” into a group, indicating “interpretative frameworks that emerge from a group’s struggle to define and realize a member’s common interests in opposition to dominant order” (Taylor and Whitter 1992: 114).

Third, mobilizing practices are not only useful for creating collective identity in diaspora but are also essential to reproduce it continuously. Mobilizing practices are not only required at the beginning of the formation of a diaspora but perhaps even more urgently later when the initial urge for community, springing from a critical event, is gone. For Sökefeld “*Initial strategies of mobilization may differ from later practices, just like “hot nationalism”*

may be replaced by everyday banal nationalism in the case of the successful establishment of an imagined community as a nation” (Sökefeld, 2006: 276).

These practices correspond with Taylor and Whitter’s “negotiation category” of collective identity, referring to a struggle to change symbolic meanings which emancipate the group from dominant representations. (Taylor and Whitter, 1992: 118) For Soysal, diaspora has particularistic claims and tries to realize them by legitimizing them through universalistic discourses and claims in order to challenge dominant and hegemonic symbols and discourses for which mobilizing practices are catalysts to reach this end. (Soysal, 1999: 2)

Lastly, Diasporas are generated by actors imagining a transnational community. These actors generated both mobilizing practices and related discourses legalizing the collective action that attracts and secures the support of the members of the supposed diaspora. The formation of diaspora stimulates specific social and political dynamics bounding social relations generated by the transnational imagined community. However, the relationship between these actors is not static; disputes between the leadership positions or power struggles between different factions within the community are in fact the cements of diaspora, helping it to regenerate itself consistently (Sökefeld, 2006: 277-288).

In short, the role of social movement is to reconstruct collective identity and thus the borders of diaspora by politicizing the bounded and unbounded elements of the borders of diaspora. In other words, social movements not only provide citizens the feeling of belonging but also provide a paramount strategy “*for negotiating a place within complex of power relationship between mainstream majority culture and the infinitely nuanced social differences between heterogeneous minority groups*” (Hopkins, 2011: 454). Benford and Snow also explain that part of the work of social movement organizations is to generate, negotiate, and keep interpretive collective action frames. These “*collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization*” (Benford and Snow, 2000: 614).

By recalling Gamson’s three embedded layers of collective identity, “organizational, movement, and solidarity,” we will answer the question to what extent the Alevi Federations, as a social movement, in Europe have achieved social and political cohesion within the Alevi collective identity in diaspora through the references of the narratives of the members of Alevi federations in the rest of the study.

5. The AABF and Alevi Collective Identity

5.1. Organizational Layer of Collective Identity

The organizational layer indicates the identities set up around movement carriers; for example, those the union made. In AABF, while core individuals play a diasporic leadership role, some people join activities, while other sympathizers only attend special days such as cem ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. These Alevi rituals are catalysers to gather the Alevi community. However, to what extent these rituals tie Alevis to the federations is a question that has been extensively studied, and the answer to the question rests on the social divergences emerging from host countries' multicultural environment and community's prioritization of politics over religion; the social movement and solidarity side of the community is much stronger than the organizational identity.

In our interviews with almost all group members of federations remark that the Alevi religion – or Alevi beliefs – is the sole element that binds the federation, at least for top administrative bureaucracy. Although the top administrative segments of the AABF (European Alevi Federations), like his founder Turgut Öker, close to Marxist ideology, they hesitate to impose their ideology to the Federations for two reasons. First, the elites in Federations try to end or at least perceive these divergences as obstacles in generating Alevi collective identity patterning on solely on Alevi religion. However, there are various political, associational cultural and regional divergences that lead cleavages within the group and the host countries' secular and multicultural environment prevent Alevis from associating with the federations. In contrast to Alevis in Turkey setting up an antagonistic relationship with Sunni Islam and the state, immigrants or diaspora members have a complex relationship with their host country and social movements in which they determine strategy for negotiating mainstream, majority culture, and their groups. For example, Hopkins (2011) mentions that Alevis in Melbourne develop multiple identities other than Alevism, such as Australian citizenship or world citizenship, due to the development of multicultural and strong human and community rights provided by the Australian government. Secondly, the AABF follows the policy of transferring resources to Alevis, particularly the activists in Turkey, who pursue a position in the religious field in Europe due to the legal rights given to religious communities by Germany and other states in Europe. Hence, Germany and other states have established a relationship with the Alevi community in the lines of the religion. This perspective made Alevi federations and its institutions established in the line of religion and its relationship with these state on the patterns of religion in Europe.

Although this fact is attributed positively to the layer of social movement and solidarity segments of collective identity, this situation to a great extent is not

grasped positively by the Federation members in the sense that this fact prevents purification of Alevism on the grounds of religion and to reinforce organizational identity. The secular and liberal system in the host countries mutually secularize Alevi identity as well, and the importance of homeland politics occupy more place than religion and make the perception of Alevism culture more than religion for many Alevis. Through the dismantlement of the sanctions on Alevism in Europe, namely recognition by the governments as a religion the politicization of Alevism on the patterns of Alevi religion to a great extent decreased, and Alevis politicised more on secular politics. An Alevi association member in Wuppertal remarks this:

“There used to be an interest to Alevi belief when it was banned. When the ban was lifted the interest of Alevis to Alevi belief is dramatically decreased. Alevis go to Alevi associations just for socialization. One who does not often go to the associations are keen on attending political protests by a strong will.”

In our interviews, an administrator in Hannover explains this: *“there is a serious polarization within Diaspora, one of them is that whether one is the member of the federation or not. 90% of Alevis are out of organized Alevi structure and the rest diversified within itself”*. One member of the Alevi federation expresses this: *“the most serious problems of Alevis are prioritizing political issues over their belief. They do not have any information about their beliefs”*. The diaspora life or the Western modernity promotes this process which, to a great extent, prevents Alevi individuals from devoting attention to Alevism as a religion rather than the subject of politics. For example, the federation’s centre resides in meeting rooms and social activities that Alevis, whether they have membership or not, find socially acceptance and belonging, albeit not all of them pledged to be the followers of Alevi faith.

One of the Dedes in Hamburg explains this as: “... Alevis here do not give enough importance to religious institutions. When the religious ceremonies arranged on Thursdays they do not attend, when religious conversations and seminars are held they gamble on downstairs. Some segments of Alevis coming to Alevi associations do not have any relationship with the Alevi belief.”

This situation is strongly observed in youth attendance within Alevi associations. Young people’s interest in the associations has decreased gradually. As remarked above, the secularization and integration of immigrants to the host country in Europe secularizes these young people, making them more individualistic and letting them avoid religion and homeland. A dede in Vienna explains this: *“There is unlimited freedom and wealth here. This can be a problem in that young people are stuck in a swamp. We should motivate them to go Alevi associations and Cemevis*

for rescuing them” (See also Nagel, 2010). Also, another Alevi remarks that young Alevis have more individualistic, cosmopolitan, and liberal lifestyles than Sunnis in which young people are reluctant to attend these associations. Another reason why Alevi young people do not attend these federations stems from their integration into the host society and alienation from the homeland’s culture. These young people do not speak Turkish well and cannot read and write Turkish. For example, this situation is strongly observed in Valence Alevi Associations. One of the members of the Federation explains this as such: “There are young Alevis educating in French schools and do not speak Turkish. They do not understand the Turkish sources on Alevism.”

The majority of the participants perceive the causes of the low attention to the federations as the poor qualification of leadership and dedes in the movement. In this vein, the leadership and the education qualification of Alevi leaders are another problem in constructing the borders of Alevi diasporic identity. According to our interviews, the participants find Alevi leaders unqualified and non-professional in executing their missions. A businessman in Mannheim expresses the following: One of the most important problems of Alevis is the problem with its cadre and leaders. Yet there is no education policy in the federations. The education is taken seriously in Sunni associations and mosques, and it functions professionally due to its establishment on professional patterns in return for money. In the Alevi case, the administrative staff and dedes execute these missions voluntarily –without getting paid – and this makes the issue a volunteer job. The dedes do this mission when they are able to find time. This prevents institutionalisation.

The unqualified leadership in the community is another deficiency that leads to cleavages within the diaspora. Many of the leaders of the community do not know the rules and the traditions of Alevism and try to implement secular policies rather than religion itself and do not listen to grassroots demands. Their rationale is to govern the associations and to a great extent ignore their demands. The dede in Calw expresses this: “the previous and the current leader of the AABF have the same mentality. They overtook the administration and used more than 100 associations for their own interest by implying their policies rather than implementing the philosophy of our religion.” These prevent the formation of both borders and consciousness of the community.

The federations are the more organized sections of Alevi diaspora and Alevi social movement, but they, as seen, are far away from the whole Alevi population in Diaspora in terms of both ideology and population. According to the interviews, the administrators of the Alevi Federations mention that almost 80% of the population are not the part of the organized Alevi community, and the organized sectors of Ale-

vis are diversified within themselves. By understanding the weaknesses of the federations, we should ask what the strong components of Alevi collective identity are.

6. Movement and Solidarity Layers

6.1. Movement Layer

There are also two other layers – movement and solidarity – that form the collective identity. The organizational layer, namely Alevi Federations, is one of the catalysers in forming collective identity. However, the federations in Europe are not the sole actors representing Alevis as a social movement. There are two sources that lead to cleavages within the social movement layer. The first one is some segments of Alevis participating in political and ethnic organisations alleging to represent the Alevi identity with other identities or ideologies, such as Marxism or Kurdish nationalism. These groups blame federations for being religious, and the second one is the cleavage between Alevi Federations in Europe and Turkey and other small Alevi organizations within the community.

There are strong ideological and organizational cleavages within the Alevi community. The main ideological cleavage is based on the perception of whether an Alevi movement should be patterned on religion or secular politics. As remarked above, the Alevi community is not uniform. Although the federations are supporters in locating Alevis on religion, there are many Alevi segments and associations established on the premises of their ideological and ethnic orientations. While Kurdish and Zaza-speaking Alevis focus more on the Kurdish problem, the left-wing Alevis follow the Marxist and socialist ideals rather than Alevism. The other political Alevi groups, namely Anatolian or Turkish Alevis, affiliate with Kemalist ideology, which they believe is the solution for Alevism within the state ideology. For example, a Dede from Berlin explains that Alevis from Dersim experienced a traumatic event in 1934, and forming associations in Europe is strongly different for Alevis coming from the western part of the country. Such Alevis are less politicized and do not want to participate in Alevi organizations because of the domination of Kurdish and Marxist Alevis in the organizations. One of our participants from the administrative staff of the Federations in Germany explains this in the following way:

Some of Alevis coming to Federation building criticized and told us they would not come if they would not hang Turkish Flags and the Ataürk's portrait. On the other side, some Alevis come up with similar demand that they wanted us to hang Abdullah Öcalan's and Seyit Rıza's portraits on the wall. We do not accept hanging of political leaders' portraits on the walls. We deal with the religion.... everyone tries to put us in different categories and some blame us of Kurdish nationalism, some of Turkish nationalism.

The federation prospects to purify the Alevi community on the grounds of religion and negotiate with the political groups within the Alevi community on the lines of religion. However, this act creates tension between secular and religious perspective groups. Some of our participants connect the rationale behind this unwillingness of young people to participate in associations as the structure of the associations by which the associations cannot make religious teaching function properly. The politics in homeland – as a bounded and political cleavages as an unbounded feature – lead these young people to stay away from the associations. A member of the Alevi association in Koln expresses this: “there are 200 hundred members of this organization. They are prosperous, but they do not attend the meetings. Subjects about education have never been discussed, but other subjects such as politics are talked about for half a day. These tense discussions disincline these young people from the association”. These facts prevent and create failure for the federations to be the producers in inculcating consciousness to the next generations.

The other point that makes the federations insufficient to embed in the social movement layer is the organizational cleavage within the Alevi community. The first power cleavage is between the dedes and the federation’s administrative staffs, leading to a power struggle within the community. The authority areas of these two actors intersect with each other in that they create problems in power sharing while dedes are responsible for the religion sphere and the administrative staff is responsible for policy making, High administrative staff members from Duisburg remark as follows:

There are problems within the relationship between Dede and administrative staff... Two actors’ role in the federation merged with each other; creating problems for the Federation... dedes strongly want to involve the administrative staff rather than realizing and leading their religion duties.

Dedes want to increase their roles within the community and interfere in the secular space to gain more independence within the federations. Although some participants find this demand highly acceptable in the sense that their perspective of Alevism is more holistic (dedes as religious leaders should be active in the administrative segments of the federations), the other segments of the participants find this demand unpromising. High administrative staff members in Hessen express the following: “Dedes think that they should govern AABF for establishing their branches within the federation and become independent. I assure you that no one will participate in these Cemevis if they realise to do so”.

The other cleavage is the power struggle between Alevi organizations. The federations in Europe, particularly the strongest German Alevi Federations and Alevi

Federations in Turkey, struggle to dominate the movement. This struggle prevents unification under one organization. The leadership struggle in these groups and the lack of democracy within organizations, ignoring grass-root demands, obstruct the unity of these associations. A dede from Dusseldorf expresses this:

The CEM Association and Federation in Germany should sit on the table. The leader of Cem Vakfi, İzzettin Doğan and the leader of Alevi German Federations Turgut Öker should withdraw from leadership. They are outdated, and these people prevent to unite Alevi movement.

The centralization tendencies of the top segments of federations, for example, AABF in Europe, prevent the unification of Alevis. The AABF has strong tendency to manipulate and ignore Alevi associations within the federations, which are not close to them in terms of political and ideological reasons. Their broadcast *YOL TV* and journal, *Alevilerin Sesi*, are used to dismantle Alevi associations and exclude high administration of Alevi associations who are not close to them by not giving place for their broadcasts and journals. These cleavages scare some segments of Alevis and lead new small organizations organized around Dede Ocaks. These people face a lack of confidence with the federations organized within Ocak understanding for the survival of their belief and identity.

As expressed above, the federations cannot strongly embed in Alevi social movement, and most Alevis in Alevi social movements other than federations find Alevi identity more important than being in federations, and a greater percentage of Alevis do not participate in any Alevi organization, which brings us the importance of the solidarity layer. In other words, what makes Alevi collective identity both in homeland and diaspora? The other question that has to be asked is to what extent the movement's identity and the collective identity collapse with each other and what is the place of the federations within the collective identity?

6.2. Solidarity Layer

As seen above, there is a tension between the Alevi collective identity and Alevi social movements for ensuring cohesion. The answer of what makes Alevi collective identity is not uniform within the Alevi diaspora. Although the federations function as negotiators in negotiating Alevi identity on the basis of Alevi belief, within the Alevi community, host state, and Turkish state, they are not sufficient to depict the content of Alevi identity by itself. In other words, Alevi federations as an organization cannot be embedded strongly in the social movement layer. Then what forms Alevi collective identity? This solidarity layer plays a strong role in generating collective identity.

The formation of the other is one of the important factors that create solidarity within the community. The mistrust of Alevis toward the Turkish state and some dramatic incidents in homeland, such as Sivas and Gazi Mahallesi incidents or big protests such as Gezi protests, occurred in 2013, lead Alevis to mobilize coherently and uniformly. These protests lead Alevis to strengthen their belongings solely to Alevism and make their identity an instrument to be recognized in their host societies. In other words, Alevis negotiate their identities both with the host and homeland. These mobilizations indicate that Alevis must be recognized as a religious community in their host societies, leading them to gain significant material and moral benefits for the community. These mobilizations also function as counter hegemonic blocs against Sunni-centred Turkish state, which paves the way for Alevis to represent their identities uniformly and coherently.

The mobilization against the legislation and the laws of the host country also lead to dismantle the divergences within the community and represent Alevi identity uniformly and coherently against the host country, thus paving the way for bounding the whole Alevi community. For example, two Alevi associations, Anatolian Alevi Culture Centre (Anadolu Alevi Kültür Merkezi) in Berlin and Unified Alevi Federations (Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu), struggle with co-operation to be recognized in the public sphere, namely to be recognized as a religious community and become successful to place Alevism in the education curriculum across Germany. In addition, all Alevi associations, including the ones close to Kurdish movement come against all actions while posing treatment of Alevi identity. For example, the television detective story series, *Tatort*, showing an incestuous relationship within the Alevi community, receives a strong reaction among all Alevis in Germany.

Apart from Alevi beliefs and rituals such as funerals, there are Cem rituals that bound the collective identity by which the community is unified against the Sunni-oriented Turkish state and against conservative Sunnis in their host countries. The Justice and Development party and its Sunni-oriented policies generate frustration and tension within the Alevi community. This anxiety is bolstered by the policies of Turkish state by not keeping promises in Alevi openings and its policies related to Syria, using heavily sectarian discourses. Alevis in diaspora worry about the life of Alevis in Turkey. A federation member from Vienna remarks, “*We do not have any expectation from Turkish government. The degradation of us by prime minister – Recep Tayyip Erdogan – and the foreign minister and Turkish government’s weapon aid to ISIS will give harm to Turkey*”.

The Turkish government continues these biased policies in Europe through its institution for Alevis. An old man from Berlin explains this:

Until the 1980s, I had gone to mosques to pray. One day when I went to Mosque I heard that a preacher systematically degraded Alevis in his preach. I responded to him. After that day I work to establish Cemevis.

The bias of the government to an extent transmits the Sunni population in Europe, particularly the conservative segments of the society. The Sunni religious men and preachers bolstered this vision among the Sunni population. An elderly woman in Stuttgart explains that a desert, aşure, was thrown to a trash when she served her Sunni neighbours. This Alevi Sunni cleavage is vividly seen when two segments of the society live together. For example, the Sunni and the Alevi students fight with each other due to the oral defamation of Sunnis, namely calling Alevi students Kızılbaş in Disburg. As the bounded side of the diaspora, the cleavage between the Sunnis and Alevis is carried into the multicultural host societies in Europe. In this sense, the participants mention that the prejudice of government policies and its reflections upon Sunni society demarcate Alevi collective identity against Turkish government and the Sunni population in Europe.

Mobilization or collective action plays a strong role in fostering collective identity, indicating that the formation of the other is not sufficient for ensuring solidarity. Rather, collective action is essential to bolster identity. Alevis in Europe ensure strong solidarity through collective action and within collective action frames. They can easily gather for protests against Sivas, Çorum, Maraş incidents, Gezi, and other protests formed against Turkish government. For example, thousands of Alevis in Germany mobilized to protest the former Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan when he came to Germany. The diversification is transformed to group cohesion. The cohesion in solidarity is also ensured in the solution of problems about the Alevi community in host countries and homeland. The pursuit of equal citizenship rights in Turkey, the recognition of Cemevis by the Turkish state as a formal pray space, the lifting of compulsory religion – Sunni-centred – lessons, and the recognition of Alevis as a religious community in host countries are some of the issues that bind the whole community and provide solidarity.

The question of the extent to which the federations are embedded in these layers should be answered here in order to understand the role of the federations in generating collective identity. The federations ensure loose but very efficient ties with Alevi community in Europe on the patterns of Alevi belief and culture. Loose ties suggest that the federations do not have a direct aim to indoctrinate Alevis into its ideology or do not have power to take the sole monopoly of Alevis mobilization like Kurdish movement, realising it by both legal and illegal ways, solely lead by the *Partiye Karkeran Kurdistan* (PKK). On the other hand, the federations' power to regenerate collective identity is to realise Alevis providing space for gathering that

leads to the politicization of Alevi identity (see De Certeau et al. 1998). Although the administrative sectors of the Alevi community complain about the ideological tendencies of Alevi identity, Alevi identity has been strongly embedded with politics, particularly into the leftist ideology due to the suppression and being subaltern through the history, since the Ottoman period in Turkish history.

Secondly, the federations have strong financial capability to mobilize Alevi masses despite their insufficiency to make all of them its members. For example, their organizations in Muharrem or the Cem organizations receive large amounts of masses. Their strong organization capability stems from its financial power to dominate the everyday lives of Alevi. For example, the federations organize funerals; their television and radio broadcasting demarcates Alevi collective identity. Lastly, federations argue that they stay away from politics, but they defend Alevi and support Alevi collective rights in international sphere, including defense to insert Alevi religion into high school and primary school curriculum both in Turkey and countries where they live or sue Turkey in international courts, such as European Human Right Courts. Therefore, the federations have an effect in shaping the social movement, but more than that, it is a strong stimuli mechanism to provide solidarity within the Alevi community.

7. Conclusion

Collective identity is a dynamic process involving cognitive definitions about the ends, means, and field of action conveyed through common languages and set up through a set of rituals, symbols, and cultural elements. Snow (2001) remarks that the process is important in collective identity formation and the product has the same weight in collective identity. He merges two elements of collective identity: process and product. Collective identity as a process and movement identity as a socially constructed product are not the same things. For Snow, the movement identity should not be confused with the process of collective identity where these two processes – product and process – can be blurred. Fominiya (2010) fills this gap by remarking that the identity based movements make the construction and the preservation of collective identity building essential for themselves by which they strategically mobilize collective identity as a political tool. The internal cohesion of the movement is settled on the explicit construction of collective identity. They identify movement identity with the process of collective identity. However, this perspective about identity-based movements ignores the pluralist dimension of identity in that individuals are the agents of multiple and often conflicting identities as the constructivists approach support.

The identity-based movements should devote efforts to convergence of their identities with their collective identities where there can be a strong tension, for

some social movements, with their social movement identity and their collective identity. Gamson (2001) answers these points by specifying three embedded layers of collective identity: “organizational, movement, and solidarity”. The cohesion refers to the embedding of these layers with each other with these three layers for a collective identity. The organizational layer indicates the identities set up around movement carriers; for example the union made. The movement layer refers to the broader concept that indicates social movement itself, and solidarity refers to the broadest sphere, bounding a large portion of individuals within one collective identity. In this sense, the role of Alevi Federations in generating collective identity is an essential question that is answered in the study.

The foundation of AABF can be traced back to the unification of 12 Alevi associations in Germany in the name of Germany Alevi Federations in 1989 (Caba, 2014: 10, 30). With the establishment of their own federations in France, Austria, and Switzerland, this led to the unification of the roof organization, namely the AABF. The organization layer of the federations include the more organized sections of the Alevi diaspora and Alevi social movement, but they, as seen, are far away from consisting of the whole Alevi population in Diaspora in terms of both ideology and population. With the interviews in federations, the administrators of the Alevi federations mention that almost 80% of the population are not part of the organized Alevi community, and the organized sectors of Alevis are diversified within themselves. In the social movement layer, the federations cannot be strongly embedded in Alevi social movement, and most Alevis in the Alevi social movement other than federations find Alevi identity more important than being in federations. Furthermore, the higher percentage of Alevis does not participate in any Alevi organization. The federations’ power to regenerate collective identity is to realise that Alevis provide space for gathering that leads to the politicization of Alevi identity.

The federations also have strong financial capability to mobilize Alevi masses, despite its insufficiency to make all of them its members. Their strong organization capability stemming from its financial power also dominates the everyday lives of Alevis. For example, the federations organize funerals; their television and radio broadcasting demarcate Alevi collective identity. In addition, the federations defend Alevi and support Alevi collective rights in international sphere, including defending the insertion of Alevi religion into high school and primary school curriculum, both in Turkey and countries where they live or suing Turkey in international courts, such as European Human Right Courts. Therefore, the federations have an effect on shaping the social movement, but it is a strong stimuli mechanism to provide solidarity within the Alevi community.

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