

PERSPECTIVES

Political analysis and commentary from Turkey



FEATURE ARTICLES

THE GREEN MOVEMENT IN TURKEY

DEMOCRACY

AKP versus women

Gülfer Akkaya

Page 52

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Turkish-American relations and the Middle East in Obama's second term

Pinar Dost Niyego

Page 60

HUMAN LANDSCAPE

Taner Öngür: The long and winding road

Serkan Seymen

Page 66

Content

Editor's note	3
■ Feature articles: The Green Movement in Turkey	
Sustainability of the Green Movement in Turkey , Bülent Duru	4
Environmentalists in Turkey - Who are they? , Barış Gencer Baykan	8
The involvement of the green movement in the political space , Hande Paker	12
Ecofeminism: Practical and theoretical possibilities , Ecehan Balta	16
Milestones in the fight for the environment , Ahmet Oktay Demiran	20
Do EIA reports really assess environmental impact? , Gonca Yılmaz	25
Hydroelectric power plants: A great disaster, a great malice , Semahat Sevim-Özgür Gürbüz	28
Latest notes on history from Bergama , Özer Akdemir	34
A radioactive landfill in the heart of İzmir , Serkan Ocak	38
■ Culture	
Turkish television series: an overview , Feyza Akınerdem	41
■ Ecology	
Seasonal farm workers: Pitiful victims or Kurdish laborers? (II) , Deniz Duruiz	44
■ Democracy	
Peace process and gender equality , Ulrike Dufner	50
AKP versus women , Gülfer Akkaya	52
New metropolitan municipalities , Fikret Toksöz	56
■ International politics	
Turkish-American relations and the Middle East in Obama's second term , Pınar Dost Niyego	60
■ Human landscape	
Taner Öngür: The long and winding road , Serkan Seymen	66
■ Barometer	
"Terrorists" created by the law , Nejat Taştan	68
■ News from hbs	69

Heinrich Böll Stiftung – Turkey Representation

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- Culture
- Ecology
- Democracy
- International Politics
- News from hbs

Editorial

The “Turkish question” was the theme of our January issue. Essays explored the idea that the “Turkish question” might be more appropriate than the Kurdish question. Political developments in the last three months support this thesis. Internal debates in the CHP (Republican People’s Party) were centered around the idea of “Turkish-ness.” In recent weeks the ‘Turkish question’ has been the subject of heated arguments, and the AKP (Justice and Development Party), considering the possibility that the Constitutional Commission might not reach consensus on the preliminary draft of the new constitution, is now searching for alternative approaches to form a consensus. Their new strategy is tightly bound to the concept of citizenship. And it seems likely that this new constitutional definition of citizenship will depend on the party with whom the AKP reaches consensus.

In our April issue we take up the environmental movement in Turkey. The environmental movement originates in the Ottoman times, with the first protests against the “urban renewal” projects between 1912 and 1919. We understand that the history of the movement is an inseparable part of Turkish political history shaped by military coups. The political pressure affected and weakened the organizational attempts of the civil society.

The goal of the present government to build a nuclear power plant was already one of the main issues of the environmental movement in the 70s. Like every other struggle in this area, the anti-nuclear campaign continues despite violations of law, aiming the actual formation of a state of law. We examine how legal boundaries and regulations were breached, which institutions neglect their duties and that this movement has therefore to struggle for the rule of law. The questions brought up by the anti-nuclear campaign in the 70s, ÇED (Environmental Impact Assessment reports) not being prepared according to the regulations, cooperation between the public and the private sector and the lack of coordination between institutions are still valid today, reflecting some of the common features of all the movements fighting for democratization.

Some essays in this issue consider the Green Party (Yeşiller Partisi), which was born out of the environmental movement, examine the extent to which the Greens are influenced by the legal constraints imposed upon political parties, and discuss green policies in connection with social conditions. Some may argue that the Green Party is mainly concerned with future risks and cannot suitably address current problems while others argue its agenda could actually improve people’s quality of life today and could therefore garner broad popular support.

The environmental movement must be seen as a movement aimed at establishing the rule of law and in this regard, its contribution to society cannot

be underrated. The protests against hydroelectric or nuclear power plants are not only concerned with future generations, but also with present day society. In developing countries, it’s commonly held that alternative development models clash with society’s desire for welfare. But even in developed countries environmental movements face similar arguments. It is up to us to convince society at large on the great importance of the environmental movement for both our present and future quality of life. Serkan Ocak’s essay on the radioactive dump site in İzmir successfully demonstrates that being concerned with environmental issues is not a “luxury” of the upper classes; on the contrary, the environmental movement has an important impact on the lives and living conditions of the lower classes.

It is no surprise to us then that most environmental activists are members of local organizations. Local activists take action to solve local problems, but it is not easy for them to make themselves heard nationwide. Since issues regarding democratization and the rule of law underlie all environmental problems, those who struggle for democracy, for the consolidation of the rule of law and for the protection of the environment should stand side-by-side in support of one another.

In addition, many politicians belittle the environmental movement, in part because they accept the existing development paradigm as true, and in part because they are insufficiently informed about sustainable development. This attitude may also be a strategy that enables them to focus on what they consider as “more important” issues. But the Fukushima “accident” proved that such a strategy could only be valid in the very short term.

Those who point out the risks involved in such short-term strategies are discredited in the eyes of the public as being pawns of foreign enemies whose goal is to impoverish the nation, and to prevent the nation’s society from sharing in the national wealth. These kinds of false accusations only serve to undermine the legitimacy of the environmental movement.

“A different life is possible.” It is evident that we still need to discuss extensively the impacts such a vision might have on society. The wealthy have the means to escape from air pollution, traffic congestion and other problems. The poor, however, often have no escape from working and living in unhealthy conditions. Today, the environmental movement continues its struggle to overcome these problems.

The environmental movement and its actions concern us all. We hope that with this issue we can impress upon our readers that the environmental movement cannot be thought of separately from the struggles for gender equality and democracy.

On behalf of the Perspectives team
Ulrike Dufner

Sustainability of the Green Movement in Turkey

Having witnessed the striking results of the discord between economy and ecology, Turkey has reached high figures in economic indicators with the policies pursued in the recent years on the one hand and started to figure among countries with the most accelerated pace of pollution on the other hand. Undoubtedly, it will be written one day when a history of the environment is penned that the years when the country was ruled by the AKP (Justice and Development Party) was a period when natural assets and historical values were irrevocably destroyed.

One cannot argue that this situation, which is due to the domination of ecological concerns by economic justifications, is adequately known, interrogated and brought into the agenda in Turkey. The problems stemming from the sacrifice of the natural balance for the sake of economic growth have been accepted as areas of interest exclusively for a limited number of environmentalists, concerned groups and experts. While one reason for this situation was the concern for votes or extreme academic specialization, the other reason was that the country lacked the economic and social structure to support a strong environmentalist or green organization.

Therefore, this article will purport to assess the potential options that may be brought to the agenda for the environmentalism and green movement to achieve success as a movement in the political arena by departing from its structural problems, the barriers it faces and the challenges it has encountered. Initially, the usual handicaps of pursuits originating from nature will be touched upon, then the current picture of the movement will be drawn; finally, a discussion will be carried out what the answers to the question "What is to be done?" could be.

Handicaps of the green thinking

Engaging in politics in a country like Turkey with the environmental problems taken as the essential point of departure has a sui generis status with its pros and cons. It can be argued that a great majority of people see themselves as natural supporters of the environmental movement. In a sense, they even tacitly ratify a great part of the activities in this field. A similar situation also applies to the media and academy. This tacit support of the people and the public opinion is also reflected on the governmental bodies in a way. For example, the environmentalists or greens are not perceived as dangerous as groups such as the Alawites, Kurds, conscientious objectors, etc. This situation may have had an impact on the fact that the environmentalists and greens were able to raise their voice a bit more as compared to other movements after the military coup on 12 September 1980. However, the mentioned support is but a tacit approval that is only inwardly given; it is not an

active contribution that would contribute to the growth and strengthening of this movement. The environmentalists and greens are asked to be alert and take action in the face of damage to nature, but they are not provided with concrete support. The question "Where are these environmentalists?" is probably sufficient to explain the situation.

The domination of ecology by economy

The attempt to bring environmental problems onto the political agenda in Turkey faces significant handicaps stemming from the relatively short history of green thought in this country. The lack of a strong green movement in a country like Turkey, which has not achieved its social-economic progress in all aspects, failed to reflect its growth onto its entire geography, has been going through a tumultuous process of transition into modernity, needs to be seen as a normal situation. As if confirming the phrase "The biggest environmental problem is poverty," said by Indra Gandhi during the Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, 1972, it is not surprising that environmentalism is perceived by us as "luxury" while there are more vital problems at stake.

Delay in industrialization and urbanization

It is only natural that the green movement of a country, which has been late in reaching the industrialization and urbanization stage and ridden by troubles in its political system, lags behind the green movements in countries that reached the maturity of the consumer society. For instance, we started to experience the environmental problems caused by mechanization later than the industrialized countries. The problems that now seem ordinary for us such as air pollution, hazardous waste, etc. are relatively new issues considering the entire history of the country.

There are important connections between the short history of the latent urbanization process, in other words, the fact that most of us live in urban settlements rather than rural areas, and the current situation of the green movement. In that respect, one should not forget that the problems stemming from the co-habitation of a great number of people on a small area have recently started to emerge. Issues such as traffic, waste, etc. have been problems on the agenda of only the last few generations. In short, one can argue that the late emergence of these problems caused the delay in taking a joint action for solution by environmentally-oriented movements.

Rural areas seen as a symbol of poverty

Since we have had a delay in industrialization and urbanization, we maintained our connection with the rural areas for a long time. Even though we have recently been drawing away from the rural areas in spatial terms, we can say



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that most of us have traces of the rural areas in our origin dating back to a few generations ago and an important part of us maintains our connection with the rural areas at least in spiritual sense by means of relatives and fellow countrymen. It seems that there is an important problem caused by this situation with respect to environmental problems. The empty lands, natural assets in urban areas remind us of the rural areas and poverty. Therefore, we want to construct something immediately on a place that we perceive as “empty space”, erect a building, in short, to “develop it”. We perceive rural areas or empty spaces as indicators of underdevelopment.¹ It is evident that the green movement is seen as one of the barriers that would hamper these steps in the way of “growth”, “development”.

The layout of the land

One may consider that one of the reasons why the green movement has been weak, in other words, the reason why we have remained insensitive to environmental values, could be related to the layout of our land. Since the lands have been owned or supervised by the state since the Byzantine times and throughout the Ottoman period, it has been easy to own the land to bring it into use or to see the natural assets as resources that should be reclaimed from the state and used as rapidly as possible. It appears that this situation is strongly linked to the construction of shanty houses on the land owned by the Treasury, build-up of illegal floors onto luxurious mansions, filling of the shores with concrete or current examples such as the urban transformation and 2B land practices.

Nomadism

There are some people who attribute the reason why green thought has not been popular in this country to the fact that our approach to nature has not been very friendly, we switched to permanent settlement too late and that we are actually a nomadic society. According to this opinion, we are not able to adopt our settlement areas and natural assets as a habitat, therefore, we see them as resources that should be exploited and consumed as soon as possible. For example, it is possible to see traces of our nomadism in the fact that we decorate our houses with nice articles and ornaments whereas our outer environment looks deplorable. Even though this seems to be an argument with an explanatory power as it points out to an important problem, we know not only that the nomadic societies actually led a life in harmony with nature, but also that other peoples that inhabited Anatolia much earlier than Turks and settled on these lands much earlier, such as the Kurds, are not very different in that respect, either. Therefore, one should take this explanation with a grain of salt.

Islam

The origins of our society's volte face from the nature may be searched in Islam. Even though there are attempts by some religious circles to discover environmentalist verses in the Koran –in a way similar to searching evidence in Das Kapital of the environmentally-friendliness of Marx–, there is no doubt that Islam has a human-oriented mentality in its core as in other celestial religions. It may be considered that the current way in which Islam is practiced stands as a barrier against in the solution of the solution of environmental problems and the strengthening of the green movement judging by the sacrifice of animals to the encouragement of population increase or rapprochement with capitalism. Ho-

wever, in spite of all these, one can notice that Islam emphasizes the value of all living beings as part of its essence, encourages a modest way of life, attaches special importance to natural values, thus argue that the explanatory power of religion-based reasons would remain constrained.

A short glance at the conditions under which the green

The villagers who are resisting the hydraulic power plants actually merely oppose to the construction of the power plant nearby the place they live in, they have no problems with the hydraulic power plants or other unclean energy resources; therefore, it may be misleading to qualify the actions of the movement as being green or environmentalist. Also, there is no doubt that the reactions shown throughout the country have a potential to increase the impact of the green movement even though they may not be enough to expand it.

movement, which is striving to do politics in the shadow of all these infrastructural challenges, may give some clues about the troubles experienced today.

Status of the green movement

The greens in Turkey, which incorporate participants from very diverse backgrounds in terms of their worldviews, represent a movement that does not have a long-standing past, is not involved in traditional political lines and has not been as effective in the social field as its Western examples.

Taking into account that the first resonating environmental demonstration was held in Taşucu, Silifke in 1977 upon the rumors about the establishment of a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu,² the first green protest held in Kızılay, Ankara in 1983 by the greens from Germany against the human rights violations in Turkey³ and the establishment of the first Green Party (Yeşiller Partisi) in 1988, it would not be misleading to say that the green/environmentalist movement has a history of roughly thirty-fourty years.⁴

Today, the number of political formations that have the ecological distress, environmental problems or natural assets within their areas of interest is not high. Following the Green Party, which was established in 1988 and reached the end of its political life in 1994, we had to wait until the year 2008 for the establishment of a political party that dealt with the environment. The newly founded Green Party decided to merge with the EDP (Emek ve Demokrasi Partisi - Labor and Democracy Party) in 2012 and maintain its existence under the umbrella of “Yeşiller ve Sol Gelecek Partisi” (Greens and Left Future Party). Undoubtedly, the parties with the word green or environment in their name do not only consist in these two, there are also formations such as “Gönül Birliği Yeşiller Partisi” (Harmony Green Party) or “Hayvan Partisi” (Animal Party), which are the products of narrow circles or function as voluntary organization.

No matter how high the number of parties is, it is not easy to talk about a robust and widespread green political tradition or to make optimistic predictions about the future of that movement in Turkey. In conclusion, the environmentalists and greens are both mentioned among “marginal” groups such as anti-war movement members, conscientious

Environment – Green Distinction

Even though it may appear that there are no differences between them and they sometimes refer to the same concepts, the terms environmentalist and green actually refer to different concepts. The word 'environmentalist' is rather used to refer to activists that conduct efforts for the protection of environment and elimination of pollution and engage in "constructive" actions within the established order. As for the word 'green', it actually denotes more radical activists who depart from the idea that environmental problems are actually reflections of existing economic-political problems and see the environmental problems as part of politics.

objectors, gays, atheists and may be politically ignored since they have a very small potential for gaining votes.

Problems in founding a party

For Yeşiller Partisi (Green Party), which has a history that can be deemed to be relatively short, it would be more meaningful to accept the period at stake as the years of foundation and search rather than assessing its success retrospectively. As it will be explained in further detail below, the movement encountered the structural problems of doing politics in a poor country on the one hand and dealt with the repercussions of the chronic problems of the left on the other hand.

The most important disadvantage of the green movement in Turkey is due to the discrepancy between its own *raison d'être* and the wishes of the people. The wish to live in better conditions within the existing economic and special system is only possible by damaging the environment. The Green Party will automatically be opposed by a great section of the society that expects a better life within this system when it acts in accordance with its own principles.

One of the factors that negatively affect the success of the greens in political life is that almost all parties included the environmental problems somehow in their programs and agendas, leaving the Green Party non-functional. For example, a look at the program of the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party), the party of electorate for whom the green movement may feel an affinity, reveals that a special importance is attached to the ecological distress, natural assets and urban problems.⁵

Another hurdle against the growth of the green movement has been the fact that it has included participants from very diverse backgrounds of the political spectrum. This situation, which could actually have been an indicator of both the support of wider sectors of the society and the richness of thoughts, has had a negative impact on the green parties. For example, the tension between the greens and environmentalists, two founding elements of the party in the first Green Party, brought about the end of the party; the differences of opinion within the Green Party resulted in a merger with EDP.

Possibilities for the growth of the green movement

It would not seem realistic to expect the green movement, which has to deal with the *sui generis* difficulties of making politics based on the nature on the one hand and has a limited growth potential as a vein that is supplied by the leftist tradition on the other hand, to become massive and turn into an important political actor. The green movement should be deemed to have fulfilled its function to the extent that it can influence the political powers, actors and groups that are outside itself.

The green thought is essentially targeted at the "potential" problems of the future generations rather than the "real" troubles of people today. In order to have

such an understanding, to be able to defend the green thought or to internalize the values that it defends, one should first be able to meet essential vital requirements smoothly and go through an educational process that would facilitate green awareness-raising, to put it more clearly, not be poor and uneducated. Therefore, the currents originating from the green thought become already automatically obliged to do politics in a mood of being left alone on their own as they appeal to a small number of supporters in a country like Turkey.

Highlighting the problems in daily life

To be able to render green thought effective in the political arena and to appeal to a wider section of the society, it seems unavoidably necessary to take efforts targeted at the current problems, to take an interest in "local" requirements rather than "global" ones, to pursue politics related to daily life rather than issues that are deemed to be "luxury" by an important part of the society.

If the movement sees itself limited only to the environmental problems or environmental protection due to the *sui generis* structural problems of Turkey, this would limit its potential for success in this land. Actually, one can say that this situation is similar to the ones in other countries. This is the truth underlying the fact that the Turkish workers in Germany, who would vote for AKP (Justice and Development Party) if they were to live in Turkey, vote for the Green Party.

Instead of subjects such as climate change, for instance, which people do not hold close to their heart, more local and more familiar problems such as poverty, housing, draught, etc. may be brought to the foreground in order to overcome this mentioned barrier in the party activities. Subjects that seem abstract and distant as in the example of climate change may be dealt with by being brought closer in place and time –namely, by addressing their concrete effects in Turkey and in the present time– so that they can be perceived more easily and more attention can be attracted.

Appealing to the actual needs of the people

Similarly, green policies should be developed based on an awareness of the real agenda of people and the problems they experience. For example, news about 2B lands or urban transformation, subjects such as the "loss of natural assets" or "unplanned urbanization" create more negative associations for the environmentalist groups, leftists and educated people. However, it is not possible to say the same thing about wider sections of the society embroiled in problems; these words signify the hope of switching to a more comfortable way of life for an important part of the society. People believe that they will move from shack houses to apartments, that the values of their houses will increase thanks to these laws. For that reason, it is necessary to work on more realistic, more feasible policy proposals for every problem even if they are difficult to implement.

Appealing to those who are excluded from profit and interest distribution

Indeed, one of the reasons why the environmental problems in Turkey have increased is that the land-related activities in horizontal and vertical directions have become intensified to assure economic success for some time. Its visible results are undoubtedly the urban transformation and skyscrapers on the vertical plane and the 2B and Hydraulic Power Plants on the horizontal plane. The extreme use of land on both planes causes environmental problems on the one hand and cause the accumulated profits to be transferred to specific sectors on the other hand. Undoubtedly, the extension of the electoral base of AKP is at least partially based on this mentioned interests shared and profits (rant in Turkish) distributed. For this reason, new policies that focus on the troubles of sectors that are unable to gain their shares from the distribution of the new value generated from land, propose the richness inherent in the land to be distributed to the entire society in a balanced way and also help the protection of natural assets should be developed.

Partnership with the environmental movement in Anatolia

It is observed that the demonstrations against increasing environmental problems have become more rampant, that the nuclear power plant projects, mine exploration activities, urban transformation practices and hydraulic power plant construction have triggered an environmental movement especially in the recent period. Even though one gets the idea that this situation provides an important opportunity for the green movement, that there is a favorable ground for growth at a first glance, it will be understood that the mentioned resurgence will actually not have effects as positive as the ones imagined by the movement based on a deeper analysis of the emerging picture.

It should not be forgotten that local people and villagers that take action against the lethal damage inflicted by the construction, mining and energy investments of the government on nature are actually not environmentalists; that they only react to the deterioration of their own habitats, weakening of their means of life, and that they are most probably AKP voters. Perhaps, it would be more appropriate to explain this situation with the word “nimby” (not in my backyard) as used by the Westerners.

To put it in another way, the villagers who are resisting the hydraulic power plants actually merely oppose to the construction of the power plant nearby the place they live in, they have no problems with the hydraulic power plants or other unclean energy resources; therefore, it may be misleading to qualify the actions of the movement as being green or environmentalist. Also, there is no doubt that the reactions shown throughout the country have a potential to increase the impact of the green movement even though they may not be enough to expand it.

Possible supporters of the green movement

At this point, the obvious question would be: “If the anti-

hydraulic power plant movements throughout Anatolia are not to grow the green movement, what should be done so that the environmentalist struggle achieves

The most important disadvantage of the green movement in Turkey is due to the discrepancy between its own *raison d'être* and the wishes of people. The wish to live in better conditions within the existing economic and special system is only possible by damaging the environment. The Green Party will automatically be opposed by a great section of the society that expects a better life within this system when it acts in accordance with its own principles.

success?” The best thing to do is probably to expand the target audience by creating associations between the oppression and exploitation of nature by human beings and the societal events. The corresponding audience in Turkey naturally consists of the Kurds, Alawites and other disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, the concrete conditions that would make such a partnership a natural one are also present. Forests burned, villages evacuated, destruction of ancient cities with dams, large-scale confiscations, forced migration... All of these are environmental problems as well.

Future of the green movement

Unless a radical change in the industrialization and urbanization tendencies takes place, the limits of use for the air, water and land will be reached; therefore, everyone will have to switch to a simpler, more sensitive way of living as desired by the green thought today; naturally, this will be in accordance with the nature of capitalism and to the extent permitted by it. To be realistic, the largest contribution of the green movement may be to further emphasize its mentioned voluntary simplicity and way of living in harmony with the environment. In the past, environmental problems were known as marginal problems; now everyone somehow experiences these problems since they have become a part of daily life. Given that the tomatoes are sprayed with hormone, the air is polluted, the traffic is congested, the forests are burned, the streams are blocked with dams, shores have turned into concrete blocks, it naturally follows that the environmental movement will become stronger. Let us hope that people will one day think of the green movement and not the Islamic movement when the word ‘green’ is mentioned.

Footnotes

1. Bülent Duru, *Doğayı AKP'den Korumak* (Protecting the Nature against AKP), *Radikal İki*, 7 November 2010.
2. Erol Özbek, “Biz Zaten Ölmüşüz” (We are Already Dead), *Yeni Gün-dem*, S. 13, 2-8, June, 1986, pages 26, 27.
3. Tanıl Bora, “80’lerde Yeşil Hareket: Salonlardan Sokaklara (Green

- Movement in the 80s: From Halls to Streets), *Sokak*, Issue 19, 31, December, pages 20, 21.
4. Bülent Duru, “Türkiye’de Çevrenin Siyasallaşması: Yeşiller Partisi Deneyimi” (The Experience of Politicization of Environment in Turkey: The Green Party Experience), *Mülkiye*, Issue 236, Volume 24, September-October 2002, pages 179-200.
5. Program of the *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* (Peace and Democracy Party) (bdp.org.tr)

Environmentalists in Turkey - Who are they?

What are the sources that feed the environmental movement in Turkey? Who do we call an environmentalist? Which socio-economic classes do the environmentalists belong to? The answers for these questions will unfold in this article, based on the data and research results we have.

If we consider the environmental movement as an umbrella, we also have to take into account the diversity of citizens under that umbrella. People from different age groups, different classes and professions come together around different interests, values and perceptions. The general tendency is to establish associations between environmentalism and the lifestyles and consumption patterns of the educated, urban middle and upper classes and their green-concerns. This association is very much influenced by the argument Ronald Inglehart puts forward in his post-materialism thesis (1977-1990), which claims that the improvements in the socio-economic status of people eventually affect their physical needs as well as their quality of life and thus comes environmental consciousness.¹ Despite the increasing number of studies on environment politics, environmental movements and environmentalist non-governmental organizations in Turkey, studies focusing on environmentalists as individuals or as groups and the dynamics of environmentalism are still limited in number. So let us have a closer look at the “environmentalists” with examples from the past and today.

From the Ottoman intellectuals to anti-nuclear fishermen

We can trace the environmental initiatives back to as early as the last period of the Ottoman Empire. In the 19th century, almost half of the Ottoman industry was in Istanbul and especially Golden Horn was surrounded by around 150 factories of all sizes. Beykoz and Paşabahçe coasts of the Bosphorus, Yedikule, Bakırköy and Küçükçekmece were among the other industrialized areas. From 1912 to 1915, thousands of petitions were compiled against the factories, wood and coal yards around the Bosphorus and were delivered to the then Mayor, Cemil Topuzlu. Back then, the environmental understanding was limited to remedying the deficiencies in the utilities, cleanliness, protection from epidemics and conservation of forests and historical artifacts.² It is only after the arrival of constitutional monarchy that political parties started to include topics like environmental health, urban planning and natural beauties to their programs. In 1909, Constitutional Reform Party proposed the protection of the existing forests; in 1910, People’s Party proposed the

establishment of a Society for the Protection of Animals and in 1912, the National Constitution Party proposed the regulation of forestation and urban and city planning in compliance with health norms. The Association of Istanbul’s Ancient Monuments, established in 1912 under the chairmanship of Prince Said Halim Pasha, adopted as one of its main principles the “promotion of Istanbul’s works of art as well as its cultural and historical heritage and beauties, and to increase aesthetical consciousness of its people”.³ The environmentalists of the period mainly consisted of the Ottoman elites.

With the establishment of the Republic, public works and urbanization related issues began to come to the forefront. Deforestation, marginal farmland clearing for agriculture, soil erosion, air pollution and forest fires were among the environmental problems. New associations such as the Prince Islands Settlement Association, Association for the Beautification of Çamlıca, Society of Bosphorus Lovers, Association for the Reconstruction of Martyr Memorials, Association for the Protection of Trees and the Association of Protection of Animals were established, especially in Istanbul, with the efforts of intellectuals. Although civil organizations increased in number, their activities remained to be under state control. In addition to the volunteer organizations set up by the elites, professional organizations also emerged. The first forestry NGO of the country, Foresters’ Association of Turkey, established in 1924, can be cited as an example to this.⁴

Transition to the multi-party period in 1946 geared up the activities of the civil society organizations. Together with population increase, changing economic structure, agricultural transformation, industrialization and urbanization, the environmental problems also evolved compared to the previous periods. Urban environmental problems emerged and air, soil and water pollution increased during the period from 1950 to 1980. Especially after 1970s, industrial pollution came into this picture. Urban/neighborhood beautification and public works societies, as well as some environmental NGOs, which are still pursuing activities today, were established during this period: Green Foresters’ Association of Turkey (1950), Turkish Association for Conservation of Nature (1954), Association of Assistant Forest Engineers (1951), Ankara Anti Air Pollution Association (1969), Society for the Protection of Nature (1975), Environmental Issues Foundation of Turkey (1978). Among the founders and staff working in these organizations, we see certain professional groups: doctors, biologists, cavers, geologists, botanists, climatologists and ecologists. In addition to these professional groups, former ministers and public officials



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also became part of the environmental movement through the foundations. Cevdet Aykan and Serbülen Bingöl, two of the founders of the Environment Foundation of Turkey, served as the Minister of Rural Affairs and, Health and Social Assistance; and the Minister of Public Works and Settlement and, Energy and Natural Resources respectively. The other founders also had years of service in different ministries. When we look at the geographical locations of the environmental NGOs, we see that Istanbul and Ankara stood out among others.

At the end of the 1970s, with the deepening and widening of the effects of problems related to industrialization and urbanization, more different segments of the community started to organize environmentalist protests. We see the emergence of unprecedented grassroots movements. Some examples are: in 1975, the silent march of 21 tobacco growing villages and boroughs that suffered from the toxic gases released from Samsun İzabe facilities; legal action taken in 1975 by the local people against the damage on the flora and agricultural fields caused by Etibank Copper Mining Company operating in Murgul; the protest conducted in 1978 by boats in the Bay of İzmit, against the pollution caused by industrialization; and protests in 1976 and 1978 led by Silifke Taşucu Fishermen's Cooperative against the nuclear power plant that was planned to be built in Akkuyu.⁵ Participation of communities that face the primary impacts of industrial pollution and big-scale energy investments to the environmental movement or their individual actions can be seen as a clear indication that the environmental movement does not accommodate professional groups. Only the struggles, which still continue in the present day, although not in the form of a mass movement, are yet to be traced back to those times, as we can see in the case of nuclear power plants. With the transition from import-substituting industrialization to export-led industrialization and the implementation of liberal policies in 1980, targets of economic growth were drawn to a large extent, as well. Large-scale infrastructure, housing, and transportation projects planned and implemented in this direction led to the deepening of the ecological devastation in urban, rural and coastal areas and an increase in the population affected by this devastation in their daily lives. Struggles against the energy and tourism projects particularly in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions made it necessary for the local actors to become part of the environmental movement on one hand and showed the importance of addressing the national public opinion and establishing international connections on the other. Struggles were under way against the Gökova (1984) and Yatağan (1984) thermal power plants, tourism facilities to be built on the breeding grounds of the caretta caretta in Dalyan (1984) and the municipality project in Ankara which aimed to convert Güven Park into a parking lot (1987).

Another important aspect of these struggles was the fact that they served as a channel for the blossoming of political activities, which were brought down to minimum with the closure of political parties, trade unions and mass organizations after the military coup in 1980, around the axis of democracy and human rights. Following the politicization of the environmental movement, also in Europe, through anti-nuclear, peace, and the women's movements, Green Party of Turkey was founded in 1988.

Who was in the grassroots of the Green Party, which classes did they come from and what motivated them to enter into green politics? Although no study exists to answer these questions, it is quite well known that the Green Party had a lot more women and young members compared to the other parties, one-third of those who

In 1999 two out of every 1000 people in Turkey were a member to an environmental NGO, while in 2007 this rate rose to 1.2. Society has more confidence in the environmental organizations (56 per cent) than it has in the political parties (35 per cent) and trade unions (35 per cent). On the other hand, the rate is lower compared to the confidence held in the women's movements (62 per cent) and humanitarian aid organizations (65 per cent).

took office in the central bodies of the party in 1988 and 1989 were women and in 1991, half of the members of the central bodies were women and the majority of the members were well-educated.⁶ We also see that local environmental organizations were established and became widespread in the same years. For instance in 1986, İskenderun Environmental Protection Association was established in İskenderun and its charter set an example for the other environmental organizations to be established in different cities and districts of the region.

Member profiles of today's environmental NGOs

In the 1990s, we witness the establishment of national, professional NGOs and their emergence in the environmental field. From 1995 to 2007, 439 environmental NGOs became operational. Nearly three-quarters of the environmental NGOs operating today, was established in and after 1995. According to records of the Presidency of the Department of Associations, the number of associations operating in Turkey is 78,608. Around 0.7 per cent of all NGOs are environmental NGOs. In spite of the increase in number of the environmental NGOs in the last 15 years, their ratio within all NGOs is still very low. Approximately one third of the environmental NGOs are operating in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, the three largest cities of Turkey in terms of population. In the distribution by geographical region, Central Anatolia and Marmara regions hold the first two places while Eastern Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia regions are in the last two rows.⁷ Organizations such as TEMA (The Foundation for Combating Erosion) and Greenpeace began their activities in this period. Environmental NGOs became an important pillar of the developing civil society. Contrary to the local level organizations with amateur functioning and a structure that would usually focus on only a single environmental problem, these NGOs started to be involved in the environmental policies at the national level and cooperate with international networks. Their structure also differed from those of the NGOs from previous periods in the sense that they recruited a significant portion of their employees professionally and carried out activities towards the business world (e.g. WWF). Uygur Özsmi makes an historical evaluation of the environmental

NGO's and their employees in five periods.⁸

1) 1950s: National oriented NGOs consisting of public officials of 40-50 years of age (Foresters' Association and Turkish Association for Conservation of Nature - TTKD).

Researchers studying the struggle conducted by the people of Gerze for the last three years against the thermal power plant that Anadolu Group wants to build can observe the different dynamics of environmentalism. People from the Yaykıl village of Gerze joined the struggle because their livelihoods would be under threat. This case appears similar to what Martinez-Alier conceptualizes in the literature as the "Environmentalism of the Poor", struggle of the poor to protect their ties with the environment, which is directly related with their livelihoods.

2) 1972 onwards: National and international oriented environmental NGOs established by intellectuals and people from the academic world from 30 to 40 years of age (Turkish Environmental and Woodlands Protection Society -TÜRÇEK and Society for the Protection of Nature - DHKD)

3) From 1980 to 1992: gap period.

4) After the Rio Summit in 1992: NGOs that host professionals and businessmen over the age of 50, professional NGO workers between the ages of 25 and 40 as well as students between the ages of 18 and 20 (Foundations such as TEMA, TURMEPA (Turkish Marine Environment Protection Association), TÜRÇEV (Foundation for Environmental Education of Turkey) and Greenpeace).

5) 2000s: The patterns in 1990s are still valid. WWF (World Wildlife Fund) Turkey and Doğa Derneği (Nature Society) were established. Furthermore, years 2000 is also marked by an upswing at the local level: DOÇEV (Nature and Environment Foundation), TÜRÇEP (Turkey Environmental Platform), KarDoğa, İçDoğa, Kuzey Doğa.

According to data from the World Values Survey, in 1999 two out of every thousand people in Turkey were a member to an environmental NGO, while in 2007 this rate rose to 1.2. By looking at the rates of how much confidence the society has in the environmental organizations, one may try to understand whether the low rates of membership to such organizations is due to the lack of confidence or not. Society has more confidence in the environmental organizations (56 per cent) than it has in the political parties (35 per cent) and trade unions (35 per cent). On the other hand, the rate is lower compared to the confidence held in the women's movements (62 per cent) and humanitarian aid organizations (65 per cent). However this rate is not too low to negatively affect membership to environmental organizations. Among the 55 countries studied in the survey, Turkey stands fourth to last, in respect of environmental organization. Egypt (1.2 per cent), Romania (0.7 per cent) and Jordan (0.4 per cent) are in the last rows.⁹ Judging by this rate, we can say that approximately 500 thousand people in Turkey are a member to an environmental NGO. So who are these

500 thousand people? Which organizations are they a member of? What do we mean by membership? What is the membership ratio of women and men? What are the motives behind membership? Which economic classes do the members belong to? Do they live in the cities or in rural areas? We will look a little more closely to the membership profiles of Greenpeace Turkey, TEMA and Nature Society operating in Turkey, on the basis of the data that we were able to receive.

Let us start with the Turkish Foundation for Combating Erosion, Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats – TEMA, the largest environmental organization in Turkey. The foundation was established in 1992. As of 2013 it has representations in 69 provinces, volunteer officials in 213 districts and student clubs entitled GençTEMA (Young TEMA) in 75 universities. Furthermore, it has different programs such as Minik TEMA (Early Childhood Environment Education Program), Yavru TEMA (Environment Education Program in primary schools), Genç TEMA Lise (High school program), and Mezun TEMA (for graduate TEMA volunteers). As TEMA is organized under the status of a foundation, individuals cannot become members, however can be registered as volunteers to join the activities of the foundation. As of February 2013, TEMA has 460 thousand volunteers and every year 30 thousand new volunteers join them. In 2012, 92 per cent of the volunteers were under 25 years of age. Lack of independent political activities by the political parties in the area of environment and exclusion of environment as a topic from the existing activities of their youth branches can be cited as the main reasons why those who want to be active in this area approach environmental NGOs and social movements rather than the political parties. Professional and common environmentalist NGOs conduct activities aiming at organizing and raising awareness among young people, mainly students, and constitute a point of attraction for the young people who want to be actively involved with environment.¹⁰ 270 thousand of TEMA's 460 thousand volunteers are active. Of the 26 thousand volunteers who were registered in 2012, 55 per cent are women.

Greenpeace Turkey has nearly 50 thousand supporters as of 2013. 43 per cent of the supporters are male and 38 per cent are female. 31 per cent of the supporters did not indicate their sex. As for age distribution, less than 1 per cent of the supporters are under the age of 18, 41 per cent between 18 and 35 years of age and 27 per cent over 36 years of age. A significant portion of the supporters are university students. Furthermore, Greenpeace has approximately 50 thousand passive supporters.

Of the 581 active members of the Nature Society, 51 per cent are male and 45 per cent between the ages of 18-35.¹¹ WWF Turkey has 5000 supporters, 55 per cent female and 70 per cent between the ages of 20-24.

In a study conducted on environmental NGOs, the problem related to membership was identified to be stemming from the absence of participation of the members – participation to activities, paying the membership fee – rather than from recruiting new members.¹² Based on the data at hand, we can roughly say that rate of men and women NGO members is almost equal and around 40 per cent of the members are between the ages of 18-35. There is no available compiled data showing which socio-economic classes or professional backgrounds the members are from.

Different denominations such as member, supporter

or volunteer are due to the fact that NGOs operate under different statuses such as foundation, association or enterprise. We also have to take into account the citizens who are active in environmental organizations with no legal entity, such as initiatives, platforms, etc. as environmental movement activism or membership to an environmental NGO are not mutually exclusive positions, but often intersect with one another.

Dynamics of activism in the local environmental movements

In addition to institutional structures such as foundations, societies and cooperatives, citizens in Turkey conduct environmental activities also under non-institutional structures like platforms, coalitions, citizen initiatives, environmental groups at universities etc. Those affected by the multiplying and deepening environmental problems increase in number and some of them exert efforts to stop the destruction and create sustainable alternatives. We can cite five major areas of struggle as the backbone of the environmental movement in Turkey – anti nuclear movement (1976-), movement against gold mining (1990-), anti HES (hydroelectric power plant) movement (2004-), anti GMO movement (2004-) and climate movement. These can be considered as movements that operate at local, national and international levels, bring together professionals and grassroots, benefit from a variety of specialties like law and medicine and have different ways of organization, action strategies and ideological tendencies. No data is available for us to learn more about the profiles of these activists in terms of their organization motives and socio-economic classes. However we can say that the majority of them are individuals or groups that take action for short periods of time and conduct struggles in different areas such as climate, food and energy. Membership to an NGO and activism under a movement may be overlapping.

There are also citizens who become “environmentalists” after finding out that a thermal power plant, gold mine or HES is to be erected in their backyards, fields or nearby their rivers. They are different from the above groupings in the sense that their struggle usually has a single focus and they do not fit well into the general environmentalist perception - well educated, urbanite, upper-middle class. Bayram Kuzu, nicknamed “Hopdediks” (Obelix), who was involved in the fight against gold mines using the cyanide leaching method in

Bergama, Kazım Delal, nicknamed “Citizen Kazım” who sold his cow to take legal action against the HES that was planned to be built right across his village, 17 years old Leyla Yalçınkaya who was banned from entering into the HES site and having contact with protest activists on the grounds that she participated to a protest action against the HES, are some of the citizens who became icon names of local environmental struggles.

Researchers studying the struggle conducted by the people of Gerze for the last three years against the thermal power plant that Anadolu Group wants to build can observe the different dynamics of environmentalism. People from the Yaykıl village of Gerze joined the struggle because their livelihoods would be under threat. This case appears similar to what Martinez-Alier conceptualizes in the literature as the “Environmentalism of the Poor”,¹³ struggle of the poor to protect their ties with the environment, which is directly related with their livelihoods. Additionally in Gerze, the way the town dwellers approach the issue is different from that of the villagers. Those who live in the town, with different livelihoods from the villagers, mainly emphasize the impacts of the power plant on the health and embrace the region, this way, they try to maintain the left-wing politics tradition prior to 1980 on the one hand and express their demand for democracy via a discourse that is against the construction of a project unwelcomed by the local people. Finally, one can also observe an eco-nationalism generating from the fact that the Black Sea will turn into the Europe's energy dumpsite and the thermal power plant will burn imported coal.¹⁴

To understand the dynamics of participation to struggle, as an individual or as a group, it is quite important to examine the factors that affect the struggle discourses in ecologic conflicts. The reasons for opposition to gold mining in Kazdağı can be grouped in five different categories: 1. threat to income source/livelihood; 2. threat to life style; 3. health risks; 4. nationalistic feelings; 5. threat to the quality of environment. Opposition to gold mining varies according to material interests of the locals as well as their values and perceptions. For instance, the groups that oppose to the project are very much concerned about the environmental risks, do not have confidence in the state institutions, do not believe that the environmental impacts can be eliminated with the correct use of technology and are concerned about the environmental issues both at national and local levels.¹⁵

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The involvement of the green movement in the political space

One of the most important questions faced by the green movement in Turkey, which is at least 30 years old, even with the most cautious calculation is how to relate itself to politics and how to form its understanding of being political. In the Turkish case we can talk about three different media of green movement: NGOs, social movements and political parties (for the reasons I will explain below the main actor of this medium is the Green Party). Considering that the political space is where policy makers like state and its various institutions, government and political parties decide on different policies, we see that all actors interested in the environmental issues who want to change these media and be part of the decision making, are included in this space. Different actors who have a word to say for environmental politics always have a relationship with the political space even if they apply different methods. In fact, in environmental campaigns there is a high level of transitivity. NGOs can support social movements as Greenpeace Mediterranean is supporting the movement against the planned coal plant in Gerze, or the Green Party may act like a part of a social movement as in the campaign against the Aliğa power plant or in the anti-nuclear movement. How these different actors define themselves in relation to the political space depends on their conception of being political and it differs from one actor to the other.

It's a common conception that environmental issues are beyond politics. This understanding that is quite common for different environmental organizations and local movements is about distancing themselves from daily political debates and their conflicts of interest and thus gaining social legitimacy. But as the latest environmental disagreements show, various environmental demands are eventually political demands and, hence, require interfering in the decision of the policy makers. Therefore, environmental protection is inevitably a part of the politics. The idea of being beyond politics, as claimed by different actors of the environmental movement, is then nullified. Different movements in Anatolia fighting against hydroelectric plants or groups in Mount Ida trying to stop gold mining aim to protect the nature and the local habitat. In that sense, they can relatively be considered to be within the boundaries of a space accepted by

the state. But these movements also oppose the energy policies of the same state and demand alternatives to them. Therefore, environmental movements do have political demands and demands for environmental protection that are accepted by the state overlap with those demands concerning energy and water policies and therefore, crossing the red lines of the state overlap in an inseparable way.¹ This is also evident in the latest environmental disagreements and in the attitude of the policy makers towards disagreeing parties. Nevertheless, it is still an important question how environmental issues and actors dealing with them understand, perceive and take a stand toward politicization. Another factor why environmental issues are regarded as being beyond politics is the political conjuncture of the 80s when environmental movement was gaining strength. In this context, it is important to examine the emergence and development of this movement and to think about how the main actors of the movement entered the political space, and also which channels and methods they used.

The development of the environmental movement in Turkey

While studying the emergence and development of the environmental movement in Turkey, it is both convenient and misleading to use a classification based on time periods. The most important reason for that is since the 1980s – a period that is generally considered as the turning point of the movement² – there hasn't been period that could be defined by a single tendency.

It is possible to date the environmental sensitivity all the way back to the 50s. The Turkish Association for the Conservation of Nature (1955), Association for the Protection of Wild Life (1975) and Environment Foundation of Turkey (1978) were manifestations of this sensitivity and they played an important role in raising awareness and improving environmental laws and regulations. It is possible to say that the main concern of environmentalism at the beginning was to raise awareness and to embellish the environment. After the 80s, a new era begun. The post-coup period of political bans created an opening for the people organizing environmental campaigns because the state saw them as relatively "harmless". One of the most important environmental actors who got organized in the political space was the Green



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Party founded in 1988. The foundation of Green Party indicated that environmental opposition was getting directly involved in political space. At the same time, many important environmental campaigns emerged. Struggles against Yatağan, Aliğa and Gökova coal power plants, projects such as the hotel construction in Dalyan – a major reproduction site of the caretta caretta – and the turning of Güvenpark in Ankara into a parking lot were the first issues that came to mind. These campaigns manifested that different actors and different political methods co-existed. In addition, it shows how these methods were intertwined. For example, contrary to classical political approaches, the Green Party chose to take part in the social movement. Especially during the campaign against the power plant in Aliğa, together with the local people, activism had been a major tool used by the Green Party.³

In the 90s again, it was impossible to use one specific tendency to define the evolution of environmental movement. 90s could be analyzed as the period of institutionalization, as professional, project-oriented and urban organizations proliferated. Foundations like TEMA (Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats - 1992), WWF (Wild World Foundation), Greenpeace Mediterranean and TÜRÇEV (Turkish Foundation for Environmental Education) recruited professionals specialized in subjects like natural protection, energy, water and local development and run projects financed by various funds. Another novelty was international connections built by these environmental NGOs. The UN conference HABITAT II organized in 1996 brought different NGOs from all over the world to Istanbul and helped them connect with the Turkish ones. At the same time, during the 90s, there were important environmental movements and triumphs. The most memorable example is the struggle in Bergama against the gold mines. A village movement succeeded to obtain public support with the help of some local representatives of political parties, national environmental organizations and international environmental networks and organizations. This was a considerably significant support given that public opinion in Turkey considers environmental issues to be of secondary importance.⁴

Bergama movement earned significant legitimacy for environmental opposition in general and took a leading position. Another similarly significant and long-term opposition was carried by Anti-Nuclear Platform against the nuclear power plant proposed to be built in Akkuyu. In 2000s on the other hand, it is possible to mention two main tendencies: institutionalized, urban environmental organizations led by professionals and environmental movements based on a powerful activism widespread throughout Anatolia. Although both of these tendencies are adopted by different actors they should not be considered as utterly opposite poles. Environmental organizations of the former

group sometimes involve in political space either by turning to activism like local movements do and organizing campaigns or by merely supporting local movements even though they rarely do so. For example, Doğa Derneği (Nature Society) joined the local struggle against the Ilisu Dam Project, which is threatening to flood Hasankeyf in spite of its vast ecological and cultural significance and they succeeded in drawing international attention to this struggle. Another

In Turkey, the environmental movement is regarded as apolitical. In fact, this understanding is linked with increasing social legitimacy. Even though this perception is still used in a discursive level, all the actors of the movement are, in one way or another, involved in the political sphere, because demands related to nature conservation and prevention of its destruction require changes in the policies of decision-makers. This is why it is situated in the very center of the political sphere.

example worth mentioning is the influential campaign against GMO food carried out by Greenpeace Mediterranean.

This brief historical look shows us that we come across increasingly diverse actors in the environmental movement in Turkey and that they are getting involved in political space through different political channels. Hence, the question regarding how political environmental issues (and the actors engaged in) are or if they are beyond politics or not, is irrelevant. We should instead ask which channels they use for getting involved in political space. Thus, it is necessary to examine different ways of doing politics in detail.

Are environmental NGOs apolitical?

Environmental NGOs interact with decision makers – with state institutions and government in this context, since we are talking about the political sphere – and, hence, involve in the political sphere, because demands related to environment direct criticism at government politics in these issues and require change. As a result, citizens demand to participate in the environmental decision-making to influence the society they live in and thus environmental demands are in the center of political sphere. In this context, opposing nuclear energy by emphasizing that there are alternative energy sources as well as demanding conservation of wetland in accordance with binding international agreements or engaging in legal opposition against projected use of 2B forest lands are all ways of engaging in political sphere. As mentioned above, the reason for environmental issues being perceived as apolitical could partly

be attributed to state's attitude to categorize activities like nature conservation as "harmless" and is partly because environmental politics emerged in the post-1980 period.

Environmental movements oppose the energy policies of the state and demand alternatives to them. Therefore, they do have political demands and demands for environmental protection that are accepted by the state overlap with those demands concerning energy and water policies and, therefore, crossing the red lines of the state in an inseparable way.

Yet, it is still impossible to consider nature conservationism as apolitical even in that period.⁵ For instance, opposing hotel construction in Dalyan in order to conserve the caretta caretta habitat, was at the same time an opposition to rent-seeking tourism policies of the state and a demand for change.

While engaging in political sphere, environmental NGOs apply different methods such as taking legal action, using expert knowledge in decision-making processes and lobbying. Yet, looking at the examples above, it is obvious that we cannot make generalizations, because there is transitivity between these methods. In other words, it is not possible to say that environmental NGOs merely use these methods and do not organize campaigns or do not engage in activism. By using all of these methods, environmental organizations engage in political sphere and hence interact with the state.⁶ The relationships of NGOs with the state should be thought as in three different aspects: cooperation, conflict and co-optation.⁷ According to the cooperation tendencies where state-NGO relationship is based on equal partnership, the capabilities of NGOs increase in the areas such as agenda-setting, effective working and opening up participation channels for their stakeholders.⁸

While mutual information exchange and transfer of expertise enable the state to make more effective policies, it allows NGOs to engage in policy-making processes and voice societal demands in the processes. When the state tries to oppress the opposition and exclude NGOs from decision-making processes, there emerges a conflictual relationship and therefore the interaction channels based on equal partnership becomes completely blocked. The third defining tendency in state-NGO relationships, namely co-optation, is a type of interaction where the state inclines to incorporate NGOs in order to be able to control them.⁹ In Turkey, we see different versions of this interaction between the state and NGOs. However, especially in the recent times, it is possible to say that the tendencies of conflict and co-optation predominate.

Local movements

The forms of interaction with the state are also valid for the social movements that work based on activism. Especially lately, local movements find themselves in a conflicted relationship with the state, because since they aim to protect the habitat and the environment they have to be fighting against state policies of economic development and energy. In Turkey, these policies are protected with "red lines" that should not be crossed. In fact, what should be questioned are these short-term, reckless growth policies because they tend to have high levels of environmental damage and social cost. And they cannot be undone. The movements that defend ecological integrity opposing hydroelectric plants, mines and coal power, local anti-nuclear movements that explain the risks and costs of nuclear power and demand alternative means of production tend to have a conflicting relationship with the state and use activism as their method. They therefore enter the political sphere because they question these policies. Some local movements even go beyond environmental concerns and defend their demands within the frameworks of human rights and democratization. For instance, during the Bergama movement, the environmental struggle was directly related to democracy and to the struggle of getting involved in matters influencing one's own life.¹⁰

Is environmental destruction a part of the political party agendas?

The actors with the most obvious link to the political sphere are in this medium, because political parties claim to produce new policies by definition. Yet, instead of examining every political party, it would be more appropriate to mention just one party for its attention to environmental destruction and domination. The Green Party, founded first in 1988, closed in 1994 and founded again in 2008, expanded the boundaries of the political sphere in Turkey thanks to its ecological politics. All the other parties share the common belief in the reckless growth and the economic development through energy politics. This is a tendency that dominates Turkey and grows with the neoliberal framework. Even though nature conservation and developmental policies have a conflicting relationship, it is still easy to see the manifestations of such policies in a country that has modernization and development as its mission. The environmental movement questions the relationship between development and progress and the domination created by its lack of accountability.¹¹

Lately the Green Party decided to merge with the EDP (Equality and Democracy Party) to have a wider organization. This political approach helped other parties to take environmental issues more seriously. Even if it is limited now, we can foresee that this interest will grow. Despite the new organization, one of the most important problems faced by a party with ecological policies is creating a social base. The Green party was involved in the political sphere with actors of civil

society and social movements, using methods based on activism. The question of a social support is also valid for these actors.

In conclusion, the environmental movement in Turkey is regarded as apolitical. In fact, this understanding is linked with increasing social legitimacy. Even though this perception is still used in a discursive level, all the actors of the movement are, in one way or another, involved in the political sphere, because demands related to nature conservation and prevention of its

destruction require changes in the policies of decision-makers. This is why it is situated in the very center of the political sphere. Hence, the real question is not whether environmental actors are in the political sphere or not, but how they will increase their social support while acting in that sphere. This is a vital question, because in order to force decision-makers to consider ecological concerns and to make a change, we need social support and legitimacy.

Footnotes

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Ecofeminism: Practical and theoretical possibilities

Ecological, feminist and other “second generation social movements” addressed the needs, identities and problems that were not acknowledged or were ignored by the working class movement. Therefore, it followed that they usually distinguished themselves and positioned themselves in the political field by emphasizing their differences from the class movement. Such a political strategy was justifiable in that period since working class movements and Marxism in general were blind to issues of gender and ecology. Later, practical and theoretical developments allowed for the convincing argument that there was indeed a feminist and an ecologist vein in Marxism, but the 1970s were nevertheless a period when the members of the socialist left in many countries felt that the future of these social movements was dependent on the fate of the working class movement; sometimes, they were ignored by them or, worse, the class movement even turned their backs on them, sometimes going as far as declaring them enemies of the class movement. As a result, these movements remained largely independent and followed an autonomous political trajectory, developing according to their own internal dynamics. On the other hand, the capitalist mode of production that defined the political-economic and socio-cultural milieu into which these movements emerged magnified their exploitation and functioned in such a way as to articulate and intertwine this exploitation with other forms of oppression. Over time, as these social movements lost their initial radical quality, theoreticians became divided on how to perceive them; some argued that they focused on independent and civil society rather than on state-controlled society, whereas others considered them merely the products of the internal contradictions of capitalism, which always served as the breeding ground for different forms of oppression. From that point on, it became ever more clear that the working class itself was not a homogenous group of white, male, blue-collar or factory workers. On the contrary, it was heterogeneous and internally divided. It was also confirmed once more that capitalism was fundamentally based not on the contradiction between labor and capital, but between human life and capital, the latter contradiction absorbing and transcending the former.

Differences in opinion on the theoretical level were soon matched by those in the sphere of applied politics. As social movements became more engaged in practical issues, they attempted to answer new problems from women from different

segments of society. After all, the broad category of “women” was incapable of addressing the particular needs and interests of cleaning women, housewives, and sex workers. Within the context of the “environmentalist” movement, there was a new consensus that micro-nationalist attitudes that only defended “one’s own territory” against environmental damage was not enough, and that the real struggle had to be against multi-national corporations and the capitalist state. The development of critical consciousness, a raised awareness about the different aspects of environmental problems in cities and the countryside, the participation of women in the environmental movement –and the radical quality of their involvement– all indicated that the ecological movement, like the feminist movement, was going through a process of internal differentiation and stratification.

This essay argues that one of the greatest obstacles preventing the various groups within the feminist and ecological movements from coming together and transcending the movements’ fragmentary structure is capitalism’s policy of divide and rule. We would like to make this clear at the very beginning: To classify ecofeminism, as other political movements are often classified, as a “new social movement” is essentially situating it and similar movements outside the capitalist mode of production. Yet 90 percent of all labor in the world is expended by women, peasants, small merchants and the world’s 600 million slaves. Women are responsible for the 70 percent of total world production but earn only 10 percent of its total income. Then the question is: Was capitalism unable to integrate these groups, or is it exploiting the fragmentary structure of different interest groups for its own ends? In our opinion, it is only because of this fragmentation and capitalism’s tendency to exclude, that the capitalist mode of production survives.

The experiences of the 1990s differed from the situation in the 1970s in that it became clear that social movements should come together under one unifying roof. The success of coalition parties, mainly in Europe, in the early 1990s and the opposition that began in Seattle and developed into an anti-globalist movement embodied a dynamic that unified social opposition movements. However, the underlying logic was still one of “a movement of the movements”, or, in other words, each social movement preserved their own independent dynamics, coming together only temporarily before dissipating. This issue-based cooperation did not seem to provide sufficient ground



Ecehan Balta

1975 Ankara-born Balta studied sociology and political science in METU and the Faculty of Political Science of Ankara University. A member of the Ecology Collective, she is a founder and an editorial board member of *Praksis* magazine. She writes regularly for the ecosocialist magazine *Kolektif*, the *Praxis*, and *antikapitalisteylem.org*. Apart from ecology, she is interested in social movements, rural transformation, and the sociology of health among other subjects.

for interaction; it did not allow different oppositional groups to influence and be influenced by each other. The end result was each group withdrawing back into itself, a major practical problem. But on the other hand, one indisputable result of the developments on the global scale was that subjects of various social movements were increasingly interconnected. The importance of this interconnection and mutual engagement of identities was confirmed in the first decade of the 21st century. In the 21st century, anti-capitalism would be envisioned accordingly: Feminists, ecological activists, anti-racists, pro-self-liberation and pro-self-government groups would come together under the unifying roof of socialist identity. This projection was not only a product of the power of imagination; it was justified by the shared knowledge that a unified struggle would be the most effective strategy against the totalitarian attack of capitalist globalization. Finally, the racist and sexist nature of capitalism as a system based on class exploitation and ecological destruction had become manifested.

Links between ecology and feminism

Sustainable equality and respect for human dignity are the common grounds between ecology and feminism (Juan Tortosa, 2011). The oppression of women and nature result from a patriarchal mentality that is based on productionism, conquest and invasion, and so it follows that their fates are tightly interconnected. The ideology of capitalist productionism and economic development not only ensure that the domain of reproduction is totally excluded from social life and rendered invisible, but it also creates the illusion that nature is a costless input in the labor process. Women are the first victims of the destruction of nature. Women own only one percent of land worldwide, but spend more time cultivating it. Women do not relate to land in an essentialist manner; for women who are bound to the land and who work in small family establishments based on subsistence economies, the protection of the land is often equated with the protection of life in which they themselves are a part of. Therefore, in the past and today, women have always been in the frontline of many movements for climate justice. At this point, I would like to leave the theoretical links between feminism and ecology¹, and focus on the ways in which we can make sense of women's participation in the ecologist movement.

Women's radical participation in the ecology movement, as acknowledged by everyone involved in local social movements, is not specific to Turkey. Barbara Epstein (1995:6) notes that in the USA, both activists for environmental justice movements against harmful waste and the researchers who study these movements have identified high participation rates of women. Again according to Epstein, most of these researchers report women's support of these movements is due to the fact that they are centered around health issues. In the gender-based division of labor, women are responsible for caring for children and the elderly; therefore, women naturally take action to protect the health of these populations. Although we can't generalize, we can argue that one reason why women who have never participated in any kind of political activity before getting involved in these

movements is because of their interest in serious health threats. In the same vein, in an interview with Tortosa, Herrero stresses that women in India are active participants in the struggle against the Narmada river dam, and that women in the USA were active participants in the struggle against toxic dumping in the Love Canal, a protest that is seen as the beginning of the ecological movement in that country. She adds that women are also in the frontline of the struggles for protection of communal lands, inclusion in the urban social field and for healthy eating. Impoverished women are especially aware that the protection of

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nature is of vital importance. In the Philippines, women have been fighting for the establishment of a seed bank. They are also active participants in the struggles against industrial agriculture, land confiscation, the application of quotas to agricultural products, nuclear and thermal power plants, hydroelectric power plants, and gold and silver mining.

How can we make sense of women's involvement in both a theoretical and political levels? Although it itself is divided into different schools, ecofeminism still provides the only conceptual framework that we can use to analyze the degree and level of women's participation. It would be impossible to say that ecofeminist theory is fully developed or that it can provide an answer to every question. But if the specific presence of women is a fact acknowledged by all who participate in the ecological movement, then we have no other alternative –because as of yet nothing else has been developed– than to utilize the only conceptual tool that is available to us, ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism and socialism

First, we must emphasize the fact that in all the history of class societies, women, slaves, and other oppressed populations have always been exploited in the interests of men. Like gender discrimination, ecological destruction is not specific to class societies; rather, it reinforces and is reinforced by the class system. According to the ecofeminist perspective, in the capitalist world that we live in, these two mechanisms function as part of a single process. One of the major critical insights that ecofeminism shares with feminism is that historically men have been defined as having the power of production, whereas women have the power of reproduction; further, productive activity is assigned to the public sphere whereas reproductive activity belongs to the private sphere. The former is deemed valuable, whereas the latter has no value. Moreover, ecofeminism

questions the artificial division between nature and history and exposes the opinion that argues –on the assumption that natural facts are static and historical facts are dynamic– that gender differentiation, as a historically constructed fact, is “natural” and therefore unchanging.

Secondly, women are exploited as if they were a natural resource, and in turn their exploitation can be legitimized by naturalization. Ariel Salleh describes

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this as the “woman = nature nexus.” According to this viewpoint, women’s time is cyclical, taking the form of the cycles defined by menstruation periods whereas men’s time progresses in a linear fashion and manhood is constructed step by step through victories in the struggle against nature.

Ecofeminism attempts to expose the ways in which women are oppressed and exploited by biologism. According to Mies, women’s ability to give birth is a function of the uterus, an organ granted to them by nature, and for this reason birth is not a voluntary human act but an act that belongs to nature. On the other hand, the concept of labor defines the bodily organs of production by separating the body into parts that are “natural” or “human.” While the head and the arms are human, sexual organs such as the uterus are natural.² Capitalism is only interested in the parts of the human body that can be used as tools of labor. While reproduction is a natural activity, production involves a struggle against nature.

According to this point of view, a woman is nature’s equivalent; she has no value and therefore her labor is a zero-cost input in the process of reproduction. Production does not consist in productive activities that derive their value from the accumulation of capital. Production is explained by wage labor and profit; nature is seen as a costless input and women are treated as unpaid house slaves.

Capital does not finance all the costs of reproduction; these costs are met either by the family, the state or by nature itself. In periods of economic crisis, capital usually attempts to decrease total costs and increase profits through primitive capital accumulation and by scaling back the costs of reproduction. The neoliberal economic policies that were put into practice in the final decades of the 20th century prioritized primitive capital accumulation achieved through more violent means compared to general capital accumulation.³ Indeed, one of the

basic characteristics of neoliberalism is that it favors primitive capital accumulation over general capital accumulation. Primitive capital accumulation based on violence involves intensive exploitation such as appropriation of labor, unpaid slavery and the colonization of nature. It is not simply a characteristic of the initial phases of capitalist development; it is an integral part of capitalism. In Marxist literature, primitive capital accumulation generally signifies the founding period of capitalism that lasts up to the moment when it becomes possible to make money from money. It was argued that from that point onwards, the “mill would turn itself.” However, with the advent of neoliberalism, it became clear once again that capitalism always has to carry water to the mill. The most obvious proof is capitalism’s search for new fields of commodification in water, air, and carbon commerce. On the other hand, women have always been subject to primitive capital accumulation because the exploitation of female labor and natural resources have always functioned as a form of primitive capital accumulation. In capitalism, primitive capital accumulation always takes the form of a relationship of appropriation.⁴ The much-debated privatization of water is a good example of primitive capital accumulation. The alienation of women from their bodies and from the products of their own labor is a precondition of their appropriation. The violent quality of this process still continues to affect both women and nature. Capitalism as a form of global appropriation and exploitation, in addition to the wars that are capitalism’s indispensable collaborators, function as a continual means of exploiting women’s bodies and their labor.

Thirdly, when faced with an ecological crisis, women as producers and consumers are more vulnerable than men. The green revolution has undermined the traditional structure of the peasant family, and, as a result, women have become more isolated from work and social life. While their poverty increased, they had to work harder to balance the effects of food scarcity.⁵ In Turkey, for example, until recently there were five million female laborers working for their families. Although they received no pay for their labor, they were employed and they had a presence in the public sphere. Despite the fact that their labor had no market value, they were still a part of the forces of production. With the industrialization of agriculture, a considerable number of these women were left unemployed and isolated from the process of production of value. Within ten years, the employment rate of women decreased from 26 to 21 percent.

The period when social welfare regimes encouraged women to be employed by taking responsibility to some extent for child and elderly care are gone. Now, with conservative neoliberalism on the rise, women are working from home for flexible hours but with no job security, while at the same time they are forced to increase the labor they expend for child and elderly care, and for reproduction in general. Needless to say, in periods of economic crisis, these conditions worsen.

According to the consumerist ideology of capitalism, women are the primary agents of household-based consumption whereas men are the primary agents of luxury consumption. Ironically,

it is always women who are advised to scale back their consumption, because “all they do is shop.” It serves to remember the recent, much commented upon campaign by the Ministry of Families where the informed housewife saved energy by turning off the lights. In fact, informed housewives and their husbands always turn off the lights, but they do so not out of their concern for the exploitation of nature but out of concern for their electricity bill. Factories, on the other hand, never turn off their lights; their power is always on and their production excessive. In other words, poverty, even though it cannot undo the damage created by capital, limits excessive consumption out of pure necessity. In spite of this, women are still asked to “save a little more,” to “turn off the lights”, to allow capital to use “more” and fill the earth with more waste.

Climate-induced migration is another dimension of the vulnerability of women during ecological crises, and it is a problem that creates new problems. It is predicted that in 2050, one and a half billion people – mostly women and children- will be displaced due to climate change.

Because of their limited access to resources, women are in a much more fragile position than men when faced with the hazards caused by climate change. For example, if there is a hurricane warning, women are more likely not to have a vehicle or a driver’s license and are therefore at a disadvantage in reaching a shelter. Women’s and therefore children’s lives are at a greater risk when there is a natural disaster.

Fourthly, one of the primary dimensions of the rigid control mechanism that capitalism is based on is the separation of public and private spheres. Women’s bodies are assigned to the private sphere where they are closely controlled and as a result women are alienated from their own bodies. The understanding that women=nature and men=reason positions a man to be able to rule over nature and therefore over women’s bodies. The conquest of new territory is inseparable from the ideas of the conquest of nature and of women’s bodies, both of which are perceived as mystic elements. As a result, the female subject begins to see herself through the eyes of men.

Medicine in general and the field of gynecology in particular defines women’s body as something that can be interfered with. Women’s bodies, as extensions of nature, can be interfered with, just like nature is interfered with when a road is built or the sea is filled with land. Also, environmentally damaging practices put women’s health at greater risk. For example, it has been shown that there is a direct relationship

between xenoestrogens and breast cancer in the case of genetically modified organisms and other toxic materials used in industrial agriculture.

Urban capitalism defines nature as a lifeless element over which humans must dominate⁶ and it is responsible for the alienation of human beings from nature. But, at the same time, as a result of complex production lines and complex technological products, human beings are not only alienated from nature but also from themselves. “The relationship of producers

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to the product of the total of their individual labors” is not constructed as a “relationship between themselves, but as a social relation between the products of their labor.” And in this relationship, individuals do not have any control over their lives or their labor.

If we are to truly understand the exploitation of women and nature, we must see capitalism for what it is: Capitalism seeks to produce with minimum cost and without limit and to sell without any control. Capitalism does not only try to turn labor into wage labor, it seeks to turn human life and labor and the planet itself into commodities and money.

The only known opponent to commodity fetishism, alienation, and exploitation is freedom.⁷ Our political project therefore must consist of the emancipation of nature, human beings and human life from exploitation. Only then can self-realization in the economic, political and philosophical senses of the word become possible.

In order to achieve such a goal, we need complete autonomy in the spheres of production and consumption, small-scale planning and a return to a subsistence economy. We must stop believing that “time is money” and stop living life as if it were nothing but competition, and work to abolish all forms of domination.

Footnotes

1. Previously, I attempted to write an introductory essay concerning this subject. For those who are interested, please see Balta, 2009.
2. Ibid., p. 104-105.
3. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Short Twentieth Century: 1914-1991* Age of Extremes, translated by Yavuz Alogan, Istanbul, Everest Yayınları, 2006.
4. Claudia von Werlhof, “No Critique of Capitalism without a Critique of Patriarchy! Why the Left Is No Alternative.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, Vol. 18, Nr. 1, March 2007, pp. 13-27.
5. Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*, Cambridge, South End Press, MA, 2010, p. 113.
6. Claudia von Werlhof, “No Critique of Capitalism without a Critique of Patriarchy! Why the Left Is No Alternative” *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, Vol. 18, Nr. 1, March 2007, pp. 13-27.
7. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Critique of the Gotha and Erfurt Programs*, translated by M. Kabagil, Ankara, Sol Yayınları, 1979

Milestones in the fight for the environment

The birth and growth of the green movement, in Tanil Bora's words, is as follows: "The green criticism began rising in the capitalist Western countries in the 1970s. Initially, it emerged as a relatively abstract and theoretical criticism which claimed that the earth's energy and raw material sources would not suffice to feed humanity if the existing cycle of economic production was maintained with the same momentum. In the course of time, this criticism gravitated towards politicization by linking up with the reaction against the capitalistic industrial order's corrupting and alienating impact on nature, urban/societal life, and hence, human relations. The nuclear energy problem and the anti-nuclear movement which became hot items on public agendas during the late 1970s gave this change of direction a radical and popular character. It was on the basis of the anti-nuclear movement that large masses realized in the clearest manner that environmental issues were too vital and important to be left to the whim of experts.¹

The reactions against environmental problems in Turkey date back to the 1970s. Some examples:

- In 1975, the local populace filed suit against Etibank's copper plant in Murgul because of the damage caused on the flora;
- Charges were brought claiming compensation from the plants opened in the Çarşamba plain after the 1970s;
- In 1975, the local populace staged a march in protest against the damage the copper plants in Samsun brought to the crops;
- In 1977, the village folk in Elmadağ, Ankara complained to the local government in Ankara through their municipality of the damage the gunpowder and cement factories in the area inflicted on their farming activities;
- The same year, the members of the Taşucu Fishermen's Cooperative in Silifke led by Chairman Aslan Eyce staged a maritime demonstration on boats against the rumors that a nuclear power plant was going to be built in Akkuyu.

1986 was a turning point in environmental sentiment in İskenderun. What happened in the aftermath of the explosion in the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, the indifference of the government, the misinformation to which the public was exposed, and the armed forces' seizing power with the 1980 coup led by Kenan Evren spelled the beginning of the end for civil society. Political parties and associations were closed. Municipal assemblies were disbanded. Clouds of fear and anxiety descended upon the nation like a deepening nightmare.

İskenderun Environmental Protection Association

It was in such a setting that the big explosion in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant took place, giving rise to an environmental catastrophe of global proportions. The authorities misinformed the public and tried to calm the people down by means of false statements and slogans on the pretext of avoiding panic. But the truth was too strong to be disguised. Founding an association was well-nigh impossible during those days but we managed to found the İskenderun Environmental Protection Association against all odds. Public awareness of the environment was practically nil. We did work on environmental issues, staged conferences, and issued press statements. Our environmental library kept growing; we got more informed and we informed those around us. One of our first actions was a public meeting entitled "Let's Protect Our Bay." The speakers included Prof. Celal Ertuğ (Chairman of the defunct Green Party), Prof. Leziz Onaran (Chairwoman of the Association of Doctors and Health Workers against Nuclear Energy (NÜSHED)), Prof. Tolga Yarman and Dr. Uğur Cilasun. Approximately 300 people came, which was quite an attendance in those days.

We saw before long that environmental issues were not of a local scale but of a regional, nationwide, and even global scale. So, we needed bigger numbers. We needed more associations and more manpower. For this purpose, we published an Environmental Bulletin which included information on how to found an association, sample by-laws, and the relevant legal regulations. We distributed this bulletin to a large audience. The conditions brought on by the coup were getting less strict by then. Public sentiment was high and the public was uneasy. The known consequences of the Chernobyl disaster were upon us. The environment was getting polluted.

Environmental protection associations multiplied rapidly upon our call. Associations were soon founded in Antakya, Osmaniye, Adana, Yenice, Tarsus, and Mersin to be joined subsequently by more in Silifke, Kazanlı, Harbiye, Kahramanmaraş, Payas, Odabaşı, Erzin, and Pozanti.

Our numbers kept rising. We were growing with the material and moral support of the public. At this stage, we held a conference bringing together the associations located in Adana with the idea that "environmental protection associations must work together." This conference was the very first meeting of what was later to be called the Eastern Mediterranean Environmental Associations (DAÇE).



Ahmet Oktay Demirkan

1942 Ankara-born Demirkan is a graduate of the Faculty of Pharmacy of İstanbul University and owns a private pharmacy business in İskenderun. In 1986, he was among the founders of the İskenderun Environmental Protection Association of which he is currently a board member. In 1991, he was among the founders of the Eastern Mediterranean Environmental Platform where he served as a co-secretary. In 2005, he took part in the creation of the Turkey Environmental Platform (TÜRÇEP) of which he is currently the secretary. He has also contributed to the efforts of the Anti-nuclear Platform and the Genetically Modified Organisms Platform.

Organizing spreads

The anti-nuclear battle waged with the help and participation of thousands of people from the four corners of Turkey and occasionally from abroad proved a lengthy and challenging process that ended in the government of the time deciding to postpone the construction of the power plant. As the Eastern Mediterranean environmentalists, we took part in all of the activities staged in the area. We contributed to the scheduling, announcement, and staging of the meetings, festivals, public demonstrations and protest marches. Not willing to let these suffice, we went one step farther and staged numerous events on a local and regional scale. I still remember the Akkuyu Festivals and evaluation conferences, the newspaper Akkuyu Postası published by Dr. Ümit Şahin and his friends, Özgür Gürbüz's backward walk from Mersin to Akkuyu, the walks of Timur Daniş and Umur Gürsoy, the Green House, the anti-nuclear sculpture symposium, the press disclosure to an audience of goats, the anti-nuclear halvah handout, the football match between Team Life and Team Atom, our press disclosure in Ankara with an attendance by villagers, the dozens of panel discussions, conferences, and many other actions.

The panel discussion entitled "Nuclear Energy and After" staged in Silifke by the Silifke Municipality and the Green Party on 16 December 1990 marked the beginning of the joining of forces between the Eastern Mediterranean Environmentalists and DAÇE in the anti-nuclear battle. Moderated by Nuran Güner Tabak, the İzmir Provincial Representative of the Green Party, the panel's speakers were the SHP party's İçel Provincial Chairman Ali Erdiñç, the Chairman of the İskenderun Environmental Protection Association Cemil Altay, the Association of Doctors against Nuclear Energy (NÜSED) representative Salim Canoğulları, the Deputy Chairman of the Greens Party Aydın Ayas, Environmental Engineer Nuray Kurnaz from the Silifke Municipality, and the Chairman of the Kum Neighborhood Environmental Protection Association Abdullah Uzun. The panel discussion began with opening remarks by the Mayor of Silifke Feyyaz Bilgen. Energy Minister Fahrettin Kurt was harshly criticized for his remark "If you're so fond of green, go to the forest." Reactions were voiced against nuclear energy. A march entitled "No to the Nuclear Power Plant" took place in Silifke following the panel.

Differences and division in the Green Party

I was notified of this anti-nuclear event by Kadir Altay, the Adana representative of the Green Party. We attended in a big group: the whole Board of Directors of the İskenderun Environmental Protection Association. Accommodation was in Hotel Lades in Taşucu. I arrived earlier than my companions. My intention was to get acquainted and chat with the members of the Green Party but I didn't have the chance to do this because I found myself right in the middle of an organizational meeting of the party where the topic under debate was the party's chairmanship. Some officers thought the Chairman Prof. Celal Ertuğ wasn't effective enough and argued that a more dynamic chairman was needed. But there seemed to be no single name upon which everyone agreed.

Some of the names I remember from this meeting were Dentist Aydın Ayas, Şerafettin Arman, Fisun Altay, Bilge Contepe, İsmail Ateş, Ali Yediğöz, Ahmet Filmer, Cengiz Kökçü, Şükran Yurdagül, Filiz Akyol.

The Celal Ertuğ faction running the party advocated

a growth model that found its expression in the term "sustainable development: a policy of growth that will not exploit the environment and human beings and not disrupt the ecological balance." By contrast, its opponents took a more critical approach to economic progress and sustainable development. It was always the members of this opposition group who came up with the most radical proposals regarding the manner of reaction or the type of activism to be staged against an environmental problem when one emerged. While the prominent members of this latter group expressed their dream of a society without military forces, prisons, schools, or state in their various writings, those in the former were in close relationship with the bureaucracy, which highlighted the ideological differences between the two.

The tension caused by the party's receiving conditional aid from a company arose from these ideological differences. As this duality persisted in the party, an extraordinary congress was held in 1991 and

The court session in the Adana Administrative Tribunal on 19 March 1996 is worth remembering. The Deputy Governor of Adana who was representing the Prime Ministry in the trial was warned by the judge when he began his remarks by saying, "As a matter of fact, I'm against the nuclear power plant, too!"

Chairman Celal Ertuğ had to hand over his post to Bilge Contepe. Later on, all memberships were canceled and a 15-seat working group was established at the party congress on 19 June 1993 which was presided over by Aydın Ayas. The party was thus closed in practice and its legal existence also ended with a ruling the Constitutional Court passed on 10 April 1994.

DAÇE and the Yumurtalık Thermal Power Plant

Following the aforementioned meeting, Aydın Ayas and I chatted for a while about the future of the anti-nuclear battle. Ayas said, "We arrived, we mobilized the people here, and now we're leaving. But this battle must go on. We can't be here all the time. Some people from around here must own up to this mission and keep fighting." I never saw Aydın Ayas again. But he was right. Something had to be done. This "something" was later to become the DAÇE.

The idea of environmental associations joining forces to conduct efforts on a regional scale was adopted in ever larger circles and they finally got together in Kadir Altay's office in Adana on 9 February 1991. In attendance at this meeting were the environmental protection associations of Antakya, İskenderun, and Payas; the Adana Association for the Protection of the Environment and the Consumers (ÇETKO); the Adana representative of NÜSHED; and the Adana and Tarsus representatives of the S.O.S. Mediterranean Group. A second meeting was held in İskenderun on 9 March 1991 with the participation of the İçel Environmental Volunteers Association and a third in Yumurtalık on 6 April 1991. The reason for the selection of Yumurtalık as the meeting location was that the Yumurtalık Thermal Power Plant was looming on the agenda at the time. This entity was

to grow bigger, assume the name DAÇE, and join the battle for the environment. Focusing its fighting efforts intensively on the Yumurtalık Thermal Power Plant first, DAÇE later redirected its operations toward the anti-nuclear battle when the government decided not to build this power plant.

In the question-and-answer session of the panel which took place on 22 March 1997, an elderly man from the audience likened the nuclear power plant to a rose, saying, "I don't want this rose if others get to enjoy its scent and we, the local populace, end up getting pricked by its thorns." This comment drew plenty of applause and inspired us to name our book, which was to be published later, *Thornless Rose – Clean Energy*.

The Second Silifke Anti-nuclear March

The Eastern Mediterranean Environmentalists convened in Hotel Klıkya in Kızkalesi to celebrate the second anniversary of their union. The convention was organized without an agenda but an extraordinary agenda came up when the members of the nearby Silifke Association for the Protection of Cultural Life and Nature (KÜDYAK) which had completed its foundation procedure on that very day joined in.

What to do about the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant was discussed during the meeting. A decision came forth to stage a panel discussion and a march in Silifke at the end of March. This event was originally scheduled for the upcoming holiday but it finally took place on 26 and 27 March 1993 with participation from other regions as had been subsequently announced.

The security measures were observed to be tighter and the less busy avenues and streets of the county seat were found to have been identified as the itinerary for the march in which the participants included CHP İlçel Deputy İstemihan Talay, Mayor of Silifke Feyyaz Bilgen, and Mayor of Taşucu Emin Güleç. This could be taken as a sign that the government was getting uncomfortable with the environmentalist activities. Some of the signs I remember being displayed during the march were "I Don't Want It, Dad," "No to the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant," "We Don't Want Our Children to Be Born Crippled," "Neither Thermal Nor Nuclear, This Sun Is Enough for Us," "Don't Make a Black Well of White Well (Akkuyu)," "Enough of Anti-democratic Nuclear Patronizing," "No More Chernobyls." The speakers at the panel discussion that followed the march were Prof. Leziz Onaran, Prof. Tolga Yarman, Ünal Erdoğan, and Savaş Emek.

The power of action

The march on 27 March 1993 and the day preceding the panel never saw a dull moment. People sailed off Taşucu on boats and conducted a landing at the spot where the nuclear power plant was to be built in Akkuyu. "No to Nuclear Power Plants!" was written in paint hundreds of times on the concrete blocks prepared for the plant's infrastructure before the return trip.

A recount of what happened later was provided in the article entitled "The Power of Action" that appeared in

issue #8 of *Ağaçkakan* (Woodpecker) magazine:

"On the way back to Taşucu, the representatives of the groups and associations participating in the action held a meeting in the galley (roughly two square meters) of one of the boats. Their hearts were all filled with the excitement of the action in Akkuyu and their first words were, "This must go on." A decision was taken to hold a meeting to organize a broader and more resounding event prior to the march and the panel to take place on Saturday, 27 March. This meeting in the Cultural Center of the Silifke Municipality was attended by the Joint Secretariat of the Eastern Mediterranean Environmentalists, the S.O.S. Mediterranean Groups, the Istanbul representatives of the Anti-nuclear Platform, *Arkadaş* (Friend) magazine, *Ağaçkakan* magazine, and *Yeşil Gazete* (Green Newspaper). Two main trends emerged during the meeting. The final resolutions were the following:

1. That relations be strengthened between the Joint Secretariat of the Eastern Mediterranean Environmentalists and the secretariat to be set up in the offices of S.O.S. Mediterranean;
2. That joint working platforms be created;
3. That information be provided to other associations, organizations, and publications about the work done and the developments that occur – with *Ağaçkakan* magazine serving as a vehicle for this purpose;
4. That it would be beneficial to create national and international joint working platforms."

Alternative Energy Report

I would say that one of the decisions made at the DAÇE meeting in the Payas township of Dörtöl on Sunday, 8 May 1994 figured significantly in the anti-nuclear battle. Intensive efforts had been spent in the name of the fight against nuclear in the days preceding this meeting. To give a few examples, the Anti-nuclear Convention in Ankara on 16 October 1993, the Volunteer Organizations Council in Ankara on 17 October 1993, the Volunteer Organizations Meeting hosted in Çeşme by the Ministry of the Environment, the Environment Council in Istanbul, the foundation of the Friends of the Earth Association, and the local elections in March 1994... These made up the milestones of the process. In particular, the Anti-nuclear Convention, the Volunteer Organizations Meeting, our getting thrown out of the courtroom of the Constitutional Court only to pick up later in the Yunus Emre Cultural Center from where we left off, the political agenda, the elections, our defeat in the elections, the extraordinary rise of the anti-secular powers, and our quest for a solution... Each of these could be the topic of a separate essay on its own.

These, too, were talked about at the DAÇE meeting; however, one of the key decisions in that meeting was to have the DAÇE prepare an Alternative Energy Report. Different types of alternative energy were divided up among the associations with each association putting together a report on its respective energy type. Adversities did occur and despair set in from time to time. Then one day, our friend Umur Gürsoy put himself to the task of editing, updating, and completing the reports and rewrote the book. The result was the publication, years later in 1999, of our book entitled *Dikensiz Gül – Temiz Enerji* (Thornless Rose – Clean Energy).

Nuclear power plant taken to the administrative tribunal

The İzmir Lawyers of the Environmental Movement made significant contributions to the environmental battle in Turkey. Providing legal counsel to everyone in a lot of issues, this group played an important role in the legal battle about Akkuyu. A lawsuit requesting a stay of execution was filed with the Adana Administrative Tribunal on 26 January 1995 as a result of the joint efforts by DAÇE's Antakya, İskenderun, and Tarsus associations and the İzmir Lawyers of the Environmental Movement. The court dismissed the case in April 1996 on the grounds that the decision to build the nuclear power plant had been made in accordance with the Five-year Development Plans. The appeal we filed in May 1996 requesting a stay of execution once more was dismissed in May 1997.

The court session in the Adana Administrative Tribunal on 19 March 1996 is worth remembering. Upon a timely reminder by Noyan Özkan, we announced to a large audience the date of the hearing and the importance of attendance. More people turned up than was expected in spite of it being a weekday. The courtroom, was rather cramped to begin with, the corridors, the stairways were all jammed with nuclear opponents. The judge tried to keep calm before this crowd he was not expecting and to establish order in the court. Some people in the courtroom could not hold back their tears; others forgot what they wanted to say. The Deputy Governor of Adana who was representing the Prime Ministry in the trial was warned by the judge when he began his remarks by saying, "As a matter of fact, I'm against the nuclear power plant, too!"

The AKÇEP meetings and the Chernobyl witnesses

The Western Mediterranean Environmental Platform (BAÇEP), similar in structure to the DAÇE, was born in the wake of a meeting with a broad participation which took place in Fethiye. The Eastern and Western Mediterranean Environmental Protection Platforms began holding joint meetings around the theme of the anti-nuclear battle. The first of these meetings was held in Alanya on 22-24 March 1996 as a Mediterranean Environmental Platform (AKÇEP) with several witnesses of Chernobyl from the Ukraine in attendance. A special session was added to the schedule of the meeting in the series which was subsequently to be called the AKÇEP Meetings when the Chernobyl witnesses joined in outside the agenda.

In that special session, Vladimir Usatenko reported that the damage from the disaster that had happened ten years ago still persisted and had to be contained. He said, "The Chernobyl disaster is still in its germinal stage. It's going to grow very big and we can't do anything about it." Biologist Natalya Prebrajenska said, "After the Chernobyl disaster, the Chernobyl Report was prepared in Vienna in May 1991. Nothing else was done. The accident was not announced to the public until five days had passed. 60,000 people died and 46,000 were crippled in the Ukraine alone." Journalist Lubov Kovalevskaya's comments were especially worthy

of note because she wrote in the 26 March 1986 issue of the newspaper she worked for that the power plant had been poorly built and that a disaster was around the corner. She also published a couple of books about the disaster afterwards so that those who were interested in nuclear energy could find out what happened. This is what Kovalevskaya told us: "The power plant in Nakhchivan is a big threat against Turkey. The radioactive clouds circled the globe twice after the Chernobyl disaster. Turkey was impacted by the southern clouds but took no precaution at all and simply did nothing. There is 1.5 million tons of nuclear waste in the Ukraine and they keep emitting radiation."

On 25 March 1996, the day after the aforementioned meeting, a forum was organized about environmental issues with Semra Somersan as the moderator. A paper on the definition and operating principles of the Mediterranean Environmental Platform was read out and adopted. Agreement was reached on the issues requiring joint effort.

The founding purpose of the Turkey Environmental Platform was to conduct efforts to promote, mobilize, and spread an awareness and sensitivity toward the historical, cultural and natural environment on the basis of preserving the ecological balance in the face of global, country-wide, regional, and local environmental problems; to side with the environment jointly against these problems, to build up public opinion, to create proposals for solutions, and bring them to life.

The "thorn" in Gülnar

The Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant was to be built near the township of Büyükeceli which was administratively subordinate to the Gülnar county of the İçel province. Despite this fact, the name of Akkuyu was always mentioned in connection with Silifke. All of the actions took place in Silifke. As a result, the townspeople of Gülnar never took part in the anti-nuclear battle. We staged a panel discussion in Gülnar both in order to do away with this misperception and to bring the citizens of Gülnar up to speed on the nuclear power plant. The panel took place on 22 March 1997 with the Mayor of Gülnar Mehmet Işık as the moderator and Prof. Leziz Onaran, Prof. Ali Gökmen, the Mayor of Silifke Sadık Avcı, and Aslan Eyce panelists. Held on a very cold day in a very cold room, this first panel in the history of Gülnar drew an audience of about 100 people – quite a turnout by Gülnar standards. In the question-and-answer session, an elderly man from the audience likened the nuclear power plant to a rose, saying, "I don't want this rose if others get to enjoy its scent and we, the local populace, end up getting pricked by its thorns." This comment drew plenty of applause and inspired us to name our book, which was to be published later, Thornless Rose – Clean Energy. I don't know how deeply the Gülnarians were impressed by this event but from that time on, Akkuyu came to be referred to as the township of Büyükeceli of the Gülnar county of the İçel province.

Clean Energy Symposium

We did not want nuclear power plants and we were against thermal power plants, too. But how would power supply be ensured? To provide a scientific answer to this question that was often posed to us, we staged a Clean Energy Symposium in Adana on 15-16 November

SPEAKER	TOPIC
Prof. Metin Çolak, Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Ege University	“Solar Energy Technologies Electrical Applications”
Prof. Eralp Özil, Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Yeditepe University	“Solar Energy Technologies Thermal Applications”
Dr. Tanay Sıdkı Uyar, Faculty Member, Kocaeli University	“Wind Power Plant Technologies and Information Management in Decision-making in the Power Industry”
Dr. Ali Çolak, Mining Research Institute	“Geothermal Energy Potential and Technologies”

1997 supported by the Turkey office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation with help from ÇETKO Chairperson Dr. Figen Doran.

The speakers at the symposium and the topics they talked about were the following:

While exposing the mistakes in energy investments in a striking manner, the symposium demonstrated beyond dispute that clean energy options had already been developed and commercialized.

Anamur

Taking the anti-nuclear battle to the west of Akkuyu was always on DAÇE’s agenda. Although the provinces of Hatay and Antalya were equidistant from Akkuyu, which meant that their tourism potentials would suffer equally if the power plant were to be built, the reaction that was due somehow never materialized in the west. Antalya and Alanya regularly failed to match the level of public sentiment stirred by the numerous actions staged by Greenpeace and the Environmentalists of Eastern and Western Mediterranean. Gazipaşa was the easternmost county of Antalya while Anamur was the westernmost county of İçel. Both counties subsisted on agriculture and stood to sustain a great deal of harm from the nuclear power plant if it were indeed built; therefore, we had always been contemplating some action in both. As early as one year ahead, it had become certain that the general and local elections were going to be held in 1999. Everyone was in a bind because the existing political parties failed to pursue the kind of policies that would help the nation weather the storm. This situation gave rise to a political potential and an Anti-nuclear Platform was founded in Anamur under the impetus of this potential. The platform included left-wing political parties, some associations, and labor unions. We liaised with the platform and made arrangements for a DAÇE meeting in Anamur. We planned to stage a panel with our own means to inform the public in the meantime. One week later, another panel was to take place upon the invitation of the same platform where Prof. İnci Gökmen, Prof. Tolga Yarman, and Melda Keskin would be the speakers. We

thought two panels in succession with a one-week interval would prove more effective. Our speakers at the panel which took place outdoors in a tea garden on 4 July 1998 were Tülay Sevgi Can, Senem Özel and Mişel Atik with ÇETKO Chairperson Figen Doran the moderator.

Gazipaşa

We staged a DAÇE meeting in Gazipaşa on 22-23 May 1999 with the help of Ayşe Selimoğlu, an AKÇEP Environmental Volunteer from Alanya. The nuclear power plant was not a big concern for the townspeople of Gazipaşa; so we picked the theme of the panel as “Unplanned Urbanization and the Environmental Impact of Nuclear Power Plants” which we thought they would find more interesting. An audience of more than 400 turned up including bureaucrats, politicians, and students. It must have been the first time the nuclear power plant was ever talked about in Gazipaşa.

Following an overview of environmental issues and nuclear power plants by ÇETKO Chairperson Figen Doran, who was also the moderator, Architect İlknur Kara from the Antalya Chamber of Architects talked about “Unplanned Urbanization and Its Environmental Impact” and Lawyer Tülay Sevgi Can who was a former chairperson of the Tarsus Environmental Protection, Culture, and Arts Center (ÇEKSAM) talked about “Nuclear Power Plants, Their Adverse Effects on the Environment, and the Precautions That Can(not) be Taken After a Disaster.”

Turkey Environmental Platform

The DAÇE organization set a good example for the environmentally responsible groups elsewhere and similar efforts were brought to life in other regions. Later on, the idea of uniting these platforms with similar purposes under one roof was adopted in principle and the Turkey Environmental Platform (TÜRÇEP) was founded in a meeting held in Ankara on 23 July 2005. The founding regional platforms were the Western Black Sea Environmental Platform (BAKÇEP), the Eastern Mediterranean Environmental Platform (DAÇE), the Eastern Black Sea Environmental Platform (DOKÇEP), the Central Anatolian Environmental Platform (İÇAÇEP), and the Marmara Environmental Platform (MARÇEP).

The founding purpose of the Turkey Environmental Platform was to conduct efforts to promote, mobilize, and spread an awareness and sensitivity toward the historical, cultural and natural environment on the basis of preserving the ecological balance in the face of global, country-wide, regional, and local environmental problems; to side with the environment jointly against these problems, to build up public opinion, to create proposals for solutions, and bring them to life.

Efforts to fight and organize against the environmental problems stemming from government policies are in progress in practically all parts of the country today despite all hardships. But unfortunately, the transfer of dirty technologies and environmental destruction runs rampant at an unabated pace.

Footnotes

1. <http://modernwish.wordpress.com/2009/11/06/bir-ekoloji-hareketi-olarak-yesiller-hareketi-turkiyede-yesiller-partisi-2/>

Do EIA reports really assess environmental impact?

In the Turkish legal context, the expression Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) immediately brings to mind the EIA regulation and the Environmental Law, since EIA reports are based primarily on the Environmental Law, and then on the EIA Regulation issued as per this law.

The Environmental Law came into effect in 1983. Article 10 of the Environmental Law stipulates that any institution, agency or enterprise whose operations might result in environmental problems is required to obtain an EIA report, and that this process will be governed by a regulation to be issued by the Ministry.

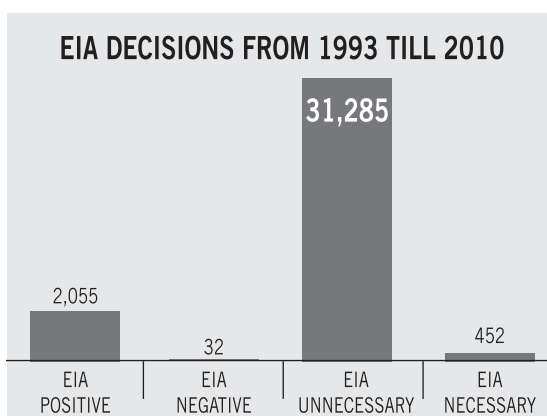
Unfortunately, it was not until the year 1993 that the EIA Regulation came into effect. From 1993 until today, the EIA Regulation was amended a total of eight times – once in 1997, twice in 2002, once in 2004, 2008 and 2009, and twice in 2011 – and was repealed three times.

An analysis of all the amendments reveals that the first regulation dated 1993 is the best piece of legislation. That is because, all the subsequent amendments, which we believe were a result of pressures from the investment and energy sectors, further diluted its objective of environmental protection, and every change gave more and more leeway to investors. Especially with the amendments from 1997 onwards, the EIA Regulation steered further and further away from its stated objective in the Environmental Law.

The EIA statistics released by the EIA General Directorate attest to the fact that the EIA process is no longer an “obstacle” before investors, mainly as a result of policies pursued by subsequent governments.

According to statistics on EIA decisions issued by the EIA Permission and Audit General Directorate from 1993 till 2010, only 32 out of a total of 33,824 EIA decisions were “EIA negative”. The number of “EIA unnecessary” decisions totals 31,285. The following table was taken from the website of the EIA General Directorate.

The figure speaks for itself. However, one can make the following argument in brief: In a country covered with natural protected areas, protected basis, forests and historical protected areas, the departments of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization have unfortunately found only 32 out of thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands of projects, to be detrimental for the nature and the environment. By the way, should anyone jump



to the conclusion that these 32 projects were annulled, it must be said that these were later divided into smaller projects, new applications were filed, a large majority of these received EIA positive or EIA unnecessary decisions, and are currently in progress.

In this regard, we need to discuss the provisional Article 3, which was included in the EIA Regulation dated 2008. This article, entitled “Projects out of scope” read as follows:

“PROVISIONAL ARTICLE 3 – (1) The articles of the hereby regulation are not applicable to projects whose implementation procedure has already been approved; projects which have been granted permission, license or expropriation resolution as per environmental or other applicable legislation; projects which have been included in the public investment program or local zoning plan; and projects in which production and/or operation has been initiated prior to the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation issued in the Official Gazette dated 7/2/1993 and numbered 21489; nonetheless, the said projects require the permissions stipulated in the Environmental Law and other applicable legislation.”

Why is this article so important? That is because, the large scale investments most detrimental for nature, such as the Ilisu dam and Gebze-İzmir highway project were added to the public investment program prior to 1993, and were thus initiated by the state without any analysis or calculation of their environmental impact, in short without any regard what so ever to nature.

In the light of these explanations, we can answer the question “How does the EIA process function?” as follows:

First of all, we need to analyze a number of



Gonca Yılmaz

Born in Malatya in 1975, Yılmaz studied law in the Faculty of Law of the 9 September University in Izmir and is studying for a graduate degree in Istanbul University's Institute of Social Science. She is a member of the Lawyers for the Environment and Ecology Movement (ÇEHAV) and a founder of the Equilibrium Ecological Living Association. Other than environmental law and ecology, her fields of work include alternative education, the empowerment of women, and fundamental rights and liberties. She is also an educator and a project coordinator.

lists found in the annexes to the EIA Regulation. Lawyers call these lists Annex1 and Annex2 in short. The investments falling under the Annex1 list require EIA reports, whereas those falling under Annex2 must meet the criteria of selection and elimination, and require a Project Promotion Dossier. Applications filed through the Project Promotion Dossier receive either an “EIA necessary” or an “EIA

An EIA firm centered in Ankara drew much public attention because of a recently published EIA dossier for the Akkuyu nuclear power plant. In a previous report on a thermal power plant, the same firm had claimed that thermal power plants were environmentally-friendly, whereas nuclear plants were “detrimental for the environment”. This is a very clear indication that the said EIA firm tends to designate as eco-friendly any plant for which it prepares an EIA report.

unnecessary” decision. The Ministry of Environment and Urbanization has delegated its authority over these applications to the governor’s office in the province where the project will be implemented. If the resulting decision is “EIA necessary”, then an EIA report must be prepared and submitted to the EIA General Directorate.

As for applications made through an EIA report, the relevant departments of the Ministry issue one of two decisions: EIA positive or EIA negative. The procedure is as follows: In projects falling under the Annex1 list, the application is filed through an EIA application dossier. The Ministry then prepares the application folder in three work days, sets up a commission, and announces to the wider public the initiation of the EIA process. A public information meeting is planned, and its date is announced via notifications in one local and one national newspaper, issued at the latest ten days prior to the meeting. In fact the legislation stipulates that “At the public meeting, information must be provided to the general public about the project”. However, in practice, since the project is new and at application stage and since the audience knows virtually nothing about it, the information flow in the public meeting is reversed. That is, the public voice their objections, and these objections are recorded in view of publishing reports which will iron out these criticisms. As a result, the public information meeting, which in fact should be a very crucial event, is in practice reduced to an official formality.

In the seven days following the public meeting, a special meeting is held to determine the format and scope of the project. During this meeting, the current situation of the project is assessed. All participating parties express their opinions and these are recorded in meeting minutes. The company is presented with a “scope” which indicates the issues it must pay attention to, and is expected to prepare an EIA report within this scope. Once the EIA report is submitted to the Ministry, the public can voice

their opinions and suggestions about it. If there are any objections and if these are taken seriously, these objections are included in the EIA report and a decision (“EIA positive” or “EIA negative”) is reached. As can be inferred from the above table, the probability of an “EIA negative” is minuscule. So, after the “EIA positive” decision is announced, the company must launch its investment in seven years.

Is the EIA process but a formality?

As indicated above, although we have criticisms against the legislative aspects of the EIA process, the main problem arises in practice. For instance, as indicated above, the public information meeting has been rendered defunct, turned into an official formality. That is the reason why in current hydroelectric or thermal power plant projects, the locals rally against these public information meetings. The people exercise their democratic right and voice their objections against the reduction of a legal right into a simple formality.

Another process turned into a simple formality is the preparation of the EIA report itself. The EIA report is issued by a number of private firms whose reliability and impartiality is questionable. These firms are the customers of the enterprises which undertake the planned investment, and are thus economically dependent on the latter. Is it possible for any firm to publish a report against a customer which will write the check at the end of the day?

Yet another such formality is the “EIA positive” decision. The officials of the Ministry put their faith in these “extremely environmentalist” EIA reports, and issue a favorable decision without even visiting the project site. As a result, there are very serious concerns as to whether the Ministry’s assessments are actually impartial and scientific.

Even if officials visit the project site prior to issuing a positive EIA decision, they do not make further visits once the project is initiated, which suggests that yet another simple formality is at play. As such, the promises, assurances and guarantees found in the EIA report remain on paper; and since there is no legal sanction or obstacle to prevent this, the investors can pretty much implement the project however they see fit. A case in point is a hydroelectric power plant project which had received a “EIA positive” decision in the Black Sea region. Although the construction collapsed and the tunnel exploded, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization was unaware of these developments, and did not even reconsider its “EIA positive” decision.

Assessment of firms issuing EIA reports

The legal principles and procedures governing the activities of those firms which prepare the EIA application dossier, EIA report and project promotion dossier, are set by the “Communiqué on Competence Certificates” issued in the Official Gazette dated 18.12.2009 and numbered 27436 and prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, as per the Articles 18 and 26 of the EIA Regulation issued in the Official Gazette dated 17.07.2008 and

numbered 26939.

An analysis of this communiqué reveals that, the firms which publish such crucial reports are not audited in any serious way, and do not face any sanctions which could be deterrent. Criminal action is taken against EIA firms only if there is a signature mismatch in the EIA application dossier, EIA report or project promotion dossier.

According to the list of penalties found in the same communiqué, even if the firm has been found to forge false documents, its competence certificate will be annulled by the commission only if it exceeds sixty penalty points in a given permit season. Even if that occurs, a firm whose competence was annulled still has the right to reapply for a certificate a year after the decision of annulment.

As mentioned above, the service fees of EIA firms are paid by the company which makes the investment. As such the EIA firms cannot be said to issue impartial reports.

Some experts who work for the EIA firms were seen to pen EIA reports that go against the spirit of their own academic work; which in turn damages scientific independence and compromises the

impartiality of EIA firms.

In practice, we unfortunately observe that most EIA reports are published without any visit to the project site, simply by copying and pasting sections of various scientific articles and publications, or previous EIA reports.

An EIA firm centered in Ankara drew much public attention because of a recently published EIA dossier for the Akkuyu nuclear power plant. In a previous report on a thermal power plant, the same firm had claimed that thermal power plants were environmentally-friendly, whereas nuclear plants were “detrimental for the environment”. However, as is known to all, in its report on the Akkuyu nuclear power plant, the firm chose to designate nuclear plants as eco-friendly by claiming that “the plant will have no greenhouse gas emissions and will not generate acid rains”, and suggested that in fact other types of power plants were hazardous. This is a very clear indication that the said EIA firm tends to designate as eco-friendly any plant for which it prepares an EIA report. I leave it to the reader to decide whether EIA reports issued in this manner are scientific or not.

Hydroelectric power plants: A great disaster, a great malice

Interview:
Semahat Sevim
Özgür Gürbüz

The Minister of Forestry and Waterworks Veyssel Eroğlu declared that out of 1500 hydroelectric power plants projects in Turkey, 350 are already in operation. Even the completion of ¼ of the current project applications, was enough to alarm the environmentalists. We say it was enough to alarm the environmentalists because these plants have been quite controversial for the last couple of years. There are protests about them, protesters have to clash with the police forces and there are hundreds of court cases against these projects. This is not an easy struggle but there are some who actually manage to win the fight. For the readers of Perspectives, we talked to the people of Meydancık town in Şavşat, Artvin, who fought against the hydroelectric plant project in their region and succeeded in having it cancelled by the court. We wanted to listen from them one of the major topics in the environmentalist movement in Turkey, the fight against hydroelectric power plants.

Let's begin with Meydancık, where is it exactly?

Dursun Sevim: It is in Şavşat, Artvin. Papart valley is on the Karçal Mountains. In Rize they have Kaçkar mountains, in Artvin we have the Karçal.

What is the name of the river they want to build the power plant on?

DS: Papart Göknaç River. From this side it goes all the way to Georgia. The beginning of the valley is at the Georgian border.

So the valley continues?

DS: Yes, it does. But the water coming to our side is separate. Some of it comes all the way from the top.

How far is the river from where you live in Meydancık?

It passes directly through the village. The stream comes from Karçal mountains, from the Papart valley, it follows the valley with the name Göknaç and reaches Çoruh river down in Artvin, where they call su kavuşumu (water conjunction). The water stream coming from Papart passes through 8 villages. There are villages both on the right and left hand side of the river. Mısırlı, Taşköprü, Meydancık and Balıklı are districts of Meydancık. They all share the Göknaç River. All eight plant projects are on that same river.

Are they all going to be built by the same company?

Servet Ekin: No, EBARA Company builds four of them. The others are owned by one company each.

Is that a foreign company?

SE: EBARA is of Japanese origin. But they have a subcontractor in Rize.

DS: This is how it works. The Ministry of Environment, the Directorate of Waterworks prepares projects. Sometimes even the Administration of Electricity prepares them.

They are then announced by the Waterworks on the internet. The companies then apply for the undertaking. In addition, the companies themselves can prepare a project and apply to the Waterworks. After the application they call for tenders. The tender, of course, does not happen overnight. They need an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA). They have to organize meetings with people living in the region.

How and when did you hear about the project in Meydancık?

SE: In 2008. There is a coffeehouse in the middle of four villages. People generally meet there. One day I was sitting there with my friends, when two strangers came in. We said hello. One of them was an engineer, from Arhavi, Artvin. I had been teaching in Arhavi, I know the place. I asked him about the village I used to work in. He was from that village. I asked about some names I remembered from back then. He got confused. Later I understood that he was lying.

So he actually was not from Arhavi?

SE: He was, but he was not from that village I worked in. He said that they came here to look for waterfalls. "We need natural waterfalls," he said. We asked what they wanted to do. They said they wanted to produce electricity. They would also use wind energy. This is how everything has started.

DS: First they put some flow-meters in the water. We suspected something but we had no information.

SE: Before this thing came up, we would never imagine somebody coming here and taking our water. Nobody had thought about that as a possibility. The water kept flowing, fish were swimming, men were swimming, and it was all very nice. Then these projects started coming up. They wanted to build hydroelectric plants but they never told us that they wanted to take the water into pipes, that the water would not stream like it used to, or there would be no water at all. They said they would use the energy from the waterfall to produce electricity. They came back a couple of months later saying they are going to build the plant, so they rented the water stream for 49 years. In



autumn many people go to cities, so until summer there are less people around here. That is why they organized the involvement meeting during that season and revealed the information then.

DS: This meeting was held on April 10, 2008. They revealed their aim at the meeting. On June 26, 2008 we got to know about it.

What about the muhtar (head of the village)? Did they tell him anything when they had installed the flow meter?

DS: This is a town (belde), so there are districts whose heads depend on the mayor of the town. They persuaded him first.

SE: Flow meter stayed there for years. They measured the water but no one asked why, with what purpose. Nobody knew about it. And there was nobody to explain either.

But after the involvement meeting we figured out that they would build plants here.

DS: Yes but we did not know what a plant was. What and how were they going to build? They say that it's a hydroelectric power plant, that there will be jobs and free electricity. They tried to persuade people with a bunch of lies. They wanted to prevent the future reaction to it.

Did you attend the involvement meeting?

SE: No, we were in İzmit.

DA: None of us attended.

DS: They held the meeting with people that they had already talked into, people that would not oppose.

The only one, opposing the project got kicked out of the meeting.

Using force?

DA: The major stood up, ordered him to leave and so kicked him out.

DS: When they finally announced it we as people who would work for the cause decided to make a research and held a preliminary meeting. We attended a panel in June 2008 in Hopa. We met a lawyer who also was the spokesperson for the Brotherhood of the Rivers Platform. We saw what happened in Rize, in Çayeli, in Fındıklı. We also met the late Metin Lokumcu there, in Hopa. He told us a story. One day, going down the village he sees the flow meter and tears its head off and throws it



Vesbiye-Dursun Sevim,
Dursun Ali Durmuş, Servet
Ekin, Ayla-Ali Alkan
(left to right)

away. We saw people coming from Fındıklı, Rize, and Çayeli. We talked to them, asked questions and decided to react. But we had to figure out how to do that, how to act together. We exchanged ideas with them.

You found out about the project. Have you decided to go to Hopa for more information? Have you decided that it was bad? Were you suspicious because of the other locations?

DS: We knew about the Fırtına Valley.

SE: We knew things, you can see them. Once you bring the water into the pipe from the pool, it has to go for 5-10 kilometers before it finally falls down. Along these 10 kilometers the villages have irrigation canals on the river. Those were built centuries ago to bring water to the fields. We started to fear that once the water is inside the pipe, there will be none left for us and our fields and our canals would run dry.

And the Fırtına Valley was an example...

DS: Yes, of course. We also know what happened in Mexico. What they did with the World Water Forum.

DA: Nobody from our side knew this was coming. One day, when I was walking down the street, İsmunur Abla from out of the village called for me. One of her friends had called her and asked her to prepare dinner for 20-25 people. The guy had said he would bring some friends. This group of 20 had come and after lunch they split into two groups.

One group had been to the plateau and the other had gone to Papart. When I asked what this was all about she told me that they had been inspecting the water. She told me to beware, that they would take away the water. İsmunur Abła sensed it. The next year they started the construction in Papart.

After the panel you attended, have you decided to resist the plant?

DS: We held a meeting with people coming from the villages around (5 or 6), we arranged a popular meeting and even the mayor came. We obliged him to come.

SE: He was playing a double game.

DS: He didn't say yes to the project and he didn't

The water kept flowing, fish were swimming, men were swimming, and it was all very nice. Then these projects started coming up. They wanted to build hydroelectric plants but they never told us that they wanted to take the water into pipes, that the water would not stream like it used to, or there would be no water at all. They said they would use the energy from the waterfall to produce electricity. They came back a couple of months later saying they are going to build the plant, so they rented the water stream for 49 years.

say no either. He goes to those meetings and comes to the resistance to speak there as well.

So he was forced to oppose.

SE: He had to resist even though he said yes.

DS: We knew this, privatization is behind all this. People know it, villagers know it. The land is sacred. Water is life. There is no life without water. No life without air. Once the state came here and took walnut trees from people. It took the forest. They had resisted but it wasn't enough. And now the state comes for the water. After they took the trees, people started to migrate because they destroyed the natural life. People used to put walnut in the bread to feed the children but we do not have walnuts anymore.

How did they take the walnut trees?

DS: They cut them and took them away. They paid for it. They dragged them with oxen and let them flow down from Çoruh River. In Artvin they loaded them on trucks and carried to İstanbul to make furniture. They finished the forest and the walnuts. Once the forest is gone, self-sufficient villagers fell into economic hardship.

Let's go back to what happened. After the panel in Hopa, did you make a clear decision to resist?

DS: Yes. After the panel we were able to see the results of privatization in Mexico and foresee its possible reflections in Turkey. They confiscated even the smallest water source. They used concrete molds, they put signs on them. They had drawn maps, they knew where the water was. They indicated all the sources of clean water. These

plants are going to be built in this area and will dry the water canals, leave the animals without water.

How many people live in the town?

DS: In summer it's more than 2000. In winter it's about one thousand.

How do they make a living?

DS: Agriculture. They have cows, they plant potatoes.

So, they do things that definitely need water, they cannot live without it.

DS: Yes. These plants fill pipes and canals with water, disconnect water from the nature and dry the river. Irrigation canals will not have any water anymore. You will see the environmental impact assessment report (EIA), you will see all the animals living in the area.

You have this water at home, don't you?

SE: We do. Taken from the source, comes all the way home.

Not the municipal water, the water from the mountain?

SE: From the mountain.

In the city we need the municipal water system but your water comes from the source up in the mountain. And you know, if the plant takes all the water, you will have none, right?

DS: The plant will put it at risk.

Ayla Akan: When the water is low, even the sources at the upper parts of the mountain dry up.

SE: We have been to Rize and then to Çayeli. There they had brought small pipes together with the large ones. People working there told us that they were planning to collect water with 4.5cm small pipes into the larger one. That construction made us clear that they have no intention to leave anybody a drop of water. Then we started worrying.

Then what happened, have you come to a decision?

DS: After the meeting we organized a committee to get in touch with the villagers. The primary purpose was to inform people and then, to organize non-violent meetings in the region without touching villagers working for the company.

How many meetings did you organize?

DS: We organized one but then they backed out of the idea. It was a really big one, everybody attended. I am 67 years old. Even people in their 70s and 80s were there. The mayor made a speech, village headmen made speeches. People had spoken and we had reached a common decision there and formed an assembly. We created Meydancık People's Assembly. And its decision was not to give away our water. We are not going to give them our water, no matter what, that was our consensus. Later, I think around the middle of August, we went to Artvin with 55 vehicles and made a press statement. The Police and the Governor wanted to meet us. We told them to come to the valley. People said "We submitted our petitions, made our warnings but you did not take them into consideration" and denied to meet the governor there.

Was it a consensus?

DS: It was a consensus. We organized a live press statement. In 2009 we came to İstanbul for a meeting in Taksim. We were on all the papers and

TV channels, with our drums and horns. We met the village headmen. In one of those meetings we decided we needed legal action as well. This was in August 2008.

Meanwhile, what were the companies doing?

SE: They continued their surveys. But they were concerned. They could not stand people's resistance. They believed they could do whatever they wanted since the government was on their side. Once the case is taken to the court, the Administrative Court in Rize decided that people were right and canceled the environmental impact assessment report.

When was the report canceled?

DS: We pressed charges on December 2008 in Rize for the cancellation of the report. They immediately objected the decision of cancellation. A higher court, the Regional Administrative Court in Trabzon complied with the decision of the Court in Rize. Then they went to the State Council. Once it was also approved by the council, the report was cancelled. At the same time we applied to the Council of Monuments to declare the area as a protected area (SIT alanı). The application was accepted.

So you managed to stop the plants...

DS: No. we were able to stop four of them that belonged to this one company. Cüneyt-1-2-3 and 4. These were cancelled. All belonged to EBARA. One of the other four plants started to operate, another one is about to start as well.

Did you have a demand about them? Are they outside the protected area?

SE: They were built because we couldn't fight them all.

DS: It is a costly business.

How much did you spend approximately?

DS: Around 100 thousand, isn't it?

SE: We collected it with the help of the villagers.

DS: This people go to their villages around April-May and come back around November-December. They live here for 8 months and go to the city for 3-4 months. We tried to keep the subject on the agenda and to make pressure on Ankara, on the state, during these 3-4 months. We also have an association now. It's called Mey-Der.

Why couldn't the others be stopped?

SE: The others (villages) were passive. In one of them the subcontractor is from that village, so he managed to silence the people. They silenced the others, they were lying and deceiving people.

Dursun Ali: As Servet says, that subcontractor influenced the village and his relatives.

Ali: Economic benefit surpassed the personal ones, of course.

But, the plants on those rivers will have an effect on you, or not?

Ali: Of course they will! It affects us like this. In the area that we saved, we have irrigation canals. When we will take the water from the valley using those canals the plants will be affected.

SE: They will have no water. They will tell State Waterworks "You sold us the river but the villagers cut off our water". And the conflict will continue.

How is the political situation in the town? You

brought 2000 people together; do they all share the same political background?

Ali: They do not.

DS: This was the common goal that people joined around. We said the walnuts are gone, the forest is gone. People saw the water is about to be gone soon. No water means no life around here. This was what brought people from different political views together. But then came the elections.

And they voted for different parties.

SE: Yes.

HES united you then.

Ali: Yes it did.

Ali Bey says something else. HES brought us

The amount of electricity that will be produced from hydro-electric plant projects is 0.4% of total electricity consumed in Turkey. For such a low percentage you destroy such a beautiful nature which is shaped in millions of years. Those who did this betray their own people. In Turkey, 25% of all the electricity is getting lost along the grid. In developed countries they save 15% of it. They throw this 15% away and then destroy the country for 0.4%.

together but set us apart as well. He says in Balıklı there is a whole different story.

Ali: If Balıklı had joined us right from the beginning... We have friends there. They told us they have not been to the village for the last 30 years. They did not know what was coming. They say that we let them alone, that they were not thinking alike. They regret it now, but it is too late now. It's done, the plants are built. Now the contractor thinks if the water goes to Meydancık following the canal, there will not be enough water for the plants.

So, they are not comfortable as well.

Ali: They are not. The collaborators, those who supported the other side, they think they are smart and enlightened. They say they oppose the plants now because they could not benefit from them. But it is too late now.

DS: They are comfortable but they can be disturbed. If we take the water to the canal they will be disturbed. There lies the problem, 4 out of 8 projects are cancelled. The State Council's decision did not put an end to the problem.

So, if you use too much water for the agriculture, there might not be any left for the plant, right?

SE: If it is a dry season, yes it might happen.

Giving these permits the government created a complicated situation. On one side you have the projects that are cancelled. It is not certain what will happen. The same water wants to be used for agriculture and for hydro-power at the same time. It's complicated.

DS: Complicated. There were eight plant projects here. In different reports the sources of these plants are listed as different sources. But it is always the same river. They even named the river differently to

make it look like it's different.

Then, all these environmental assessment reports are wrong.

DS: The source is the same, the river is the same, but the names are different. 4 of them are cancelled. This water belongs to people now, but still there are threats. If the construction continues on the other four, once the water gets scarce, the company owners will start complaining. I will have to deal with the military police again.

Did you have many clashes or fights?

DS: We did not let them happen. We managed to influence the first group of experts. We organized such a demonstration that it was very lively. People from four villages welcomed them with banners. The military police told us to put them down, that it was illegal, but we didn't listen. They couldn't collect the banners. The experts decided to come and talk to us. They did their inspection and on the way back they came to us. We told them everything that we tell now. We did not permit any kind of quarrels, we dealt with such indulgence. One thing happened though; they took the women twice to the military police station.

What was their reason?

SE: The reason they said was that they were intervening the process. They were taken into custody, to the station. They took their statements and let them go.

DS: One more thing. Now people are divided a little, but back then we were united. Balıklı had told us they were with us to the very end. Whatever it takes, money, action etc. But the constructor Kemal Türkoğlu from Ati Company is an engineer and he is from Balıklı. He managed to divide us and unite with people opposing us. He broke the solidarity. They say the water flows in vain, our neighbor benefits from it. The contractor makes them work sometime. They have a mosque, he contributes to it. They have the road; he contributes to that as well. I remember that. We collected some money but we could not finish it, we were going to go to the court.

Dursun Ali: We went to the court but we lost the case.

DS: We lost against Ati company. If we were able to open the case together with Cüneyt 1-2-3, then they would have considered the whole valley together. And they charged the experts as well.

DA: We lost the case because of the referendum on September 12, nothing else. There is a new article that says "the court cannot make a propriety audit". Based on that, we lost the case.

DS: The experts were changed. The first group was from Rize. The second was from Erzurum.

DA: After the first experts the court decided to suspend the execution immediately. But then they changed the court board, the new judges decided against us.

SE: The "yes" votes in the referendum meant destruction for Turkey. Such damage was unseen in the history of the republic. Thanks to those "yes" votes they changed the constitution and eliminated the judicial independence. If they say that courts are independent, that's a lie. They decide based on prime minister's decision. This is the greatest

disaster, the greatest malice for Turkey. This is as bad as losing a war. They changed the courts and the free, fearless judges who decide based on truth are gone and replaced with people whose decisions are based on people above us. We won the case using law, but it was the previous law.

What would happen if you went to court now?

SE: You cannot win, it is not possible.

DS: There are winners. In Tortum, a girl with the veil became the symbol. So if you have people behind...

SE: People's resistance is different.

DS: That's the important thing, the people. You have to face the state. It's the state you have to fight against. It's the contractor and there are some collaborators living in the area. These three will always be there as a united front. So, you have to be united as well. You have to be determined.

We have a conclusion here. After the referendum in 2010 you don't trust the judicial system as you used to.

We do not trust it at all.

So you don't trust the court no matter what, but you say you can win if people are united. Is that right?

DS: Yes. That is essential. This is a direct attack on human life. It destroys the nature and the water. Therefore no matter where people stand politically, no matter which government, this is against the people, it intervenes with their habitat. You need solidarity against the intervention, if not, you cannot win.

What did women do during the struggle?

Ayla Alkan: They reacted.

Did you go to those marching protests?

Ayla: Not personally. But women from my village and the other villages often complained and attended the meetings.

Vesbiye Dursun: Women went to Papart to protest. Women from other village supported them, fought together, attended meetings together, went to protests.

Ayla: If we knew this was going to reach such a level, for the sake of the village, for humanity, for the sake of life and water, we would have united and get organized as well, we would have opposed.

Vesbiye: We only attended the meetings.

Dursun: Women are involved in the struggle. The speaker in Artvin was a woman. In Papart, there were women speaking. The mayor spoke, the headmen spoke but women spoke as well.

You lived a very active two years. Has anybody resigned or migrated?

SE: 3-5 people tried to have their land confiscated and have some money. But they were a minority. People know that water is the source of life. Without water we cannot live here, they know that.

How do you know that they are aware of water being a source of life? I grew up in the city and for me water is something that I get without any effort. I turn the tap on and I have water.

SE: The villagers work all summer to have a proper irrigation. They know that if they don't bring water to the field, they won't be able to benefit from it. They know they cannot live without water. Maybe some won't be able to talk to you about it, they can't express their feelings, but they know the

benefits of water better than any engineer. There is no life without water.

Vesbiye: When I have no water for the garden I don't have any fruit. When we go up in the plateau we wash our sheep, our rugs in the river, animals drink from that water. We used to have a good life. Now, in August we run out of water. No water for the garden, no fruits.

Servet: When you take water from people, their life ends there. We do not need to explain it further. I do not believe that this is about energy production. Capitalists know that the most valuable source in the future will be water. They are planning to confiscate the clean waters and hiding it behind these projects. When we have been to panels, engineers have told us about these things. The amount of electricity that will be produced from hydro-electric plant projects is 0.4% of total electricity consumed in Turkey. For such a low percentage you destroy such a beautiful nature which is shaped in millions of years. Our fathers and grandfathers fought for this country. Their grandsons live here dependent on water and you come and try to take it from them. Those who did this betray their own people. Nobody can express it properly because to keep somebody from the water source is such a deadly, consummating malice. In Turkey, 25% of all the electricity is getting lost along the grid. In developed countries they save 15% of it. They throw this 15% away and then destroy the country for 0.4%. How are these people going to defend themselves?

Ok, let's say that the engineers are right and that without these projects Turkey will suffer power shortages. This would mean you will have to use less electricity and you will have to turn off your TV two hours earlier. Would you do that?

Vesbiye: Yes we would.

SE: Saving is my principle. If I use five bulbs when one is enough, I am less of a human, this is how I think. These HES people came here with a bunch of lies. They said without electricity we would be in darkness. Five years later we heard that Syria buys electricity from Turkey, where is the shortage then? We do not have shortage in Turkey, what we have is lying administrators.

Ali: For me electricity means civilization, but water is life. Without life, without health, without hygiene, what use does electricity have? We were able to survive even before the electricity.

When did you first have electricity here?

Ali: During 80-82. Before the 80s we did not have it. When it snows, sometimes we have to live without power for 10 days but water... water is essential.

SE: I saw that in Merzifon. They have wind turbines up on the hills. Do we really need water or nuclear power to produce electricity? We can use wind as well. If they built wind turbines in the plateaus of Erzurum, they would have enough power for the whole world. They don't go there. Because you cannot sell and buy the wind. They will sell water one day, that is why they want to have it now. There were people saying "Water flows, we just look at it". These rivers used to flow for 40-50-100 years

and what we had was health and hygiene. Ants, warms and birds all live here, it was all because of the water. There is life without electricity but there is none without water. It is also obscene to say that without these projects we would not have any power. You can use wind power to light a bulb. When we

Do we really need water or nuclear power to produce electricity? We can use wind as well. If they built wind turbines in the plateaus of Erzurum, they would have enough power for the whole world. They don't go there. Because you cannot sell and buy the wind. They will sell water one day, that is why they want to have it now.

had the accident in Chernobyl many people died of cancer. Which one is more important, human life or electric power? You want to build a nuclear plant using atomic power, but you will risk the life of millions. You want to sell electricity and make money but you treat people as warms. This does not make sense.

Does the right to use water belong to people or to all creatures?

Dursun: Sure, the right does not belong to company A or B. Water is used by people living in that region, or had been used so far, and now they want to privatize it. Why, this is what we have to think about. Turkey is a poor country in terms of clean water sources. The water consumption per capita is also quite low. But it will increase in time. What would those international companies do? They want to control the clean water. Electricity is just a cover. It is water what they are really after.

So you do believe that's the real motive.

Dursun: Yes we do. Once the water is inside the pipes they will be able to bottle it or to transfer it through the pipes one day. They can easily transport it to the whole world. This is what Tayyip (Erdoğan) says anyway. He said he would bring water from Artvin to Istanbul.

Vesbiye: He was on the news.

Dursun: This is why they transferred the water into the pipes, confiscated it, rented it out to international consortiums for 49 years. EBARA is a subcontractor, Ati is a subcontractor. These privatized waters will be taken from people forever and everybody will have to leave the region.

Will you be forced to migrate?

Dursun: We already are. Wild animals have no water anymore. Bears didn't use to come all the way down into the villages, because they used to have fruits in the forest. But they cut the trees down. Now bears that cannot find any food come down into to villages for corn, berries or cherries.

The Minister of Forestry has come up with the solution, you know, use pepper spray against bears he says (laughter).

Dursun: Yes, he suggests using pepper spray...

Latest notes on history from Bergama

On January 2013 there was a court expert inspection for the case about Ovacık gold mine related to its capacity increase. After tens of lawsuits, the legal authorities said that during the inspection the latest notes on history were taken in Ovacık. These latest notes were going to be added on other tens of notes in different trials and together they were going to be the proofs of unlawfulness that had been continuing for the last decades. Despite the fact that there was no court decision regarding confidentiality, the chief judge did not allow the environmentalists coming from Izmir into the inspection area.

A cyanide dam in the middle of the fields

After Eurogold and Normandy, the final owner of the mine, Koza Gold Company, decided to increase its capacity. Even though the gold ore had run out, the company decided to use the facilities as a gold distillation center. The plan was to bring the material from Kozak, Havran and Küçükdere and distill the ore in Ovacık. The company aimed to reduce its costs by centralizing cyanide processes and to minimize the reactions against it. After capacity increase, a second cyanide dam was built near Ovacık mine, in the middle of the fields. In other words, the mock coming from the open mine was brought here and after simple modifications was turned into a waste dam.

But:

- The area stands on a primary seismic zone and a dam built with mock was a big question mark in case of a major earthquake,
- The project did not consider the dam's effect on fields and pine trees in Kozak,
- There was no health protection belt around the dam,
- The regulations stated that there needed to be at least 1km distance between this type of dam and the nearest settlement, but this dam was 200-300m to Ovacık and 400m to Narlıca.

The fire is covered with ashes but it is still on

Three villagers who stopped on the way to Narlıca to pick up activists that were not allowed in the inspection area complained that they had no information about the incident. Hüseyin Andaç, who stated that he was an active member of different protests for years, said "If we knew, we would bring the whole village here. We fought a lot but they still managed to ruin the area. Still most of the villagers

oppose to the mine. They would still back us up today". A member of the village administration, Selahattin Çokal, believes that cancer cases increased after the mine, and that there were no researches about it.¹

For the villagers of Bergama region, the fight against the cyanide gold mine started 25 years before that conversation.

During the 90s, Turkey witnessed two more important incidents, other than the rising Kurdish movement. The first one was the strikes of Zonguldak coal miners that started in 1990 and reached its peak in 1991 with "Great March to Ankara". The second was the resistance of people of Bergama against the gold mine starting from the end of 90s, reaching its peak in early 2000s.

Three stages of the Bergama resistance

Özen explains the movement's 15-year history (1990-2005) in three stages:

1. The first period shaped by a resistance of local people and different social groups with different demands against the mining company (1990-April 1996),
2. The second period when the movement gained strength and spreaded thanks to increasing social demand and various gains (April 1996-1998),
3. The third and the final period when Bergama movement lost strength because of a new front fighting against the movement (1999-2005).

Özen states that the movement began as a resistance to prevent mining close to the settlements. But in time, it also started to address social demands like environmental protection, prevention of gold mining in general, prevention of foreign/multinational companies to operate in Turkey, the supremacy of law and democracy. In that sense the movement examines two kinds of subordination/subjectation inherent to Turkish society.

The movement mobilized different groups and caused nine out of twelve companies to abandon their investment plans thanks to the instability created by the Bergama resistance.²

A confession

The license bought by Eczacıbaşı Esan company in 1989 was sold to multinational Eurogold company in 1991. Eurogold managed to prepare a ÇED report (Environmental Impact Assessment) and had it approved immediately. It has later been found out that the Mining Department in charge of the approval did not even evaluate the report. The



Özer Akdemir

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company financed a report prepared by Prof. Orhan Uslu from Dokuz Eylül University, according to which the cyanide method did not have any negative effects on the environment. Eurogold authorities later confessed to have prepared the report and to have used measurements from an earlier mine with similar characteristic, since those measurements were impossible to carry out within the technical capacity of the country.³

The first opposition

Villagers of Bergama were at first happy about the gold mine operating on their land. After all, gold meant wealth, right? Yet, they soon found out that gold was going to be distilled using cyanide and the method was extremely dangerous. The joy was soon replaced by sorrow.

The next steps were information meetings, panels and anti-mining protests. Meanwhile Attorney Semih Özey from the Bar of İzmir took the proxy of 652 villagers from Bergama and started a legal process with three different court cases in İzmir 1st Administrative Court, against the mining company. Özey demanded the mining license of Eurogold to be annulled. In line with the legal resistance, there was also an interesting popular resistance against the mine.

Meanwhile, the company already had the necessary permits and started recruiting workers from neighboring villages. Their first job was to clean a forest area! The company paid the necessary fees to the Directorate of Forestry even though village mukhtars were against it. On October 11, on 1996 the company started cutting 2400 pine trees. This action was the last straw for the villagers. The cutting was stopped after a seven-hour blockage on the Çanakale-İzmir road.

On the last days of 1996, on December 23, half naked villagers decided to distribute notices against the mine. On the referendum carried out at eight villages all 2886 villagers voted “no to cyanide gold”. Despite their efforts, the government did not show any sign of retreat.

Court decision and intervention

The decision of State Council dated May 1997 based on the inspection caused public opinion to believe that gold mining activity was stopped. The court allegedly decided that “gold mining using cyanide is against public benefit”. Yet, Eurogold supporters including state officials and politicians found an evil formula despite the constitution stating that court decisions could not be changed. The company asked the court to re-evaluate the case claiming that they eliminated the risk factor that the court based its decision on. The petition was sent to Ministry of Environment, which passed it to Prime Ministry and finally to TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey). This last institution managed to formulate a very controversial report that justifies mining. The Prime Ministry sent a memo, based on TÜBİTAK’s report, to every ministry and related institution and instructed them to facilitate the mining activity. After the instruction, the mine finally started

working, therefore, the villagers appealed to the administrative court once again for suspension of execution.

“Despite the joy caused by the İzmir 1st Administrative Court decision to suspend the execution of the gold mine, it was evident that mining lobby was not going to give up. The court decision for the suspension of execution on June 1, 2001 was as clear as the State Council’s decision in 1997: “It is impossible to run a gold mine using cyanide, the claims of Eurogold regarding elimination of risks is invalid”.

On the last days of 1996, December 23, half naked villagers decided to distribute notices against the mine. On the referendum carried out at eight villages, all 2886 villagers voted “no to cyanide gold”. Despite their efforts, the government did not show any sign of retreat.

A report during the crisis

Let us remember the year 2001. The country was in a deep crisis under a three-party coalition government. IMF loan was the only hope, and it demanded not only a “bitter prescription” but also certain laws to be changed. In this climate, two deputies from DSP (head of the coalition, social democrat) prepared a report for the Prime Minister Ecevit. The report basically stated that the way out from the crisis was gold mining.⁴

Deputies Erol Al and Hasan Özgöbek⁵ presented Prime Minister Ecevit an economic salvation, namely the Turkish gold reserve of potentially 6500 tons. According to “satellite research” Turkey had gold reserves on 580 different locations. A potential production in these mines would create 25,000 new jobs. The report underlined also that the resistance in Bergama was supported by German Fian Foundation. Erol Al issued three parliamentary questions asking ministries in charge of internal affairs, external affairs and foundations about current activities of German foundations in Turkey.

DSP allegation, in fact, was quite old. The debate started by an Eastern Studies expert on 1999 inspired many writers and journalists.⁶ Fikret Bila’s heading in Milliyet, “Golden News” triggered the turmoil. According to Bila “gold mining could be the alternative of begging IMF, if properly administrated”.⁷

A psychological warfare

After the report of the two deputies, media took their position in the campaign. Milliyet was leading and the other Doğan Holding newspaper Hürriyet was in full support. Soon enough the campaign was seen as a way out of the crisis and gained even more support from different groups.

The statements of General Cumhuri Asparuk, who was the Commander of the Turkish Air Force proved

that a psychological warfare was conducted against the resistance in Bergama and that General Staff was supporting the campaign.

During the Presidential reception, on a question related to US intervention in Afghanistan, General Asparuk commented “You should focus on Turkey... We have the world’s richest gold reserve, but we cannot process it because of lobbying activities

The popular environmentalist movement accelerated thanks to the resistance of Bergama villagers. Thanks to Bergama resistance against cyanide gold mining process, the struggle became a village-based popular movement. Villagers organized different protests to protect their habitat and realized that it was not just a company or a government that they had to deal with.

of the Germans”.⁸ According to this claim, MGK (National Security Committee) regarded the resistance as a “threat for national security”. Most probably, the movement was an issue in the National Security meeting, it was discussed in the Social Relations Department (TİB) and a decision was taken to prevent it by psychological warfare.

Full support from the Armed Forces

A year after General Asparuk’s statement a new wave of support came from the military side; on a period when the mine was closed due to a court decision! On November 30, 2002, 45 generals, including the Aegean Army Commander and the NATO Co-commander, and their wives, made a trip to Bergama gold mine. Orhan Güçkan, a board member of Normandy Company briefed generals and “Some evil minded people oppose the cyanide used in the tanks, saying that it will intoxicate the soil. This is wrong when Turkey has to import 200 tons of gold” said Hurşit Tolon, the Aegean Army Commander, posing with a gold nugget in his hands. He invited the decision makers to come and see this mine “of great value for Turkish economy”.⁹

Necip Hablemitoğlu’s book

On August 2001, a new book from Necip Hablemitoğlu, German Foundations and the Case of Bergama, was on the shelves. The book examined the above mentioned claims and many more. With an incomprehensible speed, it circulated different groups. In fact, another book published six months prior had already focused on the same issues. Prof. Yılmaz Savaşçın’s book, A Wholistic Environmental Consciousness and Environmental Lies, was blamed for being composed and published with Eurogold’s financial support.¹⁰ The source for many of the debates in Hablemitoğlu was actually Savaşçın’s book.

The most important document in Hablemitoğlu was “Gold Concept of Turkey” on page 71. It was presented as the “Framework for Bergama

Operation” and the claim was that it was prepared on January 1990 by Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in Germany. On the footnote 63, the writer explains the source of the document: “A printed copy and the translation of the document have been sent by Prof. Metin Deliorman (who lives in Sweden) to every relevant institution. But unfortunately there have been no precautions except for the counter-espionage surveillance against the German intelligence officers...”

The most important document is fake

This document was so important that it could start a diplomatic crisis between the two countries; nevertheless, it could not be obtained by any journalist, scientists or members of the judiciary.

Ankara DGM (State Security Court) who handled the case asked the Foreign Affairs about the whereabouts of the document. The official answer came from the Police Department Headquarters: “After the investigation of Turkish Embassy in Berlin regarding the report known as “Gold Concept of Turkey”, there is no evidence that such document exist...”

There is no evidence of a Prof. Metin Deliormanlı who lives in Sweden and who has supposedly delivered the document “to all relevant institutions”!

Hablemitoğlu’s book presented many unreal documents and manipulative information in addition to a fake document and a non-existing personality that the whole claim was based on.

The book was financed by the mining company

Hasan Gökvardar who had been the director of public relations for Eurogold for ten years after its foundation, has a testimony regarding Hablemitoğlu’s book. According to this testimony that was video-recorded in the Bar of İzmir and was also covered by the media, the book was printed and distributed using the financial support, documents and information of the gold mining company. Hablemitoğlu was supplied with documents and data during his two visits to the mining area. Gökvardar stated that after his second visit Hablemitoğlu finished the book, which was printed ten thousand copies and distributed mainly by the company. Nurettin Turgut, who worked as a public relations expert for the company, testified similarly. Journalist Aydın Engin also verified that he saw a room full of Hablemitoğlu’s book when he visited the mine.¹¹

The only possible incident that would make a book based on a fake document unquestionable, that would divert the public focus from its forgery and create an environment where even criticizing the book or its author would be a “shame”, was Hablemitoğlu’s assassination. And that actually happened!

The license was transferred again, this time to Koza Altın, a gold company known for its close relationship with Fethullah Gülen community. Five years after that, the company value for public offering was announced as \$2 billion!

Even though Hablemitoğlu’s accusations about Fethullah Gülen and his community were obvious,

his book on the German foundations became a reference book for gold miners attached to this community.

The assassination destroyed the most powerful resistance on the way to gold mining thanks to Hablemitoğlu's evident support. After the dissolution of Bergama resistance, many companies close to Gülen movement jumped into mining sector together with their international partners.

The importance of Bergama in the environmental movement

The popular environmental movement accelerated thanks to the resistance of Bergama villagers. Until then, this type of activism was claimed mainly by middle class intellectuals, and the movement was belittled as "bugs and flowers environmentalism". Thanks to Bergama resistance against cyanide gold mining process, the struggle became a village-based popular movement. Villagers organized different protests to protect their habitat and realized that it was not just a company or a government that they had to deal with. They pushed the boundaries of social opposition channels and were able to successfully drive the attention of many others who experienced different forms of oppression.

The resistance that started in 1989 and reached its peak at the end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000s was first stopped and then extinguished using psychological warfare methods.

The very same den of intrigue

The same German foundation conspiracy is used again for a new massive opposition movement for against hydro-electric power plants (HES). The movement keeps getting more popular and political in the last years. The conspiracy started in the local media first¹² and was rapidly transferred to the national media.¹³ One of the latest examples is the Public Information Center in Mersin founded by Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant Company. The director of the center accused the anti-nuclear activist of being "affiliated with foreign forces".¹⁴

The effects of these false allegations produced

by the cooperation between the state and the corporation have been much more destructive than imagined. After the allegations, it was not only Bergama villagers movement that was defeated, but also all the environmentalist movements around the country were deemed invisible. Public opinion is still under the influence of "environmental movements

The effects of these false allegations produced by the cooperation between the state and the corporation have been much more destructive than imagined. After the allegations, it was not only Bergama villagers movement that was defeated but also all the environmental movements around the country were deemed invisible.

are provoked by Germany or other foreign powers who want to prevent Turkey from developing" propaganda.

The assassination

For purposes of this article we did not go into the details of Hablemitoğlu's murder. Who was behind it? What were the connection of Durmuş Anuçin who confessed the murder several times but never taken seriously by the prosecutors? Why the case was included in the Ergenekon trials? Why is it still an unsolved case? These questions and their possible answers are not part of this article, but they can be found in *The Rock in the Well: German Foundations and the Reality of Bergama*.

The final paragraph of the introduction chapter of that book probably summarizes this discussion: "...rather than a national security threat, a plot was planned against the Bergama villager movement that intervened with the projects of the gold cartel. Hablemitoğlu had a major role in the plot. They made him drop the rock in the well. He was loyal to his part until the last breath, and he never knew that the success of the plot would only be guaranteed by his own death..."¹⁵

Footnotes

1. <http://www.evrensel.net/news.php?id=47173>
2. A. Yüce, A. Ekrem, Ö. Güven (ed.) *Altın Madenciligi ve Çevre*, Beril Ofset, İstanbul, 1998.
3. H. Alethea, E. Özgüven, P. Holzer, Belgesel, 2007, Emür Henden's talk.
4. After the economic crisis in Greece, gold companies who were not able to penetrate in the country during 1990s and 2000s, attacked again to start mines in the northern part of the country.
5. For details of Hasan Özgöbek's studies on Uşak Eşme Kışladağ gold mine see: Özer Akdemir, "Anadolu'nun 'altın'daki Tehlike - Kışladağ'a Ağıt", s: 199, Evrensel Basım Yayın, April 2011.
6. Tamer Bacinoğlu, "Türkiye'de Alman Vakıflarının Marifetleri", Cumhuriyet, 6 July 1999.
7. Milliyet, 30 July 2001.
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10. Tahir Öngür, Çeçeçevre Yaşam, Hayat Tv, 6 February 2011.
11. Yeni Harman, 23 February 2003.
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A radioactive landfill in the heart of İzmir

The “nuclear passion” of Turkey is a half-a-century-old story. Government plan for the near future (2023) is to build three nuclear plants. Turkey presently has no nuclear reactors, except for the one built in Küçükçekmece, Istanbul for educational purposes, which has only 5 megawatts of power. A government contract is issued for the plant planned for Mersin. The negotiations are still on for the second one planned for Sinop. The location of the third one is still unknown but there are rumors about various places. Meanwhile NGOs continue their protests against nuclear power. Aside from these debates, a new incident took place in İzmir. Even though Turkey does not possess a nuclear power plant, it now has a landfill with radioactive contamination. It has been detected that on the 70-acre territory of a lead factory in operation for more than 70 years, is buried several thousand tons of hazardous waste radioactively contaminated with Europium 152 and Europium 154 elements. And apparently, all the authorities in the region are aware of it.

The factory, Aslan Avcı Döküm Sanayi ve Tic. A.Ş. was founded in 1940s in Gaziemir, İzmir. Since its foundation, the factory has been producing lead bullion and has been using outdated batteries and scrap lead. The factory has more than 70 acres of land and most of it looks vacant from the outside. However, there is no weed on that land. In a small area there are abandoned old machinery, vehicles, depots, acid pools, etc. The factory stopped production in 2010 and there is no personnel in the facilities except for the security guard. Looking at various reports issued by various institutions, it is not difficult to guess why the factory is abandoned. According to these documents, the estimated disposal cost of the “visible” hazardous waste alone is around TL 27 million.

TAEK discovered the buried radiation in 2007

Even though most of the waste is buried in the factory property, some of it was sent to the one and only hazardous waste disposal facility in the area, İZAYDAŞ. The experts in this facility detected the radiation, did not accept the disposal and notified immediately the only authority in Turkey regarding radiation, Turkish Atomic Energy Authority (TAEK). After the first investigation, TAEK detected an area of buried waste products and radioactively contaminated materials in the factory.

Later, on June 17, 2008, the Directorate of Environment and Forestry (now Directorate of

Environment and Urbanization, İzmir) inspected the factory. 21 different points in the factory territory were excavated and in 19 of them hazardous waste products were found. The directorate fined the factory an amount of TL 321,000 for operating against the regulations. There was also an official criminal complaint about authorities responsible for the crime. According to the reports prepared after the investigations, the factory had 200 tons of waste in its open depots that needed to be sent to a proper disposal/recycling facility. The investigators of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry paid a second visit to the factory on July 2008 and this time they detected 180 tons of hazardous waste on another location. According to their report, there were barrels marked “radioactive” that TAEK declared to pick up on July 15-18, 2008. The report also stated that TAEK made buried radioactive waste into parcels, which were ready to be shipped to Çekmece Nuclear Research and Training Center (ÇNAEM).

TAEK: “Quarantine them!”

On September 8, 2008 TAEK sent a memo to Aslan Avcı Factory saying that the institution made inspections and radiation measurements on May, June, July and August. According to the memo, they found radioactive material in the deposit area, around the furnaces and in the indoor storage area; there were traces of melted radioactive material in the pots. TAEK made a list of necessary measures to be taken to ensure radioactive security. These measures were to quarantine the areas that contain radioactive waste, to shut the deposit areas down, to stop any operations related to these sites, to take necessary precautions related to the personnel and to install radiation measurement systems in the factory.

All institutions were informed

The authorities at the directorate in İzmir sent another memo on September 17, 2008. They stated that according to the inspections of TAEK and of the directorate on September 9-10, 2008 in an area of 90x90x12 meters inside the factory territory of 70 acres, there were traces of radioactive contamination. The factory was cautioned “not to proceed in any way without notifying relevant institutions”. Meanwhile İzmir Municipality, Gaziemir District Governorate, Gaziemir Municipality and Gaziemir Health Directorate were also notified about the incident. This memo proved that all the above mentioned institutions were aware of the radioactive waste that was first discovered in 2007.



Serkan Ocak

Born in 1982 in Karadeniz Ereğli, he is a graduate of Marmara University, Faculty of Communications, Department of Journalism. He worked for the daily newspaper Hürriyet and TRT before joining the daily Radikal in 2006. Since then he has been reporting mainly on environmental issues and human rights violations. He was awarded with “Abdi İpekçi The Best Press Photograph” in 2012.

On November 2008 TAEK reminded the factory a second time the necessary measurements for human and environmental protection. TAEK's ex-president Oktay Çakıroğlu sent another communication to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and to the Governorship of İzmir. The ministry sent two more inspectors to the factory on December 2008 and September 2009 and prepared inspection reports

They melted nuclear rods

The internal memos of Aslan Avcı lead factory show the gravity of the situation. Technical Director Ö.Y. sends e-mails to General Manager H.G. explaining that the cost of sending radioactive waste to İZAYDAŞ would probably cost around TL 12 million, the cost would even be higher if the waste was sent to ÇNAEM. According to the correspondence, samples of the waste were already sent to ÇNAEM. The institution came to the conclusion that these materials do not belong to any waste category but they were regarded as "radioactive source". The institution believed that the material found in the factory should not even be in Turkey. ÇNAEM reported that the radiation generated from a material called "Europium 152" which could only be found in nuclear rods used in the power plants. It is clear that Europium 152 cannot be legally imported to Turkey. According to the correspondence, only ÇNAEM is authorized to temporarily store these materials.

What will happen to the buried waste?

The hazardous materials are still all over the factory territory. The radiation measurement devices still signal from various corners. Battery and lead remnants fly around with the wind. According to the analysis there is still radiation in the area. The amount of visible waste in the factory is estimated to be over 100 thousand tons. The amount underneath will be impossible to guess before the land is excavated.

The territory is surrounded with barbed wire, but most of the wire is useless. Since it is quite large, the field is being used as road. Kids pass from the contaminated area every day to reach the school. In some parts of the territory the waste effervesced and there are acid residues on the land. In some parts there is sulfuric acid in white powder form, in others you can see yellow sulfide come out of the dirt. The toxic waste combined with air and dirt, started burning. It is impossible to resist the smell where there is smoke.

The factory and the territory where the waste is buried are very close to the settlement area. The closest house belongs to Mevlüt Sert. The land he bought in 1979 borders the factory. This is his story: "At that time there was only one building. Then they built more and they brought all the machines. There was a creek here. They filled the creek. The neighborhood protested. We wanted the factory to leave. Two people from the factory got asthma, then they got cancer and died. We also heard there were workers who died. After the protest some deputies came. The health directorate made some scanning here. I made an official complaint to directorate of the environment. They got excited when they heard there was toxic smoke coming from the factory chimney. But nobody showed up". His wife Gülşen Sert complains about the smoke

and the smell coming from the factory: "It smelled so heavily that we could not open the windows. We saw them burying the waste. And after some time, they covered the waste with dirt using a tractor. When factory was working, nothing would grow in our garden. Now we can grow tangerines, or even olives. The factory does not function for two years now. We are happy that we are saved". An anonymous security officer who used to work in the area shows the hill where the waste used to be accumulated. "They covered the place with a tractor in two days. But they did not do anything else. Look closely, you cannot see any weed growing over there..."

How did Europium 152 come to Turkey?

Prof. Tolga Yarman from Okan University Faculty of Engineering explains the case: "This product is a nucleus called Europium 152 isotope. It is difficult to

Even though Turkey does not possess a nuclear power plant, it now has a landfill with radioactive contamination. It has been detected that on the 70-acre territory of a lead factory in operation for more than 70 years, is buried several thousand tons of hazardous waste radioactively contaminated with Europium 152 and Europium 154 elements.

understand how this element can be found in Turkey. This is the major question. This product cannot be here just by itself; it must have come with other waste materials, especially with nuclear rods. But why and how can nuclear rods be here in Turkey? Who brought them? This is what we need to know. In addition, what did they melt in the factory together with the waste? They say it was unintentional, but it does not seem possible. This means that it is possible to imagine that the factory used radioactive material for its production. In that case, it is necessary to take under surveillance the production process. We are also facing a potential hazard caused by the products distributed from that company. We should immediately test some of the batteries produced in that factory."

Yarman also believes that TAEK should take hold of the situation and make an official criminal complaint. "This is crucial not only to punish those who use this element in the production, but to clarify how the element was used and to prevent its possible effects. I cannot understand why TEAK did not make the complaints. This is a crime. It is a neglect of duty, even if it is not intentional. Somebody sent this product here, sold it, which means there are illegal connections. This is not only about that factory and the waste buried in it. Even the personnel working in the factory during the melting process should have a medical check-up. How can TAEK not be able to track down this material? Where are these products? We definitely need to find those batteries produced in that factory."

When we asked about urgent measures Yarman says: "The area must be quarantined. It is impossible

to detect where did the radioactive effect reached through underground water. The radioactive material should be transferred to a safe location. The land should be excavated and the waste should be taken elsewhere.”

Ata Erbolat, the director of Environment and Urbanization in İzmir, made the following statement: “TEAK has sent us a message that says “Do not proceed without notifying us”. We, then, sent a memo

There was no answer regarding why the area was covered again, why the waste was not properly excavated and safely deposited, how much was the exact quantity of contaminated waste, the possible risk of underground water contamination in the area. Maybe the most important and unanswered question still is why in a country like Turkey with no nuclear power plants there is waste containing Europium 152 and 154 isotopes.

to the institutions. We told them there is a radioactivity test in progress and that they should not proceed. What needs to be done is clear in the regulations. TAEK has the authority here. Whatever the cost, that material should be disposed as soon as possible. There are complaints about waste being buried. We sent down a team on March 2008. We charged them for an amount of TL 320 thousand. They took the fine to the court, lost the case but appealed it. The trial continues. The Directorate of Environment made an official complaint, saying that the company does not follow the regulations. During the negotiations with İZAYDAŞ, when they found radioactive material in the samples, TAEK took over. And after TAEK’s message we did not do anything.”

Public land is also contaminated

A former executive of the factory admits that hazardous waste had been buried for years. The anonymous executive says “The cost of sending the waste to the disposal facility is TL 270 per ton. There is approximately 100 thousand tons of waste, which adds up to TL 27 million. So it was not sent but buried. After the death of the owner, there was a fight over the inheritance. Five siblings are still fighting. There have been no technological improvements. I literally escaped from the factory. Even without the

radioactive source, lead waste should not be buried. This thing can cause diseases. In addition, a part of the factory is quarantined by TAEK. The estimation at that time was 50 thousand tons of waste. There is also waste buried in the public land inside the factory. 30 years ago, first batteries were used to cut by guillotine and buried there. Once, while excavating before pouring some concrete, we saw plastic parts of the battery buried underground. The whole factory territory should be turned upside down. Who could afford that, I do not know. Following the regulations we sent the workers to a health scan. Their blood was checked for lead. Sometimes we actually found lead in one of them, so we hospitalized them.”

TAEK takes action after five years

After a one-week series in Radikal, a daily newspaper, TAEK decided to take action. After leaving the radioactive waste for five years right where it was buried, they decided to re-investigate the area. After the investigation there have been a series of statements on their website on 2012: “In our investigation we found Europium 154, not Europium 152. 15 tons, 21 tons and 151 tons of separate radioactive waste is excavated from the ground and sent to ÇNAEM. During additional examinations, we found 1100 tons of residues with elevated radiation levels. We explained that 900 tons of materials should be distilled by the factory. The personnel are trained for protection from radioactive material.” TAEK concluded that they assumed the responsibility for the case and that it is now the other institutions’ turn to act.

After all these discussions, people wondered what those responsible institutions would do. Ahmet Kenan Tanrıku, a deputy from MHP (Nationalist Action Party) and a member of the Parliamentary Commission for the Environment issued a parliamentary proposal asking the possible actions of the ministries regarding the case. The first reply came from the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. In the reply, the ministry explained that inside the factory territory an area of 90x90x12 meters was quarantined and following TAEK’s orders the area was covered with 10.200 tons of soil.

There was no answer regarding why the area was covered again, why the waste was not properly excavated and safely deposited, how much was the exact quantity of contaminated waste, the possible risk of underground water contamination in the area. Maybe the most important and unanswered question still is why in a country like Turkey with no nuclear power plants there is waste containing Europium 152 and 154 isotopes.

Turkish television series: An overview

Television series are one of the most popular cultural forms being consumed as evening entertainment and generating public discourse in Turkey. This is confirmed through the high ratings, frequently visited internet forums and fan pages, and lively public discussion about program topics. Their themes, characters and plots surface in the media, in various other public forums and in homes. Even Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan has seen fit to criticize “Muhteşem Yüzyıl” (“The Magnificent Century”), a popular series based on the life of one of the most prominent Ottoman sultans, Suleiman The Magnificent as the westerners called him or Kanuni as was called by the Ottoman public: “We know no such Kanuni [as portrayed in the series]. He spent 30 years of his life on horseback. I publicly condemn the directors of that show and the owners of the television channel. We have warned the authorities about this. I expect the judiciary to make the right decision.”¹ TV series are clearly not mere entertainment but widely discussed social phenomena in Turkey.

Categorized as a cultural form, TV series consist of a variety of genres and narratives. The commonly consumed genres and narrative forms in Turkey portray similar themes to diverse audiences from various perspectives so that they may be consumed at multiple levels. Every genre and narrative cultivates its own viewer activity. Some series — melodramas, comedies, soap operas, etc.— are followed by young people who are active users of social media and who create fan sites, some are watched by the whole family at night; others are watched through web sites, and still others are directed at specifically male or female audiences. This makes television production an ongoing collective process of writing, reading and discussion in homes, on the internet and elsewhere, contrary to the perception that the influence of this medium is unidirectional towards the audience.

Albeit through different genres and narrative forms, the main themes of Turkish series tend to center around common themes of femininity, masculinity, love, marriage and family. Stories may focus on lovers separated by ethnic or religious differences; tell cautionary tales of families torn apart by injustice, hatred or fate; or they may narrate the searches of men and women in search of a “proper” family life. While looking at how these themes are handled in various series, we should also keep an eye on similarities and differences in genre, narrative and audiencehood. In this article, I will focus on how male and female characters are narrated in recent Turkish TV series of various genres.

Representations of masculinity in “Kuzey Güney” and “Karadayı”

It can be difficult to categorize TV series. The globally con-

sumed TV series, which are usually produced in the US and UK, have spawned conventional film genres, like mystery, drama, romance, fantasy and horror.² New technologies of production and new styles of storytelling, however, that have developed especially since the 1990s have made categorization more complicated.³ As a newly emerging regional/international actor, Turkey’s television genres are more complicated still, as new categories like local narratives, adaptations from Turkish literature, adaptations from globally successful narratives and historical narratives have emerged. On the other hand, generic analysis of television series in various contexts shows that genres shape and are shaped by audiencehood.⁴ This is why a rough classification based on genre and narrative may illuminate our understanding of popular TV shows in the Turkish context.

The highest rated melodramas and soap operas in prime time can be discussed under the same heading despite differences in formal characteristics. These series generally take on moral-normative conflicts that are resolved by the central protagonists in a linear narrative form. In melodramas, the way conflicts are narrated and resolved is quite significant. The protagonist makes a choice between conflicting norms so that he or she becomes the hero or heroine. For the genre of melodrama, we can examine this point through two series “Kuzey Güney” (Kanal D, 2011–present) and “Karadayı” (ATV, 2012–present).

Kuzey Güney narrates the tension between two brothers, Kuzey and Güney (whose names mean North and South in English, foreshadowing their dichotomous characters). Kuzey is both an ex-convict and the story’s most righteous character. He has confessed to and been convicted of his elder brother’s crime, spent time in jail where he was physically scarred. As the narrative unfolds through flashbacks, we come to learn he has also been emotionally scarred since childhood. As the problem child of the family, it seems to be inevitable that he would have eventually ended up in jail. Nonetheless, his family is not innocent. The “defects” of the various family members, Kuzey, Güney, Handan Hanım (mother) and Sami Bey (father) are all revealed at various points in the series. The mother is an inside-out representation of the archetypal self-sacrificing mother; the father, initially represented as a classic breadwinner, is revealed to beat his wife; and the elder son, Güney, incurs the ire of everyone who comes in his path as he ruthlessly strives to meet his mother’s expectations. Kuzey, though damaged, comes across as the least corrupt and most trustworthy member of the family in spite of his wounds. His righteousness is also the reason he is unable to act on his love. He is in love with his brother’s fiancée, Cemre but, although she is also in love with Kuzey’s forthrightness, his principles stand in the way of the way of their happiness. The biggest normative conflict of the



Feyza Akınerdem

Born in Ankara in 1981, Akınerdem received her BA from the Sociology Department of Boğaziçi University. She completed her postgraduate studies with a viewership survey on the TV series *Asmalı Konak*. She currently works on her doctoral research on the matchmaking shows on Turkish television channels in the Open University (UK).

overall narrative thus does not extend from the interactions between characters but from Kuzey's deep internal conflict, as portrayed through the central love story.

"Karadayı" is another series that revolves around a story of true love, this time set in the 1970s. Mahir Kara, while trying to help his father who is on trial, falls in love with the prosecutor handling the case. Because he has begun working at her office under the guise of an intern, he is unable to reveal his real identity and pursue his love freely. Like Kuzey, Mahir also has principles, but unlike Kuzey, he does not have a corrupt family. To the contrary, his is an ideal family situation with loyal and loving members, and no interpersonal strife. This makes the injustice perpetrated on his father much more tragic and, in turn, charges Mahir with an even greater responsibility, and making his love impossible.

Despite its historical setting, the main focus of the show is Hürrem, especially how she goes about protecting herself, her family, and Suleiman himself from various plots inside the court. "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" resides in the fact that it positions the nuclear family where it was historically absent, namely the Ottoman palace.

Feride, the prosecutor, is dedicated to her profession and has always been distant to men. But as she responds to Mahir's affections, we begin to see a different Feride, a more fragile and sensitive young woman and who begins to err that threaten her case. She tries to fight Mahir's protective nature but is inclined to trust him at the same time. The righteous prosecuting attorney Feride is in conflict with Feride-the woman in love. Here again, different norms are in conflict both for Mahir and for Feride: What is the most righteous path, to be a dedicated attorney, a good son or to follow one's heart?

Mahir tries to lead the woman he loves towards a just verdict for his father, but the more he deceives her, the more impossible his love for her becomes. Watching Feride's transition from attorney to woman in love, we understand there is no one true representation of righteous womanhood. The viewers also have to decide how to align themselves with Feride's situation, and the tension brings us back in front of the telly week after week.

Representations of femininity in "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" and "Lale Devri"

Having portrayed two melodramas that focus on representations of masculinity, I would like to dwell on two series focusing on representations of femininity. "Lale Devri" ("The Tulip Age"; Show TV, 2010–2011; Fox, 2011–present) is a contemporary and local incarnation of the American and Brazilian style soap operas that Turkish audiences have been familiar with since the 1980s. "Lale Devri" tells the story of a love that can never get "on track" as a result of a series of jealousies, intrigue, mistakes and continuous misunderstandings. As opposed to melodramas, soap operas are not based on a normative conflict that needs to be solved, but a web of daily and widespread conflicts.⁵ All the characters in "Lale Devri" fall into similar love adventures, and through these are revealed issues of true manhood, true womanhood,

true love and true intimacy. Toprak, a woman who grew up in the small town of Ürgüp, Central Anatolia, and who is both emotionally and physically wounded as a result of her previous marriage, finds herself married to Çınar, a very rich businessman from Istanbul. But Toprak's luck does not last long, since it is not easy for a woman from the provinces to keep up with a rich, handsome Istanbul man. She struggles to learn how to be a woman in a world unknown to her: when to talk and when to keep quiet, whether or not to get jealous, whether to dress up or not—which is the true womanhood? The story keeps producing these subject positions using conflicts and makes the audience think on Toprak's dilemmas.

Another iteration of the melodrama and soap opera genre is the historical drama. The most popular example from Turkey is "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" (Show TV, 2011–present). Based on a story that brings together fictional characters with historical figures from Topkapı Palace, this series is a source of both high ratings and continuous debate. Ottoman history is a delicate matter: Some Turks embrace it, while others believe it should be left in the past in favor of the Republic. "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" is a fictional account of a controversial period in the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, and depicts a more intimate, more emotional and darker side of palace life. Despite the outrage it created initially, audiences derive great pleasure from watching the adventures of Hürrem, Suleiman's wife, more so than from watching Suleiman himself.

Despite its historical setting, the main focus of the show is Hürrem, also known internationally as Roxelana—especially how she goes about protecting herself, her family, and Suleiman himself from various plots inside the court. It is crucial to recall here that the nuclear family is a Republican norm and project within Turkey.⁶ Thus, as Nükhet Sirman points out, the significance of "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" resides in the fact that it positions the nuclear family where it was historically absent, namely the Ottoman palace. The 21st century audience can thus identify with a 16th century figure Hürrem who has been given the mission of monitoring and protecting her family.⁷ From this point of view, there is a similarity between "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" and "Lale Devri", one that cannot be easily identified initially. They are both related to the current social context. "Lale Devri" focuses on a female character as well: The central question of the show is about Toprak's attempts to negotiate her family dynamics in order to find her way to a true womanhood. Toprak and Hürrem's struggles are similar to each other. They both try to protect their love, their family and their kids from conspiracies, tricks and schemes. This is not to say that "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" is anachronistic; it has merely accommodated its audience's expectations in order that its message may be more readily translated. Here the purpose is not to learn from TV but to entertain and to stimulate discussion and "water cooler chats" about the events depicted on show. The proof that the show's messages set in Suleiman's court continue to resonate with today's audiences lies in the high ratings and vigorous audience reactions, especially with respect to issues of femininity and masculinity.

Male Suffering in "Leyla ile Mecnun"

The other genre I would like to focus on is comedy. Turkish sitcoms began as adaptations of foreign sitcoms and have been institutionalized as a part of Turkish TV production since "Çocuklar Duymasın" ("Don't Let the Children Hear"; TGRT, 2002-ATV, 2012). "Çocuklar Duymasın" was a

long-running comedy that had fun with the issue of men's difficulty adjusting to the shifting roles of modern family life. The current generation of sitcoms derive humor out of issues relating to relationship troubles, like lovers who have been torn apart, womanizers, love affairs between men and women from different social classes, or ongoing misunderstandings between people who love each other. The most current examples are "Ali Ayşe'yi Seviyor" ("Ali Loves Ayşe"; Fox, 2013–present), "Zengin Kız, Fakir Oğlan" ("Rich Girl, Poor Boy"; TRT1, 2012–present) and "Yalan Dünya" ("World of Lies", Kanal D, 2011–present).

"Leyla ile Mecnun" ("Leyla and Mecnun", TRT, 2011–present) can be distinguished from other comedies by its loyal fan base, its distinctive storyline and the references it draws from film, literature, poems and other texts, especially the ancient "Leyla – Mecnun" story. Interestingly, the show's core audience, made up of young men, describes the story of Mecnun, who is never successful when it comes to women, as one of "male suffering".⁸ At first, the idea of identifying a comedy show with pain and suffering may seem peculiar; this demonstrates that in fact normative "masculinity" and "femininity" also inform the storytelling in comedy shows.

In "Leyla ile Mecnun", Leyla is an unstable character illustrated by a constantly rotating roster of actresses portraying the character over the course of the three seasons, while Mecnun and other male characters of different ages and personalities remain consistent (in character and casting). No matter what he does to keep up with the Leylas, Mecnun finishes each season alone. Thus, "Leyla ile Mecnun" functions as a sort of live action portrayal of the sentence "No matter how hard we try ..."; it is thus unsurprising that the narrative attracts a male audience and that it is identified with pain. Even though it is a comedy, and hence differs stylistically and follows a different narrative format, the story centers around a male subject and its primary theme is one of suffering. As a result, we as the audience are again led to reflect on issues of masculinity, and by extension femininity, as was also the case with "Kuzey Güney" and "Karadayı".

All the series reviewed here weave tales around themes of masculinity and femininity, and of conflicts between the sexes. Melodramas are exciting to watch since they portray characters facing the dilemma of choosing between love and honesty, love and justice, love and principles. Soap operas are moving because they bring these broad issues down to the level of the daily choices of their protagonists. Comedies deal with such conflicts using irony, absurd coincidences and funny misunderstandings, which sends the audience bouncing back and forth between laughter and thought, or laughter and pain.

The tentative categories of television series mentioned here coincide with a variety of audience practices. These series of various genres and narrative styles dominate most of the prime time slots in Turkey. Turkish series run a mini-

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mum of 90 minutes, interrupted by long commercial breaks. Therefore these shows become the background of evening household activity; they inform the rhythm of life. The audience is able to have a break, think, discuss and continue daily activities while they are kept company by these familiar stories, normative conflicts and, of course, advertisements. The experience extends throughout the evening and continues with subsequent episodes over the course of months each year, furnishing viewers with conversation starters with each new airing. What is important for the viewer is not just the immediate representations, but the overarching story, which is in a constant state of transformation and development. Normative masculinities, femininities, ideas of love, and family values are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through these narratives. Through the viewer experience, individuals form, refine, challenge, and topple his or her own norms. Nevertheless it is difficult to claim this to be a construction-deconstruction process parallel to that of the narrative. These shows are not reflections of social life, but actual components of it.

In summary, these productions serve as forums where matters of man, woman, relationship and family are debated. TV itself is both an extension of this debate and a medium by which it is extended to the realm of the mundane. It is also evident through different genres and narratives that the debate does not necessarily glorify merely masculinity or femininity in any monolithic way. In the Turkish context these concepts, together with the concept of family, which itself contains the other two, are produced, altered and transformed every day in a macro level debate that includes TV itself. Between the dominant ideologies and discourses, social projects and opposing ideas, television becomes a constitutive point for understanding manhood and womanhood as social constructions by giving the viewer a variety of norms, emotions and desires from which to select. Regardless of how the scriptwriters might decide to resolve the dilemmas faced by Kuzey, Mahir, Hürrem, Toprak and Mecnun, the stories live on as resources from which these programs' viewers draw from as they go on about their lives, making decisions for themselves about the meanings of true manhood and true womanhood.

Footnotes

1. E. Banış Altıntaş (27.05.2012)"Turkey debates soap opera that angered prime minister" in Today's Zaman. <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-299466-turkey-debates-soap-opera-that-angered-prime-minister.html>
2. Jason Mittel (2004), *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*. London: Routledge
3. Jason Mittel (2006), "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television". *The Velvet Light Trap*, (58), 29-40.
4. Glen Creeber (2008), *The Television Genre Book*. British Film Institute.
5. Tania Modleski (1979). "The Search fo Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas". *Film Quarterly*, 33:1 (1979): 12–21
6. Nükhet Sirman (2002) "Kadınların Milliyeti": Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce, Milliyetçilik. İstanbul, İletişim Yayınevi.
7. This claim was made at a conference organized by the Swedish Research Institute entitled "Male violence, media and visibility" on 15.02.2013 in the session titled "Media, violence towards women and state: A new definition of woman and womanhood?" discussing transformations in the notion of family from Ottoman times until the Republic.
8. My observations on the Leyla ile Mecnun audience are based on the discussion at a fan meeting at the beginning of season 3. See: Feyza Akınerdem (2012). "'Leyla ile Mecnun'da 3. Sezon Başlarken: Mecnun'un Yolu". *Erkan's Field Diary*, 05.09.2012: <http://erkansaka.net/archives/18123>

Seasonal farm workers: Pitiful victims or Kurdish laborers? (II)

In the first part of this article, published in the previous issue, I had elaborated on two basic ways of phrasing utilized in articles on seasonal farmworkers in Turkey: “the language of mercy” and “the language of state’s negligence”. I had claimed that these two ways of phrasing dissimulated the ethno-political and class aspects of the practice of seasonal farm labor, by defining Kurdish seasonal farmhands as victims to be saved from their “inhumane” conditions by means of the social responsibility awareness of the sensitive public opinion and the compassion, mercy and assistance of the state. From this claim I moved on to the following argument: knowledge produced in this manner cannot be perceived simply as a bunch of innocent solution proposals to improve their conditions. This knowledge vindicates the state and the capitalist structures, the primary culprits of the inequality and misery suffered by seasonal Kurdish farm workers. This knowledge also confines the issue of seasonal farm labor to the realm of social responsibility, which it defines as non-political, thus creating the image that the state and capitalist structures are responsible for not exploitation and oppression, but at most negligence.

Although the arguments I put forth in the first part shed light on the structural character of the violence and inequality generated by the practice of seasonal farm labor, they might lead to the impression that the social sphere is determined entirely by state and capitalism. If not developed further, such an argument could easily lead to a portrayal of seasonal farm workers, maybe not as victims in dire need of the public’s mercy and the state’s compassion, yet still as the victims of the ethno-political and class violence of the state and capitalism. In the second part of this article I will try to focus on how Kurdish seasonal workers actually experience these inequalities. For this purpose, one must take a look at how they recognize various regions of Turkey and are recognized in those regions, rather than rushing to ameliorate their “conditions” with a couple of practical measures, as suggested by the two above-mentioned perspectives with insupportable kindness.

Kurds get to know to Turks via a bunch of vine leaves

Manisa’nın bir köyünde bir çiftçinin, Gökhan I am staying at Gökhan’s, a peasant who lives in a village of the province of Manisa. Seasonal workers have put up numerous tents by the road which connects the village to the thoroughfare. Many of them have arrived in May to harvest cucumbers to be sold to a pickle company. Their job is done and they are waiting to get paid. Gökhan points at the workers living in the tent closest to

his house and says, “They are the latecomers and they could not find enough work. Poor folks, they are trying to make enough money to go back home. I know them in fact, would you like me to introduce you to them?” On his way to the village, he drops me near the tent. I walk closer, introduce myself, and ask “How about a little chat?”, in broken Kurdish. Berfin welcomes me right away: “Come right in, it’s been a long time since we last had a guest.”

Her daughter Rojbîn serves tea to Berfin and me; the others are fasting. Berfin had a fever last night and decided not to fast. We’re in late August; it is scorching hot. The previous day, Berfin was so annoyed by the heat that she wetted her hair in the field. But she was exposed to wind on the tractor on her way back to the tent, and fell ill. We enjoy our tea while the conversation goes on and on. Berfin’s husband Xalo Xekîm asks me, “Are you a relative of Gökhan’s?” I respond, “No, just a guest”. He says “We might have wronged them, unknowingly. They had a very negative impression of us”, and starts to explain what happened.

One afternoon, they were back from the field and still had time before the hour of breaking the fast. Xekîm told his kids, “Come on, let’s walk to the vineyards over there. It will be fun and we might also collect some vine leaves for dinner.” But a villager saw them in the vineyard and called the village headman (mukhtar) to say “Kurds have broken into so and so’s vineyard, they are stealing the grapes!” Then the mukhtar, the owners of the vineyard and the gendarme came to Xalo Xekîm’s tent. The gendarme checked their IDs and criminal records, whereas the owner shouted at them and accused them of being thieves. At this point the mukhtar convinced him not to file a complaint and warned Xekîm not to do this again. The issue was over.

While telling me this story Xalo Xekîm blushes with embarrassment. “They got it all wrong” he says: “Would I really take my family along with me, if I wanted to steal from someone’s vineyard?”

Right at that moment, we see that Gökhan is back from the village. He stops to say hi to Xekîm. Xekîm gets up and walks to the road. He shakes Gökhan’s hand, and says that he’s very sorry for what happened, maybe a hundred times. Gökhan responds “You don’t need to apologize. Besides, I am not the one who called the mukhtar”. Xalo Xekîm continues to apologize, saying “It was a misunderstanding; we feel very embarrassed”. After Gökhan leaves, he goes on telling me over and over: “We have done something very wrong, unintentionally. Back in my village, everyone can take what they like from each other’s gardens, and it is not



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perceived as stealing. Apparently, it doesn't work like that here. God, we are so ashamed of what happened. We aren't thieves, they got us all wrong." I try to calm him down, saying "It isn't seen as stealing here either; we call it the passerby's share. What is really wrong is to deny that share to someone." However, I cannot calm him down, and he repeatedly says that the villagers had a totally wrong impression about them.

Indeed, what kind of an impression did the villagers actually have of the Kurds? How did they recognize them? How did the Turkish villager who saw them in the vineyard know that they were Kurds? How did he reach the conclusion that they were stealing? Why did the mukhtar and the owner of the vineyard call the gendarme?

Us, others and the other others

The issues of encounter and recognition are in fact closely related to the conceptualization of a relationship with the other. In order to produce a discourse about this relationship, one must grapple with the questions of inequality and power, as well as questions such as how we acquire knowledge about the other and how we construct ourselves vis-à-vis the other.

The intricate bond between this relationship with the other and the issues of knowledge and power is one of the most basic problematics in philosophy, humanities and social sciences. From Hegel's master-slave dialectics, to Marx's class war, from Said's Orientalism to postcolonial and subaltern studies, from feminism to psychoanalysis, numerous philosophical, social and political theories are based on key concepts such as equality/inequality, dependence/freedom, consciousness and self-consciousness, which in turn are closely related to the conceptualization of the relationship with the other. Without recourse to these concepts, such categories as class, ethnicity and gender which determine the nature of the relationship between the 'self' and the 'other', and such institutions as family, state and market which are created via this relationship cannot signify anything.

Thus, the issue of recognizing the other refers to an area much wider than a simple "acquaintance" through physical encounter. What is really important in recognition is not losing sight of the relationship between the particular and the general, that is, the relationship between discourses and practices of recognition which conceptualize the other in the larger social imaginary and the discourses and practices of recognition established at the moment of physical encounter. For instance, the relationship between the question "How are Kurds recognized in Turkey" and the question "How are Kurdish seasonal agricultural laborers recognized in Turkey's Aegean region" would provide us with the knowledge both of the general social structure and the particular place as construed by this labor practice. Another important matter is the mutuality of the relation of recognition. In addition to the question "Who recognized whom and how?", we need to ask "While describing the other in this manner, how does the subject construct herself vis-à-vis the other?"

Although the relationship with the other seems to concern only two parties, it actually organizes the entire social space according to an economy of difference and similarity. That is, saying that "the other is different from me" is never sufficient; one also needs to be able

to say "this other is similar to that other in these respects, and differs from her in these respects. Moreover, the role of each of these others in the conceptualization of the subject's self-imagination and the conceptualization of the relationship among these others determine the story and discourse of the relationship of recognition. As such, one objective of this article will be to answer the question "Who conceptualizes Kurdish seasonal workers as what kind of an other, where and when; and who/what intermediates in the establishment of such a relationship?"

Although the relationship with the other seems to concern only two parties, it actually organizes the entire social space according to an economy of difference and similarity. That is, saying that "the other is different from me" is never sufficient; one also needs to be able to say "this other is similar to that other in these respects, and differs from her in these respects.

There are several ethnographic studies stating that it is common practice to define Kurds, especially lower class migrant Kurds in large Western cities, via stereotypes like "backward", "ignorant", "uncivilized", "cultureless" and "barbarian".¹ However, there are some controversies over the role of the Turkish state discourse and Turkish nationalist discourses in the creation of these stereotypes and over where these come from, how they are used and what purpose they serve. As quoted in the first part of this article, Mesut Yeğen claims that Turkish nationalism is not a homogenous, monolithic and top-down discourse which generates false consciousness about Kurds. Instead, he suggests that nationalist discourses are based on the state's discursive totality which centers around the axes of nationalism, laicism, Westernization and centralization. There is no top-down state ideology which causes Kurds to be misrecognized by Turks. This discursive totality functions not by creating clear-cut boundaries and definitive statements, but rather by drawing a line between what can and cannot be said about Kurds, and by allowing for numerous ambiguities as to what can be said. This ambiguity is precisely what permits the coexistence of numerous inconsistent and conflicting claims.

The above-mentioned stereotypes precisely serve to conceptualize this space. Homi Bhabba suggests that the stereotypes used by colonial discourses are "forms of representing the other" which vacillate between two extremes. The first extreme is "fixity". An eternal "fixity" which stems from the other's unchanging racial, cultural, traditional and historical difference, and which can be clearly seen and recognized (such as a fixed "custom"). The second extreme is the unfixability of the other: it can never be seen, known or predicted totally; it consists of individuals/groups who can create chaos at anytime, who degenerate and transform constantly, who need to be corrected repeatedly because they cannot be

normalized. According to Bhabba, the stereotype goes back and forth between these two extremes, since the wholeness of the fixed and knowable other is constantly threatened by a “failure” which could arise anytime.

According to Bhabba, the real function of the stereotypes in Orientalist and colonial discourse is not to project to the other a false image which compromises reality and thus to use this image as an excuse for discriminatory practices. The stereotype is a much more ambiguous text: it creates ruptures, contradictions and inconsistencies not only in the world of the other, but also in the world of those who use these stereotypes to talk about the other. It is because of these inconsisten-

White man is sometimes a big brother, sometimes a lion trainer; sometimes a victim of the incivility of the other, sometimes a chief justice. He protects, guards, tames and civilizes the other; he is disgusted with the other, afraid of it, and heartbroken; but he also loves the other.

cies that the other can never be fixed, and must therefore be repeatedly defined and redefined, repositioned and controlled obsessively.

“The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces.”²

However these inconsistent redefinitions of the other also bring ambiguity to the white man’s self-definition. Sometimes he is a big brother, sometimes a lion trainer; sometimes a victim of the incivility of the other, sometimes a chief justice. He protects, guards, tames and civilizes the other; then he is frustrated, betrayed, stabbed from his back just when he was about to believe in the loyalty of the other; he is disgusted with the other, afraid of it, and heartbroken; but he also loves the other. The other is “human and not wholly human”³; he pities the other. Sometimes it distinguishes between “evil others” and “good others”, but in any case, “evil others” can always mislead “good others” to doing wrong; because, whether good or evil, the other always remains “the other” in essence.

Does this story sound familiar to you?

The people from the East are a bit, “different”

During my fieldwork in Western Turkey, I observed that the farmers who provide employment to Kurdish laborers and the local population refrain from using the word “Kurds”, and instead opt for geographical designations such as “people from the East” or “laborers from the Southeast”. Besides, whenever I utilized the word “Kurd”, they behaved anxiously and rushed to say that there are indeed no problems between Kurds and Turks, and that the conflict is entirely caused by politicians or foreign powers. They indicated that the only difference between laborers from nearby provinces and the “people from the East” in terms of working conditions was that the former stayed in their own homes or at a

empty house in the village, whereas the latter lived in tents near the fields or in a designated area. However, working with the laborers from the East was “different”, since they were “different” in essence. This difference was generally expressed through such themes as culture, language or education⁴ and any perceived shortcomings in these respects were portrayed as an essential characteristic of Kurds, independent of their conditions.

Farmers frequently mentioned “cultural difference” and “language difference” in this context and claimed that this difference makes it harder for the worker to understand the boss. One farmer I interviewed in Söke expressed this challenge in the following terms:

Özgür: We can talk about a cultural difference. That is, the culture of the East vs. the culture of Denizli... Denizli is in the West. We are part of the Aegean region. The people from the East or Southeast are a bit, err, “different”. One can run into problems in face-to-face contact. However, I experience no such problems with the people of Denizli, that is, we speak the same language. When working with locals, I could join them an hour earlier for some chit-chat. It is not possible to do that with these [Kurdish] ones. They don’t speak Turkish correctly like us either...

I did not make direct contact with the workforce. The labor contractor is someone who talks normally, correctly like me; I would tell him what I wanted to be done, he would go and talk to the laborers. He would shout at them, and they would raise their heads. I never forget the expression he used: he would say, “switch to the first channel”. He would speak in their dialect, yell at them; although I would not understand a word he said, he would somehow explain the task to them. He would then come and sit by my side, and say, “Mate, now you will see how hard they will work.” And indeed they would.

Here, what Özgür calls “speak the same language” clearly refers to a “cultural difference” rather than speaking Turkish or Kurdish. In Özgür’s eyes, this cultural difference constitutes the main distinction between the two sides: we are from the Aegean region, they come from the East. That is, he cannot easily communicate with those from the East and the Kurds cannot understand Özgür, because they come from different cultures, and moreover, “They don’t speak Turkish correctly like us either”. As suggested by the expression “switch to the first channel”, the labor contractor starts speaking in Kurdish with the laborers. Although Özgür clearly admits that he did not understand what was spoken, he still talks about the Kurdish language as a “dialect” rather than a language.

If not directly correlated with culture, the language issue was associated with the laborers’ inability to speak Turkish properly and the boss’s anxiety in failing to understand the laborers who spoke in Kurdish among themselves. Many farmers indicated that they did not want the laborers to speak Kurdish. They would say “I don’t understand a word he says; he could as well be swearing at me!”. In their eyes, the failure of some workers to understand Turkish and their own failure to understand Kurdish could never be equivalent. Many farmers said that they did not enter into direct contact with the laborers, and that their relation was limited to giving instructions and warnings about the task at hand by the intermediation of a labor contractor.

Two other farmers, Veli and Dündar, attributed the Easterners' failure to understand them not to their language, but rather to their "uncultivated" and "barbarian" ways. They even described the Kurds as "dictators" for insisting on their opinion:

Veli: Of course, there certainly is a difference. People from the Southeast fail to understand us. You get to know them in time. People from Konya are better; they are more cultivated, more sophisticated. We can talk to them, just like we are talking with you right now. But you cannot sit down and talk to someone from the Southeast in the same way. A labor contractor or a laborer from the Southeast asserts his origins and slowly becomes a dictator in his own right. They would never view their boss as a true boss, especially when it comes to getting their pay. But a laborer or labor contractor from Denizli, Konya or say Burdur are different. We can talk to them just like we chat with you right now. That is, we really had a dialogue between us. Those from the Southeast, however, assert their Eastern origins...

Dündar: They are barbarians!

Veli: They act like dictators.

Here, the common ground pitted against the East is not defined as the culture of the Aegean region or the culture of the West. Denizli, Burdur and Konya, which are located in three different geographic regions are placed under the same category; however, the underlying common ethnic identity is not expressed explicitly. In a way, the laborer from the East is not simply different from the laborers of Konya, Burdur or Denizli, but rather "different" per se. This difference was deemed to be evident; I, like everyone else, would already be aware of it. As such, any problems that would arise were clearly (!) caused by these barbarian and uncultivated people.

Numerous farmers suggested that Eastern (that is, Kurdish) workers "caused more problems" due to disagreements over pay; when it was time to get paid, it was always the Kurds who would "break the contract", "make a fuss" and "threaten us". Here it must be underscored that what the farmers call a "contract" is not a written labor agreement with legal consequences; rather, the only guarantee that seasonal laborers' will get paid is the farmer's goodwill. While talking with local (Turkish) laborers in Manisa, I never heard them complain about not getting their money. However, I witnessed many times that Kurds had to wait for days before getting paid and going back home. Besides, since Kurds tend to go and work in multiple farms each season, not being able to go to some other farm after a job is complete results in a drop in the number of days they can work and thus the amount of money they earn. Furthermore, the Kurds' living condition in tents is much worse than those of Turkish workers living in houses; they are also much more anxious due to the gendarme's ID controls which are never directed at Turks. Nevertheless, farmers suggest that Kurds "make a fuss" not because of differences in their working and living conditions, not because of the bosses' differential treatment of Kurds and Turks, but rather because of their "different cultures" or their being "barbarian", "wild" and "uneducated".

The issue of education would come up in two contexts: first, farmers would talk about how the labor contractor or workers would make children "who should be at school" work in the fields, second, they would claim that Kurds "did not know any manners". Stereotypes

such as "uneducated", "ignorant", "backward" and "uncultivated" were almost used interchangeably, and the word education referred not to a formal education but rather to "correct manners," and was thus used to pass negative moral judgments about Kurds or those from the East.

Looking at how the issues of culture, language and education determine the discourse about Kurdish seasonal workers, one sees that, defined through these three stereotypes, Kurds are portrayed as an essentially backward people, a frozen, monolithic group, whose aggressiveness is a result of their culture, who resist being educated or adopting proper manners, who are impossible to sit down and have a talk with, who cannot speak Turkish correctly either, and with whom it is best to have minimal relations. Nevertheless, this fixity harbors a number of inconsistencies: supposedly, the Kur-

Before conducting this study, I was worried about how Kurdish laborers would react to me. After all, I was not a Kurd, but a "Turk", just like their bosses or the state. However, in none of the tents I visited did I hear the expression "Turkish" or "Westerner", nor any hint thereof. Expressions like "the people of this region" or "locals", when used by Kurdish laborers to make general statements, did not refer to some essence, but rather are used to convey how these "locals" view and treat Kurds. They either did not pass moral judgments as regards the other, or passed judgments on the social inequality they were subjected to and on the continuity between and the similarity of the state's practices and the Turks' practices.

dish worker is on the one hand different and deficient "in essence" as a result of his culture; on the other, this culture could not bear the proper name of Kurdish. In case the word Kurd comes up, it must immediately be highlighted that there are no problems between Kurds and Turks! Turks do not understand a word Kurds say; however the latter supposedly speak a certain dialect, not a different language. The ones who do not sit and talk with the Kurds are the Turkish bosses, they immediately call the gendarme if a problem arises; however, it is still the Kurd who is branded a "dictator".

Nevertheless, this fixity is challenged both by the abovementioned inconsistencies implicit in these categories, and other categories (humanity, ethics, etc.) which create contradictions in this area. As such, it becomes impossible to position the Kurds, and the farmers feel obliged to continuously articulate such expressions with one another. Precisely, the impossibility of positioning the Kurd, the impossibility of fixing him to a spot turns him into a chain of possibilities from "barbarian" to "poor devil", from an "ignorant man" to a "thief", and most of all, to a "terrorist".

The assumption that the Kurd is a potential terrorist fits like a glove with adjectives such as wild, barbarian and ignorant, and thus serve to legitimize the gendarme's ID checks directed exclusively at the Kurds.

Besides, during these controls, the farmers act like a big brother between the state and the Kurds: a big brother who protects his younger brother from the father, but also accepts the latter's authority with pleasure. Here's how Özgür described this:

Naturally, the gendarme witnesses all these events. The state is right, of course. They don't know whether the laborer from the East is a terrorist or not. When the gendarme comes along, the laborers call me immediately, saying "boss, the gendarme is raiding our tent!" I say, that's OK, what harm would they do, is there a

"Evil others" can always mislead "good others" to doing wrong; because, whether good or evil, the other always remains "the other" in essence. Does this story sound familiar to you?

problem? "No" they would answer. "Then, what are you afraid of?" "It would be nice if you were with us." My presence gives them courage, raises their morale... So I drive over to the field, and talk to the commander. "Is there a problem?" "No". "All right then".

So, can we say that the farmers use the state's discourse against the Kurds, capitalize on the state's authority to establish their own authority and thus legitimize their practice of discrimination? The answer to this question is both yes and no. It certainly is no coincidence that the experts mentioned in the first part of the article speak with almost the same categories used by the farmers, because speaking inside what Yeğen calls "the state's discursive totality" results in the reproduction of certain clichés. However, neither this discursive totality itself nor its reproduction corresponds to a clearly defined, complete text. Accordingly, it constantly causes temporal and spatial shifts, slips of the tongue, contradictions, inconsistencies and cracks across the subject's semantic world. Then, how much can the East penetrate into the West through these cracks?

An invisible state spanning from the East to the West

Xalo Xekim and his son Serko paid a visit to the mukhtar after the gendarme raided their tent on suspicion of theft. They reiterated their apologies and expressed their gratitude for his help. The mukhtar offered them tea. They told him that the labor contractor deceived them by saying that there was work there; that they could not find work on their arrival, and simply wanted to raise enough money to go back home. Then it turned out that the mukhtar also had a field and needed workers right at that time. He said "Come and work in my field then".

Rojin: "They would not have given us this job, if they had not liked my brother. We worked in the mukhtar's field. He is really a very kind person, and helped us a lot. So we worked in his field as if it were our own. Well, if you take care of someone's field as if it were your own, people trust you more and give you work."

Serko: "Mukhtar told me, 'Don't go back, stay here, be my son'. He likes me and also trusts me a lot. 'You are the boss now,' he says, 'take care of this field as if it were yours.' So we do our best when working in his field."

What makes this case so different from the others? Here, although Xalo Xekim and his family are fully aware that they are accused of stealing only because they are Kurds, since they absolutely do not associate themselves morally with stealing, they interpret this accusation as an exceptional and incidental misunderstanding, and do not refrain from apologizing to mend this misunderstanding. So when the mukhtar believes them and stops the vineyard owner from filing a complaint, the two parties reach a similar narrative of this event. This incident is categorically different from the problems that arise between farmers and workers on payday, because there is no money to be fought over, any previous contract, mutual promises, a feeling of disillusionment or deception resulting from a disagreement. Furthermore, whereas it is really difficult to define accusations like uncultivated, ignorant and barbarian as misunderstandings, it is much easier to qualify a supposed act of theft as an exceptional incident.

If this case is assuaged through apology and help, is it possible to claim that the real problem between the Turkish farmer and Kurdish laborer is class rather than ethnicity? That is, would the Kurds and Turks recognize each other differently, had the conditions and context been different? Unfortunately no, because neither the relationship of recognizing the other, nor the social space that this relationship constructs can be conceived with simple mathematical formulae such as "the relationship of domination minus class relationship equals an ethical and equitable relationship with the other".

First and foremost, we need to see that the encounter between Turks and Kurds never takes place in neutral territory, and that the state is always involved in this relationship with its discursive and institutional structure. As indicated above, adjectives such as uncultivated, ignorant and wild, through which Kurds are labeled in case of the slightest disagreement, come from the state's discursive totality. Besides, the gendarme immediately intervenes in any disagreement with Kurdish workers but not with Turkish workers. However, since the state is an intermediary in this relationship, should it not work both ways, not only in determining how Turks recognize Kurds but also in effecting how Kurds recognize Turks? In other words, could not the Kurds also call the Turks uncultivated, barbarian and ignorant? Should not they also call the gendarme in case a problem comes up? In fact, the relationship of domination and structural inequality are defined by the very asymmetry and irreversibility of this relationship.

Since the gendarme and the state have been inscribed in the very history, bodies and minds of the Kurds through violence and fear, both Kurdish workers and Turkish farmers are fully aware that it would not at all be reasonable for Kurds to complain about their Turkish bosses to the gendarme, who in fact frequently subject Kurds to ID checks both on their road to the West and after they pitch up their tents. Besides, Kurds know that even if they called Turks as ignorant, barbarian and uncultivated, these adjectives would not stick them in the way that they stick to Kurds. Then, how does the state get involved in this relationship from the Kurdish side?

Like a human being...

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Kurdish laborers would react to me. After all, I was not a Kurd, but a “Turk”, just like their bosses or the state. However, in none of the tents I visited did I hear the expression “Turkish” or “Westerner”, nor any hint thereof. Expressions like “the people of this region” or “locals”, when used by Kurdish laborers to make general statements, did not refer to some essence, but rather are used to convey how these “locals” view and treat Kurds. They either did not pass moral judgments as regards the other, or passed judgments on the social inequality they were subjected to and on the continuity between and the similarity of the state’s practices and the Turks’ practices.

When I expressed my wish to spend some time in Kurdistan and improve my Kurdish, Xalo Xekîm suggested me to work as a teacher. He indicated that those teachers supposedly killed by the guerrilla were in fact killed by the state to put the blame on the guerrilla, and added:

A teacher or doctor who is appointed to a post in our region never eats at home. She is invited to dinner by one family one day, and by another the next day; people send them food... It is not at all like that here; everyone ostracizes us.

Here, Xalo Xekîm placed civil servants appointed to a post in the East and seasonal laborers who go West to work on an equal standing as guests. Thus it became possible to underscore the striking difference in terms of hospitality between the Kurds who offer food to their doctors and teachers, and the Turks who ostracize their Kurdish farmhands. This discursive act also made it possible to view the state as an illogical and unfair power which kills not only Kurds, but also Turks and even its own civil servants. However this judgment was not transformed into an essentialist demarcation such as “The state is barbarian, so the Turks/Westerners are also barbarian”; instead, it is used to emphasize the wrong they were subjected to.

Kurds and Turks, while recognizing each other through this labor practice did not relate to each other only through ethnic and class antagonisms but established relationships of humane feelings, friendships and trust. But the social inequality, antagonism and the hegemonic language and presence of the state never entirely abandoned the venue of these relationships founding the basis of all personal and social relationships to be established.

While working in the field of the mukhtar who saw him like a son, Serko made a new friend:

“I have a new friend from among the locals, called İbo. He can repeat exactly what I say to him [in Kurdish]. I tell him, you sure are Kurdish! He says that his friends could not believe how he made friends with Kurds! İbo

During my fieldwork in Manisa and Söke, I observed that the farmers who provide employment to Kurdish laborers and the local population refrain from using the word “Kurds”, and instead opt for geographical designations such as “people from the East” or “laborers from the Southeast”. Besides, whenever I utilized the word “Kurd”, they behaved anxiously and rushed to say that there are indeed no problems between Kurds and Turks, and that the conflict is entirely caused by politicians or foreign powers.

responded to them saying ‘What is so incredible about that?’ There you go; they see us like dogs.”

Serko and many others have a strong objection against not being treated “like a human being”, being obliged to travel 1300 kilometers and live in tents for months to do a work which the locals refuse to do, being ostracized, belittled; in short, against social inequality...

Due to the remarks of İbo’s friends, Serko saw his friendship with İbo and mukhtar’s trust in him as exceptional cases. He believed that the majority of the locals were not like İbo and the mukhtar. That was because, Berfin was longing to welcome guests in her tent, however, she was never invited to anyone’s house. Because, a bunch of vine leaves collected by Xalo Xekîm was seen not as the passerby’s share, but as stealing. Because, at any moment, their language would be qualified as a dialect, their cultures as barbarian, their children as ignorant, and they themselves as “different”. Even if it is no longer so in the state’s official discourse, when the Turkish farmer designates the Kurdish worker as barbarian, wild and ignorant, the state appears right then and there. Özgür found it ridiculous for Kurdish workers to be afraid of the gendarme; however, he still wanted the state to assert its control, that is to intermediate. As a result of all these, this structure is not undone even if Turks have a beloved neighbor, friend or labor contractor from the East. The “good people” from both sides are viewed as exceptions and relegated to history; and the two sides cannot speak “the same language”. Xalo Xekîm simply cannot say “So what if I collected a bunch of leaves from your vineyard?”. Even if he would do so, neither the farmer, nor the benevolent experts who are for a compassionate state and a tolerant public opinion would understand him.

In short, as Berfin Abla says, “Tu dibini, xale me rezili ye.”⁵

Footnotes

1. B Koçacıoğlu, Dicle. 2011. “Knowledge, Practice, and Political Community: The Making of the “Custom” in Turkey”. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, pp. 172-228; Üstündağ, Z. N., 2005. *Belonging to the Modern: Women’s Suffering and Subjectivities in Urban Turkey*, s.l.: Department of Sociology Indiana University; Saraçoğlu, Cenk. 2011. *Şehir, Orta Sınıf ve Kürtler*. İstanbul: İletişim.
2. Bhabba, Homi (1994): *Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge. p. 82
3. Bhabba, Homi (1994): *Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge. p. 85
4. The most important issues which destabilize such stereotypes always centered around the themes of body and space, especially interpreted through cleanliness and loyalty. However, since there is not enough space here to discuss all these issues at length, I focused on how the farmers discuss the themes of language, culture and education which also frequently come up in the discourses of those who produce public knowledge on seasonal farm workers. For an analysis of the affective side of the relationship with Kurdish seasonal workers, see Deniz Duruiz. 2013. (forthcoming) “Embodiment of Space and Labor: Kurdish Migrant Workers in Turkish Agriculture”
5. You see, we are in deep trouble.

Peace process and gender equality

I read with amazement the comments of the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party), CHP (Republican People's Party) and AKP (Justice and Development Party) touching upon the importance of women during the peace process. In a speech he made on March 8th, the International Women's Day, Prime Minister Erdoğan asked women to get involved in the peace process and stressed (as an accomplishment!) the fact that the ratio of women deputies in the Turkish Grand National Assembly had climbed to 14 percent. One cannot help but wonder: How come the ratio of women deputies in the AKP is only 13.8 percent then? Why did the ratio of women cabinet members diminish during the AKP's incumbency? According to the KADER's (Association for the Support of Women Candidates) latest report, this ratio has dropped from 6.4 percent during the term of the first AKP government to 3.8 percent during the last. Why are there no women at the undersecretary level? Why aren't there any woman at the chairperson or deputy chairperson levels and any more than one woman at the member level among the seven members of the RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) which is doubly important for its social impact? And, TÜSIAD (Turkish Industry&Business Association) notwithstanding, how come women don't figure in the chairmanships, deputy chairmanships, and administrative entities of organizations such as the MÜSIAD (Independent Industrialists and and Businessmen's Association), TOBB (The Union Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey), TESK (Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen), and TZOB (The Union of Turkish Chambers of Agriculture)?

Is the Turkish government aware of Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council? The UN resolved as early as the year 2000 that women should take part in peace processes and negotiations by all means and that gender equality should be taken into consideration in the resolutions (which, incidentally, are valid for Turkey, too). In South Africa, upon the demands made by the National Women's Commissions, a 50-percent level of participation by women was ensured in the peace process and 3 million women attended the various meetings and sat on committees during the process. Furthermore, a 30-percent quota was established for women for the upcoming parliamentary elections. Although the participation of women was low in the peace processes conducted in various countries following the issuance of Resolution 1325 (the ratio of women signing a peace treaty since 2000 is 0 to 5 percent; the ratio of women negotiators

is 0 percent with the exception of three cases; women's testimonials are rare and the number of women in the peace negotiation teams is also very small), there may be a lesson or two to be learned from the South African example.¹

Sentiments feminine, negotiations masculine

In Turkey, the Women for Peace Initiative demands in accordance with the UNSC's Resolution 1325 that women take part in every stage of the peace process concerning the Kurdish-Turkish issue and that gender equality be ensured at every stage.² It's obvious how far we are from making this happen; therefore, I believe it's necessary to draw attention to this matter and build awareness of it. The tone of expression we generally come across in the media whenever mention is made of the Kurdish issue and of women is one which – albeit used in good faith – is patriarchal and annoying for the way it keeps talking about “ending the suffering of mothers, making sure they cry no more, and how no mother, Kurdish or Turkish, would want to lose her child). It's as if fathers never grieve when they lose a child. This idiom portrays the picture of a man without emotions and I believe men must be finding this rather disturbing, too. As for women, an image is created of them as being at the disposal of their men; mothers who would not exist if it weren't for their emotions. It's difficult to imagine women symbolized with the “motherhood” role and “sentimentality” to be taking part in peace processes and sitting at negotiation tables, isn't it? One would think the only faculty women possessed was sentimentality. Also, comments are often made describing “women's suffering” as being greater than men's. One can hardly emphasize enough the fallacy of such thinking. Who can rightly say, “My agony is greater than yours”? Young soldiers recount their suffering in Nadire Mater's Mehmet's Book, a collection of conversations with soldiers. Is the pain felt by a man subjected to torture lighter than that of a woman? Is the grief felt by a father who has lost his child different than the mother's? It's such nonsense to grade pain!

Since we are commonly faced with approaches of this kind, it becomes unthinkable that women have an importance and role that's on a par with those of men in peace processes and women are overlooked even in the demands for democracy. Motherhood and pain are generally the themes associated with womanhood when the topic of “peace and women” is brought up. When the topic is “peace and men,” however, the themes of discussion shift to political demands, negotiations, and how the process is to be conducted.



Ulrike Dufner

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States of manhood

I suppose it's time to dwell on the states of manhood while writing the news stories in the media about the violence perpetrated against women. What I mean is, instead of the headline "Young women killed by husband," headlines like the following: "İzmir killer turns out to be the husband," "Another male-perpetrated murder," "Jealousy drives man to battery," "Unable to come to terms with a powerful woman, man resorts to violence," "Taken by inferiority complex: Again a killing by a man," "Another murder committed by a man: Unresolved battle trauma leads man to reenact violence at home".

Although the emphasis in Erdoğan's March 8th speech ("No one can justify the killing of and the violence against women on the grounds of mores"³) is important, and although the women subjected to violence must be protected, the states of manhood perpetrating the violence, the moral and psychological state of the men, etc. must be addressed. Warnings such as "Don't do it," "Don't beat women," and "Don't kill women" are important but they're not enough. The perception might perhaps change if the states of manhood were brought up in the stories about the incidents of violence. If I were a man, I'd be extremely uncomfortable with this role of a living being I was cast in – namely, one that's devoid of feelings like love, hurt, and friendship; possessing nothing else than a twisted brain, and perpetrating violence against women. I'd have no feelings, I wouldn't care much about my children, I'd regard the woman in my life as a sex object and a housemaid, I wouldn't be able to hold a pleasant conversation with her, I wouldn't be able to understand her feelings, either, because I'd be a living species without feelings.

For example, although Kerim Yıldız mentions a number of vital points about the requirements for and the phases of the peace process in his article that appeared in the magazine *Insight Turkey*,⁴ he keeps silent about gender equality and therefore, I think, he fails to make the grade. Likewise, the final declaration of the Seventh Kurdish Conference held in Brussels last December, which demanded a resumption of the negotiations, included not a single sentence about the role and importance of women in this process. The phrase about UNSC Resolution 1325 in the final declaration of the Seventh Kurdish Conference read, "...that Kurdish women be accepted as partners in the prevention of the violence against women and the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325."⁵ While it is true that violence against women is a horrifying problem and must be stopped at once, UNSC Resolution 1325 takes a far broader perspective in referring to a peace in which women participate in all phases of the process and gender equality is ensured. The final declaration, on

Is the Turkish government aware of Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council? The UN resolved as early as the year 2000 that women should take part in peace processes and negotiations by all means and that gender equality should be taken into consideration in the resolutions. In South Africa, a 50-percent level of participation by women was ensured in the peace process and 3 million women attended the various meetings and sat on committees during the process.

the other hand, mentions violence while talking about women and says that "women should also participate in the process" because of the violence.

"Men's assembly of smart alecks"

Last year, a group of people wishing to revive the peace process formed a new initiative by calling themselves the "wise men." In an article entitled "Wise men – who are they?" Tanil Bora wrote that the name "wise men" that rang like a "council of aristocratic elderly men" or an "assembly of wise guys" struck one as obnoxious first of all.⁶ If they had called themselves "wise people," they would have at least precluded from the outset any anxiety or doubt as to whether they were adequately concerned about gender equality. I wouldn't want to be a member of a group with a name like "wise men" even if I knew that their intentions were good and their motivations earnest; and I'm sure lots of women wouldn't, either. In my opinion, the primary job of a group of wise people is to satisfy the requisites of fundamental democratic standards, to make sure women had a 50-percent presence in all fields of endeavor of the group, and to include assessments on gender equality in the communiqués and reports it published. It's unthinkable that the members of this group have not studied peace processes but I don't think they have read UNSC Resolution 1325 and the research papers on "peace process and women." Therefore, the members of this group should first read and discuss the research papers related to Resolution 1325. Only then might they be able to offer any contribution to the peace process project encompassing the whole society. Important lessons about Turkey could be derived from a study of how women were engaged in the peace process in the South African example which has been mentioned quite frequently in the recent years. I'd like to call upon everyone, particularly the male community, to pay attention to UNSC Resolution 1325 and the research papers on its consequences and to make room for gender equality in drawing up models of a peace process.

Footnotes

1. http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/0302_WomensParticipationInPeaceNegotiations_en.pdf
2. Bkn: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/144808-kadinlar-surecte-ye-almazsa-baris-da-cinsiyetci-olur>
3. Bkn: <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/erdogan-siirt-ten-kadinlara-seslendi/siyaset/siyasetdetay/08.03.2013/1677933/default.htm?ref=mackolik>

4. Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Pathways to Progress, <http://www.insightturkey.com/insight-turkey-volume-14-no-4/issues/228>
5. http://www.kurmesliler.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1410:7kuert-konferans-ali-ekber-aslaner&catid=44:ali-ekber-aslaner&Itemid=388
6. <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalYazar&ArticleID=1090659>

AKP versus women

In December 1989, the Family Studies Center, which reports to the Prime Minister's Office, decided to take action to reinforce the Muslim-Turkish family unit, "which went into decay as more women joined the labor force". Cemil Çiçek, then Minister for Family Affairs (ANAP - Motherland Party) gave his full support to these efforts. The result was a large number of publications and meetings, detrimental for women and beneficial for men and the family.

November 1990. About a year into the campaign by the Family Studies Center, the Minister Cemil Çiçek, a self-proclaimed defender of the Turkish historical heritage and the Muslim-Turkish family, summarized the findings of these studies as follows: "Flirting is equivalent to prostitution, and feminism is perversion."¹ Feminist women slammed the Minister's words as nonsense and staged rallies across the country.

The feminist reaction did not end there. Feminists started to divorce from their husbands in protest, in order to show their rejection of the historical heritage, Muslim-Turkish family structure, and family in general, which the Family Studies Center was so fond of.

2003. After being highly praised by Islamist political parties such as Refah (Welfare) and Fazilet (Virtue), Cemil Çiçek took office as Justice Minister in the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government. The same year, the new Turkish Criminal Code came into effect: This time, feminists started to wage a struggle against plans to make female rape victims marry their rapists in order to exculpate the latter. The Justice Minister Çiçek's chief consultant Prof. Doğan Soyaşlan suggested that no one else would want to marry a female rape victim anyhow, and opined about the draft law: "If I were a raped woman, I would marry my rapist. One would get used to it in time."²

Back then, women's organizations had sent their criticisms against the draft law to the Ministry of Justice, and the AKP MPs in the relevant commission had indicated that they were not ready to accept the idea of equality between men and women. Ten years on, the AKP is still not ready to accept this idea. In the last decade, the only thing we could learn was the reason of their objection: Fitrat, which translates as nature or creation!

In 2004, feminists and homosexuals from various provinces were at the doors of the parliament in Ankara. The government went back and forth between accepting and rejecting women's propositions about the reform of the Turkish Criminal Code. In that period, there was a heated debate or rather a psychological warfare between women and the AKP on abortion. Yet, eventually adultery would become the main topic of debate as the

new criminal law was being drafted. Women's war cry was a jokingly slogan: "Take to the streets in defense of adultery".

Our propositions concerning the draft Turkish Criminal Code were as follows: The annulment of the virginity test; the removal of sanctions imposed against voluntary sexual intercourse between youngsters aged 15 to 18; the cancellation of provisions against the freedom of expression in the article on "obscenity"; the re-inclusion of the expression "sexual orientation" to the article on discrimination; the replacement of the expression "customs" with "honor" in the context of the article on the motives of first degree murder; the cancellation of the article on "unjust provocation" which leads to reduced prison time for men who kill women; and the rejection of the article on adultery (banning married women from having relations with others) which served to oppress women's sexuality and bodies.³

I have provided the reader with a short summary of recent history for a purpose: Since early 1980s, feminists in Turkey joined forces to read, discuss, organize meetings to raise awareness, write articles on feminism in various magazines (1983) and staged the Rally Against Domestic Violence (1987) –not only the first street protest of its kind but also a turning point for the feminist movement. For three decades, without any interruption, feminists have been waging a struggle against men, the state, and all the sexist political parties in power.

The main topics forming the agenda of feminist struggle in Turkey are as follows: Female body and sexuality; male violence; family, marriage and love; women's employment and social rights; struggle for constitutional and legal rights; political Islam; and war, militarism and chauvinism.

During the struggle, some of these topics gained importance in different periods in parallel with contemporary political developments, – such as abortion, virginity tests and male violence.

In the booklet entitled "Conservative Democracy" which lays out the principles of AKP's ideology, one reads "AK Party strives to develop a conservative political stance, which, although partially in tune with conservative practices across the world, mainly pursues policies shaped by the social and cultural characteristics of Turkey, and a political perspective based on local dynamics."⁴

Indeed, AKP's conservatism is identical to that of conservative parties the world over. Especially with regards to the women's question, the political agendas of AKP and other conservative parties across the world seem to overlap in many respects: the ideal number of



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children in a family, banning abortion, women's clothes, the sacredness of the family, preservation of social and cultural traditions... Since what conservatives embrace as tradition is a life full of sexism and repression against women, in every country feminists wage a struggle against their local (sexist-repressive) traditions. Nevertheless, some of the female members of AKP, refused these limitations imposed by their own party and did not give up their gains.

"Conservatism refuses radicalism and social engineering. Politics must be based not on conflict and polarization, but rather cohesion and tolerance. Change should be coupled with the preservation of the values and gains of the traditional structure."⁵

Keen on preserving what is given, conservative democrats are indeed knee deep into social engineering when they say that they will clean politics from conflict and polarization. The contradiction between workers and bosses, or women and men can be settled not through social engineering, but by social struggle. Anyway, it is not politics which creates these contradictions. Politics simply acts on these. Trying to create harmony and tolerance between workers and bosses, or women and men, who are irreconcilably opposed to one another, is in fact tantamount to deceiving the society in order to strengthen one's power.

In the same booklet, AKP's plagiarist ideologue Yalçın Akdoğan goes on to write "In essence, conservatism defends the restriction of power against authoritarian tendencies, leaves change to the natural course of social dynamics, emphasizes that freedom is meaningful as a concrete rather than abstract value, and attaches great importance to intermediary social protection mechanisms such as the family, voluntary organizations and foundations..."⁶

Conservatism can be seen as an attempt to control the society in both the domestic space and public space by establishing a permanent bond with the historical heritage; emphasizing the unchangeability of social structure; opposing revolutionary movements which demand social change; portraying basic rights and liberties as inferior and dangerous to state or social institutions; controlling social and individual liberties while pretending to leave change to its natural course; and transforming its main institutional pillars such as religion, family and state into repressive control centers pitted against all liberties.

True to their motto "The private is political", feminists have shown that the domestic is indeed public, and that home is indeed the inferno of women. Thus they have exposed the conservative attempt to veil, and thus sustain the status quo. Conservatives reject women's demands for basic rights concerning the female body, love, sexuality and freedom, by upholding religion, sanctity, family, morality and social structure; and they veiled and sustained the problems in all these areas. The feminist movement opened up all these areas for discussion, and suggested that women and society can discard all of them, in particular the family.

In the quotation above, one phrase which is particularly dangerous for women is "leaving change to the natural course of social dynamics". This expression perfectly complements the logic of tolerance and reconciliation. That is because, there is no such thing as "the natural course"; except that created and sustained by

certain groups for their own interest. Change cannot come through "the natural course" of things, but rather through an intervention to that supposed "natural course". Here, "the natural course" functions as a discursive mechanism which preserves the status quo, and idealizes the past as an object of yearning: Then family and marriage become "the natural course" for women.

The Prime Minister warns doctors about C-section and abortion, and insists on natural birth. Hospitals, in particular state hospitals, provide almost no abortion services, or abortions are carried out without anesthesia as a means of punishment. Besides, morning after pills are brought under severe state control and rendered less accessible.

Gender equality versus fitrat

During AKP's 16th Consultation and Assessment Meeting held on October 17th, 2010, the Prime Minister Erdoğan said "Certain ladies go on TV to demand 'equality between women and men'. Such an equality is acceptable as far as rights are concerned. However, anything going beyond that is against creation", and thus embraced the Islamist concept of fitrat [nature, creation] to oppose gender equality.

Fitrat refers to the way a creature has been shaped by Allah. Fitrat has two unalterable elements: creation and nature. Creation comes from the divine power of Allah, and is thus unalterable. Nature, on the other hand, refers in this context to what should be, what actually is, or what is in accordance with the creations of the divine power.

The main tension between AKP and the feminist movement boils down to the fact that what AKP sees as unalterable fitrat is, in the eyes of women, a field of struggle open to change. In line with Simone de Beauvoir's famous maxim "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", the feminist movement sees gender roles as a result of the social division of labor, hence as alterable. The contradiction between the unchangeable fitrat which the Prime Minister talks about, and the idea of the alterability of gender roles which the feminists uphold correspond to the conflict of interest between two social groups, namely women and men.

Feminists protested Prime Minister Erdoğan –who by the way opts for sexist expressions such as "ladies, dames" rather than "women"- for his opinions about fitrat. They pointed to the increasing number of women murdered across Turkey to show what fitrat actually means for women, and drove home the message that "The more you emphasize gender inequality, the more women get killed".

After the Prime Minister objected to gender equality in the name of fitrat, the Commission for Equality Between Women and Men, a sub-commission of the Parliament, changed its name to Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, whereas Ministry for Women and Family Affairs (which was already a problematic title in our eyes as it mentioned 'families') was renamed Ministry

for Family Affairs and Social Policy. These changes were, needless to say, a natural result of fitrat.

“As a conservative democratic party we attach immense importance to the family. The essence of our social policy is the protection, development and support of families, which constitute the foundation of our society.”⁷

For AKP, the “natural” family, which consists of a woman and a man, carries an importance which goes way beyond social policy. From this perspective, family is based on marriage; homosexuality is a disease; a relation out of wedlock (without a legal or religious marriage), which rests solely on the mutual consent of two individuals, is unacceptable. Marriages are meant to produce children who are respectful of tradition and religion. The Prime Minister “suggests” that women should give birth to at least three or five kids. He is frequently invited as best man to wedding ceremonies, where he reminds the brides that they should raise at least three children.

On November 26th, 2010, at the conference entitled “Family Values in the crossroads of Religion, Tradition and Modernity” organized by the Journalists and Writers Foundation -the public face of the Fethullah Gülen sect-the Minister for Women and Family Affairs, Aliye Kavaf said “I believe that homosexuality is a biological disorder, a disease”, and added that modern living harbors grave dangers for the family: “The strongest guarantee for the continuation of families would be the protection of widely accepted values. In the same vein, families must play the key role in protecting these values and conveying them to the next generation.”

Family wasn't simply a hearth for raising three to five children. These children needed to be educated as members of an Islamist, pious generation. The Prime Minister's words “We shall raise a pious generation”, which had sparked much debate, are being put into practice through many means, in particular the education system.

With the government's new education system dubbed 4+4+4, these groups of three to five children will join the labor force as cheap laborers when they are eleven. The constitutional right of access to equal and high-quality education will be violated. Girls will become mothers, and entrusted to “the mercy of compassionate men in the family home”. The relevant law on education has been rapidly signed into law by the Parliament.

The Prime Minister portrays nations with a large percentage of senior citizens, such as the EU countries, as bankrupt. He voices his objection to the drop in birth rates, and “warns” that, unless women give birth to more children, the Turkish economy will lose its driving force, that is the young demographic base (cheap laborers), and this will spell disaster for the economy. In fact, by saying so, the male Prime Minister inadvertently confesses that women have immense power over the world economy and the national economy, beyond their role as cheap domestic or outside labor. If women give birth to less children or refuse to give birth at all, the world economy would be hit by severe crises. That is, the world economy is not threatened only by a crash in the American stock exchanges controlled by men, but even more so by a drop in birth rates! This indeed is a political force to be reckoned with!

The new law on abortion

After demanding women to give birth to three or five children, the Prime Minister voiced his objection against the C-section in the summer of 2011. He made the famous declaration “Each abortion is tantamount to another Uludere massacre, to an insidious plan to annihilate this nation”, which drew the ire of women. On December 28, 2011, F-16 warplanes of the Turkish Air Forces had bombed and killed 34 ethnic Kurdish civilian youngsters in the region of Uludere (Roboski in Kurdish). And now the Prime Minister was declaring that abortion was equivalent to this horrible massacre against Kurdish people, which had taken place under his own rule. Women were outraged by this attempt to control their bodies and by this ridiculous equation, and took the streets to stage protest rallies.

AKP was not happy with the current abortion law. The draft law on abortion stipulated that the period of abortion would be shortened from ten to eight weeks; thus, it was designed to first limit and then ban abortion: Women would be subjected to family violence and control by such methods as sending SMS messages to the fathers of unmarried young women having an abortion; all pregnancies would be kept in records under the pretext of health controls.

Although the government failed to amend the legislation on abortion in 2011, it strived to assert control on women's bodies with laws passed via statutory decrees. The Prime Minister warns doctors about C-section and abortion, and insists on natural birth. Hospitals, in particular state hospitals, provide almost no abortion services, or abortions are carried out without anesthesia as a means of punishment. Besides, morning after pills are brought under severe state control and rendered less accessible.

Why? In order to shut women inside the home and family, make them dependent on men, and encourage them to raise pious generations, in the spirit of conservative democracy.

Especially in recent years, men harass, rape and murder women in increasing numbers in Turkey. The statistics released by AKP point to a 1400 percent rise in male violence against women. Aside from women's organizations, various web sites and newspapers publish statistics on the number of women murdered by men in subsequent months and years. “According to data by the Ministry of Justice, the number of women murdered by men rose by 1400 percent from 2002 to 2009. The number of women killed went up from 66 in 2002 to 953 in the first seven months of 2009. According to official records, the number of women killed by men was 83 in 2003, 128 in 2004, 317 in 2005, 663 in 2006, 1011 in 2007 and 806 in 2008.”⁸

The death toll rises constantly, because the AKP government has chosen to empower not women but men and families through its policies. This increased power of men hits women as a lethal force.

Another reason why women in Turkey are subjected to male violence is the fact that women refuse to succumb to patriarchy despite all the efforts of the state, government and men, and refuse to submit their lives to decisions made by men. Women take control of their own lives and want to make their own decisions.

Since it bases its perspective about the relation between the sexes on the concept of fitrat and accepts

male domination, the AKP government chooses to protect men rather than women in cases of male violence. Courts give shorter prison sentences to men who kill women, due to “unjust provocation”. After a couple of years in jail, these men get out and continue their lives as before. Men jailed for murder, extortion or rape are frequently set free with amnesties and sent home, making life incredibly difficult for women.

Although municipalities are under the obligation of opening women’s shelters in districts with a population over 50 thousand, this rule is rarely implemented. Since there isn’t enough space in the current shelters, women fleeing violence and murder are sent back home to their husbands, in line with the traditional belief that it is only natural for a husband to both love and beat up his wife.

The Law No. 4320 which stipulates that a man inflicting violence on his wife will be banned from approaching the house was a significant gain of the feminist movement; however, it is not properly implemented and thus cannot stand in the way of murders.

When AKP talks about social policy, it does not, unfortunately refer to the state providing social welfare. On the contrary, for AKP, social policy amounts to assigning the burden of care work to women locked inside their homes.

In this perspective, not public or private care centers, but women will be in charge of taking care of the children, elderly, sick and disabled, inside the family -the supposed “hearth of compassion”- at a much lower cost. AKP declares that “The essence of our social policy is the protection, development and support of families, which constitutes the foundation of our society”.⁹ As such, taking care of the elderly or disabled, which is seen as “sunk cost”, is to be assigned to women at minimum cost. In fact, AKP huddles women, youth, disabled, children and elderly under the category of Social Policies. That is, women as a social category are assigned the same status with the youth, disabled, children and elderly, and subjected to “policies of prevention and assistance”. However, what women need is not assistance, but gaining back their rights and getting empowered against men.

The feminist movement campaigned many times for independent social insurance and pensions for women, including domestic workers, and continues to fight for this cause. The government, however, refuses to hear these demands, and claims to increase female participation in the labor force with so-called projects.

Feminists and NGOs

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are formed by

voluntary members who take initiatives against various social problems independently of the government. NGOs are not ideological or “political” organizations. They do not take sides in politics.

The women’s question and struggle cannot be delegated to NGOs, or resolved with the perspectives of NGOs. As an oppressed and exploited social group, women have to pursue a political ideology to liberate themselves, and that ideology is called feminism. Feminism necessitates taking sides. Feminism takes sides with women, who are oppressed and exploited by men. Yes, it is discriminative; it discriminates in favor of women. Members of the feminist movement are not “voluntary” but committed.

The word NGO refers to a wide array of organizations. It might designate a small association where a handful of people gather to work on an issue, or a business association like TÜSİAD which represents the political and economic interests of monopoly capital in Turkey, and can establish or fell governments.

Another problem is that NGOs are very much malleable by government intervention; some NGOs have close bonds with governments. Most important of all, like many other institutions, most NGOs are sexist organizations managed mainly by men. There are only a handful of mixed NGOs fighting against sexism. As such, in Turkey, it should be the feminist movement which fuels the growth of NGOs, rather than the other way around. To this end, we must ensure that NGOs closely monitor the agenda of the feminist movement, defend and embrace feminist demands, include more women in their staff and decision-making mechanisms, establish direct contact with the feminist movement, and formulate policies in favor of women.

To conclude, I believe that 30 years of feminist struggle has created a radical difference between the lives of mothers and daughters. In this sense, the results are encouraging. Women have made significant headway in such issues as honor, virginity, education as well as making decisions about their own lives. Undoubtedly, we are more liberated than ever before. It is very crucial to embrace and protect, as well as enhance these liberties, for which we have paid a huge price.

Accordingly, women must fiercely resist and repel AKP government’s attacks against women, in particular the draft law on abortion.

Embracing feminist thought or shaping one’s life according to feminism is not simply a personal decision for a woman. The members of a social group are equally subjected to and affected by each attack. Feminism is the platform where women join forces against the attack.

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New metropolitan municipalities

Like many countries, Turkey is also going through a rapid transformation. The external dynamics triggered by globalization and the efforts to become an EU member on the one hand and the internal dynamics made up of several phenomena such as rapid urbanization, the services sector taking the lead in economic structure, intensification of democratization demands, civil society movement coming to the foreground, increase in the ecological sensitivity on the other hand exert pressure on all societies towards changes in the political forms and state structures. We are going through a period of almost continuous reform and restructuring. This pressure for change does not seem likely to be overcome with minor adjustments; it creates a need for a continuous radical transformation.

Turkey has implemented constitutional amendments 16 times within the last two decades in order to keep up with this change. However, these did not provide a full transformation; therefore, the country is now engaged in an effort to enact a new constitution. Several efforts for restructuring in the legislative, executive and judicial fields have been seen as well.

We witness that major changes have been undertaken in public administration and totally new institutions emerged in some fields. Some ministries in the central government have been merged and some ministries have been endowed with new functions. Additionally, independent committees especially related to financial and economic structures have been formed.

We see that radical changes also take place in local governments in parallel to these developments and new institutions are formed: essential laws such as the Law on Financial Management and Control, Law on Municipalities, Law on Metropolises, Law on Special Provincial Administrations, Law on the Unions of Local Administrations have been promulgated. Additionally, related laws that would enable democratic governance such as the Law on the Right to Information and Association, have also entered into force. Furthermore, Development Agencies have been established.

Emergence of metropolises

In Turkish, diverse terms are used to denote local administrations. The local administrations of the central government are referred to with the terms province, district (sub-province) and sub-district (township). The local governments are rather referred to in the context of neighborhoods, boroughs, villages, towns, cities and metropolises.

The concept of metropolis is a new way of expression. In the past, Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir used to be cited as examples of big cities in the geography textbooks. The adjective “big” would be used to refer to the population.

Following the Second World War, Turkey transitioned to the multi-party democratic system on the one hand and started to abandon strictly statist policies on the other. In this period, the habitual urban structures started to change as well. In 1960s, the word “metropolitan” came into use to refer to urban areas with a more complicated socio-economic texture as compared to cities. The Master Plan Offices were established in 1965 in Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir towards the aim of planning metropolitan areas.

In 1970s, it became clear that the existing municipal system was inadequate in the face of many issues caused by rapid urbanization especially in Istanbul. Before the establishment of the metropolitan municipality, there were 27 municipalities in Istanbul; these municipalities were operating as separate administrations, which were independent from one another. In Istanbul, a complete despondency prevailed in fields such as drinking water, sewage administration and garbage collection services. In that period, a draft law on metropolitan administration geared towards Istanbul was also prepared in the State Planning Organization (DPT).

The new constitution adopted after the military coup in 1980 included the principle that a separate regulation could be created for metropolises. Based on this principle, the Law on Metropolises was enacted in 1983. Along with the establishment of metropolitan municipalities, the authorities of municipalities were extended and their funding resources were reinforced.

Local government reform

During the foundation period of the Republic, 85 percent of the population lived in villages. Therefore, one of the first administrative regulations of the Republic was related to villages. In 1924, the Law on Villages was promulgated.

The restructuring of municipalities was completed in the year 1930. This law granted municipalities a wider authority for administration as by the standards of that period. The municipalities were authorized in many fields ranging from infrastructure to social aids, cultural services to traffic regulations under the supervision of a strict administrative custody. The requirement for administrative custody was explained by two reasons. The first



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one was that the municipalities could not be left alone, because the Republican ideology had to be adopted at local levels. The municipalities were expected to assume important roles in the realization of the target of modernization of the Republic. The second was that it was suggested that a centrally guided administration would provide more rational and rapid results on account of the fact that the municipalities did not have adequate administrative capacities. Both of these arguments remained valid as barriers in the way of an understanding of autonomous municipalities.

However, the internal and external dynamics had started to exert pressure for a radical administrative reform in local governments as mentioned at the beginning. The efforts were first initiated along with the establishment of metropolitan municipalities (1983). However, it was not until 2000s that a reform was initiated which encompassed local governments involving municipalities.

As part of this reform, a radical change was preferred rather than making amendments to the laws. The Laws on Municipalities, Metropolises and Special Provincial Administrations were entirely renewed.

A new understanding of administration was envisaged primarily in three fields with this reform:

1. While some increases were provided in the revenues of municipalities on the one hand, the financial management systems were re-arranged with new techniques to assure efficiency, accountability and transparency. For example, it was made obligatory to have strategic plans and performance criteria in place.

2. The scope of duties of municipalities was expanded. New areas of duty were created such as the protection of historical and cultural heritage, disaster response, construction and repair of schools, provision of investment incentives by municipalities in specific fields for commercial and economic development.

3. The administrative custodian authority of the central government over municipalities was restricted. Instead, a democratic governance model was put in place where the civil society and people would control the municipalities starting from individuals. Mechanisms were developed to enable civil society actors to participate in the decision-making processes.

The new Law on Metropolises as part of the local government reform entered into force in 1974. One of the most important regulations enacted by this law was the expansion of the municipal boundaries of Istanbul and Kocaeli as city boundaries. In addition, the borders of municipalities in other metropolises were extended to include areas within circles with diameters of 20 and 50 kilometers as per the metropolitan population.

So, why has there been a need for a new Law on Metropolises even though a short period of seven years had only elapsed after this amendment?

The new metropolitan order

Prime Minister Erdoğan announced during the last general elections that metropolitan municipalities

would be established in 13 more cities as part of his party program. The reasons behind the establishment of metropolitan municipalities on a city level are explained as follows in both the party program and the legal ground of the new law: the first one is achieving efficiency and effectiveness in services, namely, reducing the costs of public services; the second one is the allegation that the entirety of the city was at an optimal size with respect to the administration, planning and coordi-

The biggest hurdle in the way of not only enacting a new constitution, but also implementing decentralization is the Kurdish question. It doesn't seem possible for Turkey to implement reforms in many fields without first solving this problem. That is the reason why reserved and poorly designed steps such as the new regulation on metropolises are being taken.

nation; yet another reason is the assumption that a metropolitan municipality that emphasizes democracy and good governance, is citizen-oriented, as local as possible, participative and transparent would be established.

One reason not clearly expressed in this draft law is the thought that this new restructuring would be beneficial in the solution of the Kurdish question. The proposal for the establishment of metropolitan municipalities authorized to administer the entire city was brought in response to the demands by the Kurdish movement for autonomy.

How much do these reasons overlap with the metropolitan municipal structure intended to be established? Could it be that these reasons are not more than euphuisms that rhyme with the current jargon used as a shield against criticisms that may be raised to the current regulation on metropolitan municipalities?

The new regulation on metropolitan municipalities represents a radical change that will shake to the core many elements ranging from agriculture to ecology, politics to the concept of democracy, beyond the establishment of an administrative structure, which will have irreversible effects for many years to come. Therefore, one should keep in mind the fundamental sine qua non conditions for reform when dealing with such initiatives for reform. What are these conditions? One can talk about the existence of primarily two fundamental conditions for an administrative reform; these are defending democracy and achieving efficiency and effectiveness in service.

The rule of democracy

Today, all kinds of regulations to be enacted in public administration are prepared and promulgated via participative and transparent methods. The requirement to take the principles of participation and transparency into account while making efforts for a regulation that would radically change the local government system has been made obligatory via international conventions. Firstly, it is beneficial to tackle this mat-

ter from the perspective of EU, which we are trying to become a member of.

As it is well-known, the European Charter of Local Self-Government developed by the Council of Europe and accepted by Turkey with certain reservations is deemed to be part of the EU *acquis communautaire*. The Article 4 of this charter explaining the concept of self-government and the Article 5 on the protection of boundaries stipulate that changes in local authority boundaries shall not be made without

Even the thought of what a government, which has become highly-centralized based on a mentality of forcefully constructing mosques in Alawite villages and not recognizing djemevis (cemevi), could bring onto those communities is dismal enough.

prior consultation with the local communities and administrations.

Additionally, it is explained that the local services should be undertaken by the unit that is the closest to public according to the principle of subsidiarity. In the face of the spirit, the essence and the foregoing express provisions of the Charter of Self-Government, the Law on Metropolises is problematic.

The Progress Reports published on Turkey every year by the EU state that action is not taken in Turkey in accordance with participation and transparency with respect to political criteria.

In the EU harmonization process, an amendment was made to the related regulation in 2007 by the Prime Ministry and the requirement to carry out an Impact Analysis for important laws was put into force. Accordingly, it is obligatory to have transparency and to consult with the related parties during the preparation of any kind of legislation. This law is not in line with this regulation of the Prime Ministry and it has also been prepared in contradiction with the general techniques for the preparation of a law. Such laws are prepared by the related ministry and matured after consultation with other ministries.

This law, however, was prepared by the related ministry and AK Party (Justice and Development Party). No municipal administrations were consulted about the law and it was not discussed by the public.

Judging by the order brought about by this law, it would not be a prophecy to say that it will cause many controversies and go through endless judicial procedures in the future. The Lisbon Treaty, which was adopted in place of the EU constitution, states that the EU is based on the following values: Human dignity, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights of the persons belonging to minorities. These values are common values that enable pluralism, prohibition of discrimination, tolerance, solidarity and gender equality.

The new Law on Metropolises does not allow

autonomous democratic administrations in villages; furthermore, it deprives them of their self-government authority. This may lead the society to uniformity under the guise of creating a democratic and citizen-oriented administration in a country like Turkey, which hosts various ethnic and religious communities.

The legal entity of villages is being abolished, the common property, fields, forests of villages are to be transferred to centralized municipalities. Additionally, the villages are to be made subject to the development authority of the related municipality.

Even the thought of what a government, which has become highly-centralized based on a mentality of forcefully constructing mosques in Alawite villages and not recognizing djemevis (cemevi), could bring onto those communities is dismal enough.

The communities that govern themselves in their own villages will have been deprived of their rights to live with the development-related regulations and municipal bans. Considering that we are faced with a *de facto* ban on alcohol in almost all cities in Anatolia upon the pretext of restricting places that serve alcohol, it is not hard to imagine what could happen to these communities. Eventually, these communities will not be able to protect their own identities under a pluralistic mentality of government and the social peace will be disrupted.

The metropolitan municipal structure may also damage the multi-party life in Turkey. The analyses made on the results of the latest elections indicate that AK Party will be able to win all metropolitan municipalities nearly throughout Turkey other than the cities where the Kurds hold the majority. How would the parties which have no local power be able to become alternatives for the government? Furthermore, it is known that political parties gain experience in governing via local administrations and they achieve a political competence. This system will result in a single party rule with democratic elections. This will constitute a significant threat to the future of democracy in Turkey.

The thought that the Law on Metropolises could bring about a solution for the Kurdish question is not realistic. This law gives preponderance to the central government on a local level. An institution of governor's office with extended authorities replaces the Special Provincial Administration, a democratic institution. This cannot be termed as a democratic approach.

The issue should also be seen from the perspective of the constitution. We do not intend to defend the Constitution of 1982, which is currently criticized by the majority of the society. However, the principle of the rule of law necessitates that the current laws be taken into account. The Article 127 of our constitution tackles local governments in three categories being city, town and village. According to this definition, would it be possible to remove Special Provincial Administrations in metropolises? We will receive the answer to this question soon from the Constitutional Court.

The constitution adopts the subsidiarity principle in a way that is similar to the European Charter of Self-Government. The current situation with respect

to the subsidiarity principle was explained above.

The constitution says that special forms of administration can be implemented in large settlement areas. Whether the new metropolises have such a quality will be extrapolated below in the context of scope.

The rule of efficiency

The primary logic behind the Law on Metropolises is that the new regulation will enable the services to be provided more efficiently and effectively. This reason may be true for some cities. Indeed, the services may be offered more efficiently and effectively in cities like Bursa and Gaziantep, which are united around one metropolis with a more homogenous structure.

Judging by the metropolises in the first group (the cities before this law), we see that the ratio of the population in the centers constituting the metropolis to the total population of the city is more than 50 percent in all cities other than Samsun and Erzurum. This is in keeping with the definition of large center as mentioned in the constitution; we also see that these centers are truly centers of those cities in economic, social and cultural terms. The total capacities of these cities may fulfill the expectations from the new regulation on metropolitan municipalities.

One can argue that the qualities of Denizli (57.41 percent) Kahramanmaraş (51.76 percent) and Malatya (64.42 percent) are similar to the metropolises in the first group in terms of the ratio of the population of the central district to the total population of the city in the new 13 metropolises. One can add Manisa, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon and Van to this list even though the ratio of the population of their central district to the total population of the city is below 50 percent. However, it can be seen clearly that the situation is artificially far-fetched in the other cities. These cities fall outside the scope of a large center as mentioned in the constitution and do not have the quality of being social and cultural centers. For example, it is doubtful whether even the conventional services can be provided in Mardin, let alone efficiency in services.

The new Law on Metropolises does not demonstrate an approach that is favorable for metropolises in terms of the division of services between the central government and local government. No solution is provided for the gap of services that emerged with the abolition of Special Provincial Administrations, either. Attempts are made to fill in this gap via the coordination unit to be created in governor's offices that seem to be attached to the public administration. This situation will generate new bureaucracies, thereby reducing efficiency and effectiveness in services. If all the duties, authorities and responsibilities of Special Provincial Administrations had been granted to metropolitan municipalities, one could have talked about efficiency and effectiveness in services.

It is obvious that the area which will be harmed most by this new structuring will be farming and animal husbandry. The removal of villages, transfer of common properties to the municipalities, and takeover of planning authorities over forests by the

municipalities constitute an open threat to both the environment and agricultural production. The cities turn into areas of profit in their entirety. A municipal tradition which has come to perceive fields as land may do great harm to the agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry sectors.

Dilemma of social engineering

One of the agenda items in Turkey that has remained unchanged is the problem of decentralization-localization. Even though several steps have been taken in the way of localization in recent times, no radical reforms could be implemented in relation to this matter. Courageous steps need to be taken in two fields in order to pave the way for Turkey to end the acts that have turned into an armed struggle and establish lasting peace. The first one is a new constitution that will enable a democratic structure of government and society by providing equality. The second one is to establish a public administration that will promote and not limit the fundamental rights and liberties to be envisaged in the constitution. The primary one among the most important tools of the public administration for especially internal peace and development is to implement a decentralization that constrains the central government.

The biggest hurdle in the way of not only enacting a new constitution, but also implementing decentralization is the Kurdish question. It does not seem possible for Turkey to implement reforms in many fields without first solving this problem. That is the reason why reserved and poorly designed steps such as the new regulation on metropolises are being taken.

One of the primary agenda items of the process recently started for solving the Kurdish question will be regional autonomy. The fact that the Law on Metropolises is being brought onto the agenda at top speed before the new constitution process is finalized and an agreement is reached on regional governments strengthens the arguments that the main reason for this is to provide the party in power with political gain.

It would be a better step to look at the results of this system upon its application in cities like Istanbul and İzmir rather than resorting to an extreme form of government engineering that would encompass 75 percent of the country's population with the metropolitan municipal order. In place of them, a chaos has been preferred; perhaps, a barrier has been built in front of the new steps to be taken.

Our history of the last 200 years also shows that social engineering via laws and administrative regulations is not possible. Therefore, there is no need to be very pessimistic. The new constitution and the Kurdish opening initiative may change this course of events. The potential judicial decisions on the regulation on metropolises may also eliminate the concerns. The impending imposition of local governments run by the AK Party and BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) may trigger unexpectedly positive developments. It is possible for new coalitions to emerge among the liberal sectors of the society and Alawites, Kurds and other communities in the years to come.

Turkish-American relations and the Middle East in Obama's second-term¹

Although “American unilateralism” became part of political discourse during the administrations of George W. Bush (2001-2009) and took a concrete form especially with the United States’ occupation of Iraq without UN approval after the September 11 attacks,² “imperialism” and “unilateralism” have always exercised a certain influence over the ideological infrastructure that dominated US foreign policy in the greater part of the 20th century and in the 21st century thus far.

With its “interventionist” foreign policy, the ideological and physical foundations³ of which were already taking shape during the World War II era, the US devised a new definition of national security. This redefinition was linked to America’s desire to maintain the high levels of production that the war had allowed them to attain, and to find new markets. The main strategic principle of US national security is to hold back an adversary through the use of air bases. The effect of this on economic policy is as follows: For its long-term welfare, the US economy must have access to free markets and to most –and if possible, all- of the raw materials in Eurasia without any economic barriers; and it must ensure that these markets and materials suit the general principles of a liberal economy.⁴

This conception of national security was questioned during the first four years of Obama’s presidency. As a result of the American economic crisis and the military strategists’ shifting interests from Europe and the Middle East to Asia, the US began to favor a policy of strategic rebalancing in Asia/Pacific over its policy of forward presence that it had adopted after World War II. This change of policy was made manifest in the Pentagon’s doctrine of Air-Sea Battle.⁵ America’s Middle Eastern policy must be interpreted in this context. It was during the final phase of World War II that American diplomats realized it was mandatory the US have a presence in the Middle East and that it must increase its influence in the region. Perhaps the current period will be recorded in history as the time when, after 70 years in the region, the US withdrew - at least in the military sense - from the Middle East.

Soft-power politics

Following the September the 11th attacks, the

US once again sent troops to the Middle East in line with the Bush administration’s policy to fight global terrorism and with the “Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative.” With their renewed military intervention in the Middle East and their regional calculations, Turkey once again became a desirable partner in the eyes of American policy makers.

On March 1, 2003, the Turkish National Assembly rejected the US’s request for permission to use military bases and ports in Turkey for its military operations in Iraq. Although the Bush administration blamed the Turkish General Staff rather than the AKP, the party that had only come into power in November 2002, this incident nevertheless caused serious tension in Turkish-American relations. The Assembly’s rejection of the American’s request and the eight year occupation of Iraq that followed created serious security problems for Turkey, and, as a result, Turkey was forced to protect its interests in the region through non-military means, using “soft-power” strategies.⁶ Foreign policy makers defined the politics of the era as “‘soft-power’ policy designed to win friends and influence by maximizing on Turkey’s strategic position, its historical connections to its many diverse neighbourhoods, cultural links and economic wellbeing.”⁷

Up until this period, with the exception of the Cypriot issue, Turkish foreign policy makers had always been prudent in their policy-making; their decision-making process was deliberate and balance was always their priority. But in this new period these policy makers were replaced by a group of diplomats who were much quicker to make decisions, swifter in switching sides and stances, and who acted much more independently. In this respect, it wouldn’t be wrong to say that between 2003 and 2010, Ankara’s Syria and Iran policies were carried out in spite of Washington.⁸

Because of Turkey’s contributions⁹ in Afghanistan on both civil and military levels and its cooperation with the US, the Afghan war that began in 2001 and resulted in the collapse of the Taliban regime that had sheltered Al-Qaeda created an atmosphere in which the negative effects of the March 1, 2003 vote were partly forgotten.

The AKP administration then directed its efforts to situate itself as an influential actor in



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the Middle East and to improve Turkey's relations with the Arab world. The true purpose behind the policies of the AKP, however, was to carve out a role for itself in the global scene.¹⁰

A bridge between the Muslim World and the West

The AKP rose from within political Islam to come to power in Turkey. The AKP administration's desire to improve its relations with the Middle East - much neglected by Ankara for many years - and with the Islamic world in general, suited the interests of both George W. Bush and Obama administrations.¹¹ Therefore, whereas the Clinton governments (1993-2001) supported Turkey's membership in the EU, thereby stressing Turkey's European-ness and Western-ness, the administrations of George W. Bush impressed upon Turkey that not only did it belong in the European Union but that it also had a very important role to play in improving relations between the Muslim world and the West. The Obama administration also emphasized Turkey's role as a bridge between the Islamic world and the West.

As Turkey improved its relations with Middle Eastern and the North African nations, its relations with Israel deteriorated. At first, Turkey's disagreement with Israel was caused by the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and at first the divergence remained contained at the political discourse level. With the 'Mavi Marmara' incident, however, virtually all relations between the two nations came to a halt. At the UN Security Council meeting later in 2010, when only Turkey and Brazil voted against the sanctions against Iran, American-Turkish relations became even more tense. Some political observers in the US and Western media described a "shift in axis," commenting that Turkey seemed to be turning away from the West and NATO and toward the Muslim world and the Middle East.

America's Middle East policy during Obama's first term, its attempts at reviving the Israeli-Palestine peace process, redefining relations with the Muslim world and improving the US's image in the region proved unfruitful. In its first term, the Obama administration didn't have a determining influence over the Middle Eastern political agenda; instead, it had to react to a series of crises. More precisely, it initiated sanctions of Tehran and tried to keep the dangers of Iran's nuclear program in check; it abandoned former allies while sending messages of support to the Arab uprisings in support of new Islamic governments.¹² The Obama administration avoided - as much as was feasible - any military engagements abroad; the US withdrew its forces from Iraq, and according to the administration's plans, American and NATO forces will withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

Obama and Erdoğan supposedly had an extensive conversation at the G-20 summit held in June 2010 resulting in the foundations of a relationship based on mutual trust between the two leaders.¹³ Then, at NATO's Lisbon summit

in November 2010, when Turkey agreed, in line with the Missile Shield Project, to position radars and missiles on its territories in defense of Israel against a possible attack from Iran, the then still cold Turkish-American relations continued to thaw. This was also the period when Turkey ended its foreign policy of independent unilateralism that had been in place since 2003. This policy change was one of the outcomes of the Arab uprisings and of the US's withdrawal from Iraq, both of which left the region open to Iranian influence and intervention.¹⁴

Considering the above-mentioned developments, cooperation in Afghanistan, Turkey's developing political and economic relations with the Kurdish Regional Government in Northern Iraq (despite new criticisms from the US that Turkey's close ties with the regional government

One result of the Arab uprisings was the revitalization of the political, military and economic relations between Turkey and the US, and, as part of this revitalization process, the leaders of the two countries themselves formed closer personal ties. The diminishing power of US's other allies in the region and the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq made Turkey a much more important partner for the US in terms of its Middle Eastern policy.

threaten Iraq's territorial integrity), and Turkey's constructive policies in regards to the Arab uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, it seems that over the last two years, American-Turkish relations have been especially positive. American foreign policy makers revised their strategic partnerships with Turkey accordingly to further strengthen the relations between the two countries. Currently, NATO is Turkey's strongest and most important institutional link to the West. According to Serhat Güvenç and Soli Özel, Turkey's NATO membership gained new importance in the country's strategy after the Arab uprisings. Davutoğlu's strong support for NATO constitutes a substantial change in his views about foreign policy.¹⁵

Indeed, one result of the Arab uprisings was the revitalization of the political, military and economic relations between Turkey and the US, and, as part of this revitalization process, the leaders of the two countries themselves formed closer personal ties. The diminishing power of US's other allies in the region and the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq made Turkey a much more important partner for the US in terms of its Middle Eastern policy.¹⁶

The Arab uprisings forced the Obama administration both to protect American interests and to support the civil uprisings. America openly supported the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, but followed a different policy in Libya. Although the US played an important role in the NATO-led

operation against Muammar Gaddafi, it entrusted the heavier part of the mission to its allies and to the countries in the region, defining its own role in the operation as “leading from behind”.

From a “Zero Problems Policy” with Governments to a “Zero Problems Policy” with the people in neighboring countries

The Arab uprisings made a change in Turkish foreign policy imperative. Until then Turkey had been following what it called a ‘Zero Problems Policy’ with the governments of all the countries in the region, whereas with the uprisings, it had to shift its support from the official governments

Turkey would most likely take part in a possible military operation against Syria, especially if it concerns the formation of a “buffer zone.” It is very likely that Turkey will play an important role in post-Assad Syria providing civil support for reconstruction projects and military support to secure public order.

to the peoples themselves.¹⁷ In general, Turkey supported the Arab uprisings except for its indecision and then change of policy concerning the situation in Libya.¹⁸ The Turkish government sent naval ships and a submarine to Libya to control Libya’s coastline, and war crafts to strengthen the no-fly zone. The Turkish government had always disagreed with Mubarak’s Gaza policy, and when the uprisings began in Egypt, Erdoğan was the first leader who called for an overthrow of the existing regime.¹⁹

The uprisings in Syria present a greater challenge to Turkey. Until the outbreak of violence in Syria, Turkish-Syrian relations presented a good example of zero problems politics. Revolts in Syria began in March 2011, but it wasn’t until November when Erdoğan finally understood that he wouldn’t be able to convince Assad to act in line with Turkey’s counsel. Turkey urgently needed a solution to the Syrian problem because they were faced not only with security risks, but also with a refugee crisis.

The Obama administration’s priority was to support the formation of a reliable opposition in Syria. It hasn’t directly provided weapons to the rebels but it supported regional allies who did so; it restricted relations with rebel leaders in favor of improving relations with the oppositional groups that did not favor violence.²⁰ After Hillary Clinton’s visit to Turkey in August 2012, Turkey and the US agreed to form the Syria Working Group. This was a result of the AKP’s demand that the Obama administration provide military and political support to Turkey at various levels. The Syria Working Group held its first meeting in Ankara the same month. The group focused on the following issues: the formation of a “buffer zone” in Syria in case of a serious refugee flow; the military in-

tervention strategies to be employed if the Syrian government used chemical weapons against rebel groups; the methods of securing public order and of preventing the formation of a power-vacuum in Syria in the post-Assad transition period.²¹

When we consider the Syrian issue, it is important to keep in mind Turkey’s relations with Israel, and the US’s position with respect to Turkish-Israeli relations. Without a compromise from Israel, relations between Turkey and Israel cannot be expected to improve. The AKP administration’s adversity towards Israel is nothing new, however, the AKP’s foreign policy makers didn’t risk any further deterioration of relations until they could make sure that the AKP was powerful enough domestically, that Turkish-American relations were improved, and that Turkey would become an important actor in the Middle East.²² In a final analysis, even beyond the Mavi Marmara issue, the real obstacle to better relations with Israel is Israel’s Gaza Strip policies and the regional blockade. Since it’s unrealistic to expect a change in Israel’s attitude, there is also no reason to expect a visible improvement in relations. We say ‘visible’ because cooperation behind closed doors is always a possibility.

The Triangle: Turkey-Israel-Iran

In terms of closed-door negotiations, Turkey’s denunciation of the Assad regime had a positive impact on Turkey’s relations with not only the US but also with Israel.²³ If, as rumored, both Turkey and USA were informed in advance before Israel hit targets inside Syria –and this was most probably the case– then it could be argued that the US was either actively involved in a process of reconciliation between Turkey and Israel based on the shared interests of the two countries or that it was at least acting as an intermediary.²⁴

Israel’s ‘Operation Pillar of Cloud’ offensive against Gaza immediately after Obama’s reelection reconfirmed the importance of the Israel factor in Turkish-American relations. One of Obama’s challenges now is to reconcile the US’s two regional allies. The importance and difficulty of this task was made clear once more during John Kerry’s visit to Ankara. John Kerry expressed his disagreement with Erdoğan’s statement that Zionism should be considered a crime against humanity, and stressed that relations between Turkey and Israel, the US’s crucial regional allies, must improve. The subsequent reactions of Turkish politicians to Kerry’s words are a good measure of the hard road that lies ahead. The AKP administration might have calculated that Erdoğan’s critique of Zionism would build popular support within Turkey and that also it could strengthen Turkey’s hand in negotiations with the US in their push for peaceful relations between Turkey and Israel. It might be the case that Turkey had been planning to include its demand for the recognition of Hamas during the negotiations. This was also around the same time that Hamas asked Obama to cancel his visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque.²⁵ Hamas asked Obama not to visit the mosque

because his visit was to be under the auspices of the Israeli government, and would therefore risk “granting legitimacy to Israel.”

Many have argued that the main issues on the Obama administration’s second term agenda would not be foreign policy issues because of the troubled US economy; the election that Obama won was dominated by economic issues.²⁶ However, the dominance of Republicans in the House of Representatives may limit Obama’s ability to act in matters of domestic policy or the economy, thereby obliging him to focus more on foreign policy.²⁷ In fact, the budget cuts effective as of March 1st were approved in spite of Obama. We know that Obama’s priorities in foreign politics are the “Asia Pivot” strategy and the policy of encircling China. It seems that - despite the wishes of Obama to the contrary - due to the unrest in the Middle East, US foreign policy makers will have to concentrate on the region for at least two more years. However, it is probable that their interest in the region will be contained within the strategy framework of “leading from behind” as it was in Libya. Recently, the Israel army began an offensive that hit certain targets within Syria. If it is really the case that Israel obtained America’s approval for this operation, then our assumption about “leading from behind” proves most fitting...

In November, a group formed in Qatar with the US’s support with the purpose of uniting the Syrian oppositional groups both within and outside Syria. Admittedly, this organization has much progress to make before it could become a viable alternative to the Assad regime.²⁸ When John Kerry attended the recent “Friends of the Syrian People Group” meeting in Rome, he announced the US’s decision to donate a further sixty billion dollars to the Syrian opposition to intensify pressure on the Assad regime.²⁹

Turkish and American attitudes in terms of relations with Iran are also worthy of our attention. Obama’s reluctance to undertake new military operations abroad and his determination to restructure his own country mean -until today- that an open-ended war justified by Iran’s nuclear program has been avoided. In fact, amongst all America’s allies, Israel is the only country that supports a war with Iran. The US sidestepped Israel and took quick action to start preparations for negotiating with Iran to seek mutual agreement on the issue. Supposedly, Iran was also positive about possible negotiations. When the US Vice President Joe Biden mentioned the possibility recently of meeting directly with Iran without intermediaries, Ali Akbar Salehi, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, commented that it was “a step forward.” Evidently, Tehran is more open to dialogue now considering the upcoming June 2013 elections and the fact that the Iranian economy is in difficult straits due to US and European sanctions.³⁰ Besides, Obama has expressed time and again that he favors diplomacy over military methods to deal with the problem of Iran’s nuclear program. During the US election campaigns, Netanyahu had revealed his desire to

see the Republicans in the White House again; it is, therefore, conceivable that he will be supported by Republicans in the Congress, who will put political pressure on Obama and weaken his hand in the negotiations.³¹ If negotiations with Iran fail, an Israeli attack on Iran seems inevitable.

Iran’s and Turkey’s varying opinions about the Syria uprising position the two countries on opposite fronts. Iran and Turkey are regional rivals and it is often argued that Turkey did not intervene in Syria until now is because it wanted to avoid a possible clash with Iran. Iran has important influence over Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Hamas, and it’s a well-known fact that many of Turkey’s efforts are directed towards balancing Iran’s power in the greater region.³² Furthermore, according to Tehran, the events in Syria are nothing but a con-

Trade relations between Turkey and the US reached record heights in 2011. The volume of foreign trade was 20 billion dollars in 2011, an increase over 15,8 billion USD in 2010. Of course the figures are low compared to Turkey’s 37 billion USD of foreign trade with Germany and 30 billion USD with Russia. The Arab uprisings will also probably have a positive impact on the economic relations between the two countries.

spiracy plot devised by the West to topple Iran’s strongest ally in the region and isolate Iran on the international arena.³³ Turkey’s developing relationship with the Kurdistan Regional Government is important in that it serves as a balance against Iran’s influence over the Shi’a central government in Iraq, and Turkey is at an advantage since Iran no longer has Syria as a stable ally.³⁴

Despite these facts, in our opinion, Turkey would not be an active participant in a potential war with Iran. Even if the missiles stationed in Turkey were utilized, NATO would be accountable for such an operation and it, therefore, wouldn’t constitute a serious blow to Turkish-Iranian relations. However, 51% of Turkey’s oil consumption is supplied by Iran and since a war would disturb the supply, Turkey might have to turn to Saudi Arabia for its oil needs. There are rumors that the two countries have already discussed such a turn of events and that Saudi Arabia has offered oil at a more suitable price.³⁵

Considering the chaotic state of affairs in the Middle East, it’s certain that in the near future, Turkey and the US will continue their political and military cooperation, especially under the NATO umbrella. The US, as argued above, will likely abstain from direct intervention in Syria and will not take part in a military operation against Iran unless it’s forced to do so.³⁶ On the other hand, Turkey would most likely take part in a possible military operation against Syria, especially if it concerns the formation of a “buffer zone.” It is

very likely that Turkey will play an important role in post-Assad Syria providing civil support for reconstruction projects and military support to secure public order.

As a result of all these developments, the US must be well aware that its relations with Turkey can no longer be contained within a 'great power-small state' paradigm that was characteristic of the Cold War era. Turkey now has a much more independent foreign policy and it has become a significant economic power in the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey will host the G20 meeting in 2015 and, most importantly, other countries in the region and their people feel an affinity and a friendship with the Turkish leader and its government. It seems that in Obama's second-term, US foreign policy will be more balanced and will give Turkey greater liberty to act.

So much for Turkish-American cooperation for military and security purposes. Taking into consideration the AKP's economic policies in the Middle East and Africa, Turkish companies investing in these regions with the government's incentive and America's desire to put an end to its military presence in the region, we can conclude that in the following years, Turkish-American relations in the Middle East will be based more on economic cooperation than military or security issues.

The Deauville Partnership

Trade relations between Turkey and the US reached record heights in 2011. The volume of foreign trade was 20 billion dollars in 2011, an increase over 15,8 billion USD in 2010. Of course, the figures are low compared to Turkey's 37 billion USD of foreign trade with Germany and 30 billion USD with Russia.³⁷ It is possible that a free trade agreement could be signed between Turkey and USA. The Arab uprisings will also probably have a positive impact on the economic relations between the two countries. The two countries' development agencies, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) and the United States Agency for Development (USAID), started to cooperate in order to support economic development in Middle Eastern and North African countries. In addition, Turkish companies have already begun investing intensively in the region and they have become part of important business networks; partnerships among Turkish and American companies in the Middle East/North African region are a possibility in the near future. In fact, this partnership prospect is supported by both the Democratic and Republican parties.³⁸ On May 8th, the Turkey-United States Economic Partnership Commission met in Ankara and decided, in effect, that Turkey and the US invest in cooperation in energy and infrastructure in Arab countries in transition from political unrest and in Sub-Saharan Africa.³⁹

As a matter of fact, precautionary measures

against economic crisis in Arab countries shook by democratic revolts were discussed previously during the G8 meeting that took place in Deauville on May 26th-27th, 2011. Member countries discussed the details of a new plan similar to the Marshall Plan that was put into effect after World War II. The new plan was called the "Deauville Partnership" and it aimed to provide political, economic and financial support to North African and Middle Eastern countries. Initially, Egypt and Tunisia, the two countries where the Arab democratic movement started, were the beneficiaries of the partnership agreement; later the scope of the plan would be extended to include other countries in the region.⁴⁰ In September 2011, the G8 Deauville Cooperation Platform Finance Ministers meeting took place in Marseille. Turkey was represented at the meeting by a delegation headed by Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan. At this point, we should remember that in June 2012, some Turkish newspapers reported that President Abdullah Gül had suggested a new Marshall Plan.⁴¹ The reports referenced an essay by President Abdullah Gül in which he presented his evaluations of the year 2012. In his essay, President Gül proposed that, in line with the Deauville decisions, developed countries should put into practice an extensive program of economic revival for those Arab countries in transition. Recently, Turkey loaned Tunisia 500 million USD and 250 million USD to Libya through Eximbank.⁴²

The Challenges of Being a Regional Actor

It seems that Turkey's ambition to become an indispensable actor in the Middle East and North Africa will position it to be a competitor with the EU in the region. It is already true that Turkey is an important economic power in the region. However, recent developments proved that Turkey is not yet a regional actor capable of shaping the course of politics. Evidently, being in the region does not automatically make a country a regional actor: Up until 2010, Turkish foreign policy makers remained independent in their efforts to become an important power in the region believing that they could achieve this goal without any outside assistance. But even acting alone, in the end they again had to turn to US, a player from outside the region, for cooperation...

We started this essay with a reference to American unilateralism, so then let us finish by saying that the global order must be established at all levels with a multilateral approach. Only then, wars may gradually cease and we may speak of peace. Obama seems to have already understood this truth with respect to the Middle Eastern question. In the cases of Davutoğlu and Erdoğan, the realization came with the Arab uprisings, and as a result, they had to resort to multilateral politics.

Footnotes

1. I would like to thank Alexandre Toumarkine for his comments and suggestions about this essay.
2. The Bush administration is also known for its withdrawal from the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), its violation of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and its refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol. For the Bush administration's policy of "new unilateralism," see Nilüfer Karacasulu Göksele, "From 'Multilateral Engagement' to 'New Unilateralism'," *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, vol.9, no.1, 2007.
3. As early as 1945, the US had more than 300 permanent overseas military bases in various parts of the world. Gregory McLaughlan, "World War II and the Transformation of the U.S. State: The Wartime Foundations of U.S. Hegemony", *Sociological Inquiry*, vol. 67, no.1, February 1997, p.10.
4. For USA's new conception of "national security" at the beginning of the Cold War, see Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman administration, and the Cold War*. California: Stanford University Press, 1992 and "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 89, no.2, April 1984, p. 346-381.
5. Michael P. Noonan, "Flaws Already Emerging in Obama's Second Term Foreign Policy," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 20, 2012. Leon E. Panetta has introduced USA's policy of "rebalancing" in his speech in The Shangri-La Dialogue conference held in Singapore in June 2012. He also stated that until 2020, USA would shift 60% of its military forces to Asia Pacific. See: <http://www.iiss.org/EasySiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=66624&type=full&service=Attachment>
6. For a sound analysis of post-Cold War Turkey-NATO relations, see Serhat Güvenç ve Soli Özel, "Nato and Turkey in the post-Cold War world: between abandonment and entrapment, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 12:4, 2012, p. 540.
7. Henri J. Barkey, "The Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *TESEV Dış Politika Programı*, July 2012, p. 3.
8. Soli Özel, "Arap Baharı ile Ortadoğu'da değişen dış politika dengeleri," *Perspectives – Türkiye'den siyasi analiz ve yorum*, n.2, October 2012.
9. Turkey was one of the foremost countries providing military personnel to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for the purpose of securing order in Afghanistan, and it twice undertook both ISAF Command –once in 2003 and once in 2005- and the Kabul Regional Command.
10. Henri J. Barkey, *op.cit.*, p.3.
11. Bülent Alırıza and Bülent Aras, *U.S.-Turkish Relations. A Review at the Beginning of the Third Decade of the Post-Cold War Era*, SAM&CSIS, November 2012., p.7.
12. Tony Karon, "What Should the Middle East Expect from Obama's Second Term?," *Time*, November 7, 2012.
13. Serhat Güvenç, "Seçimler, Başkanlar ve Türkiye-Abd İlişkileri," *Görüş Dergisi*, TÜSİAD, n.76, November 2012, p. 52.
14. Serhat Güvenç and Soli Özel, *id.*
15. *Id.*, p.18.
16. Gallia Lindenstrauss, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: Embracing 'People's Power' ", *Papers IEMed/EuroMesCo*, n.14, 2012, p.22. *Ibid.*
17. Turkey's indecision is understandable when one considers the business agreements signed with Gaddafi and 20,000 Turkish citizens living in Libya. Before the uprisings, Turkish companies had construction contracts amounting to 23 million USD; at present the total value of contracts is 15 billion USD, "Eximbank to extend \$750 billion loans to Tunisia, Libya," *Today's Zaman*, January 24, 2012.
18. Gallia Lindenstrauss, *ibid.*
19. Hannah Allam and Jonathan S. Lanfday, "Obama's first foreign policy challenge will be replacing Hillary Clinton," *McClatchy Newspapers*, November 7, 2012.
20. Anadolu Ajansı, August 11, 2012.
21. Steven A. Cook, "Can Israel's New Coalition Fix Relations With Turkey?," *The Atlantic*, January 28, 2013.
22. Mete Çubukçu, "Türkiye / İran: Tarihsel rekabette kritik hamle", *Perspectives- Türkiye'den siyasi analiz ve yorum*, n.1, 2012.
23. In June 2011, DebkaFile, a website known for its proximity to the Israeli Secret Service Mossad, reported cooperation between the intelligence services of Turkey and Israel for the purpose of checking the rising tension in Syria; that Erdoğan and Obama, in their telephone interview on June 21st, discussed the improvement of relations between Israel and Turkey; that in line with these developments, the US and the European Union would increase sanctions on Syria; that Turkey would threaten Syria by concentrating troops at the border and that it would cooperate with Israel by sharing intelligence information. Moreover, it was claimed that in their interview, Erdoğan and Obama also talked about the possible mediation of Turkey in the negotiations between Hamas and El Fetih and that the efforts to improve Turkish-Israeli relations were tied to the condition that Hamas was included in the Palestine peace process. According to the report on the website, Moshe Yaalon, Deputy Prime Minister, came to Turkey in secret in June, and Erdogan, MIT Undersecretary Hakan Fidan and Yaloon had a meeting; and it was as a result of this agreement that Abbas and Meshal visited Turkey at the same time. See: "Debka: Turkey-Israel Cooperation Against Syria," *Sabah*, June 26, 2011. Ankara declared the report on the website untrue. Israel's mentioned compromised was made through the mediation of the USA while this magazine is being edited and, as a result, Israel issued an official apology concerning its intervention in Gaza Flotilla.
24. "Hamas'tan Obama'ya Çağrı," *USA Sabah*, March 1, 2013.
25. Tony Karon, *ibid.*
26. Saqeb Mueen, "Obama's Second Term: Realist or Radical?," *Huffington Post*, November 7, 2012, See: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/saqeb-mueen/obamas-second-term-four-more-years-us-election_b_2087015.html
27. P.J. Crowley, "Obama's Second-Term National Security To-Do List," *The Daily Beast*, November 13, 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/13/obama-s-second-term-national-security-to-do-list.html>
28. The Times reported that USA and its European allies have been giving military training to Syrian rebels in a military base in Jordan with the purpose of overcoming jihadist groups like the Al-Nusra Front. pls.see Sheera Frenkel and Roger Boyes, "US and allies are training rebels in fight against Assad," *The Times*, March 1, 2013.
29. Saqeb Mueen, *ibid.*
30. Tony Karon, *ibid.*
31. Mete Çubukçu, *ibid.*
32. Bayram Balcı, "Süriye krizi: Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu rüyasının sonu mu, " *Perspectives- Türkiye'den siyasi analiz ve yorum*, n.2, October 2012.
33. Gallia Lindenstrauss, *ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. Serhat Güvenç, *ibid.*, p.53.
36. For Turkey's foreign trade figures, see: "Ülkelere Göre Dış Ticaret Dengesi 2007-2011," *TÜİK Dış Ticaret İstatistikleri Yıllığı*, 2011, p.36-67.
37. "U.S.-Turkey Relations: A New Partnership," Madeleine K. Albright and Stephen J. Hadley, Chairs; Steven A. Cook, Project Director, Council on Foreign Relations, Independent Task Force Report n.69, May 2012; John McCain, "Transforming the U.S.-Turkey Alliance," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol.11, n.3, 2012.
38. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/05/189473.htm>
39. İktisadi Kalkınma Vakfı E-Bülteni, May 23-29, 2011.
40. "Arap ülkeleri için 'Marshall' formülü," January 9, 2013, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/arap-ulkeleri-icin-marshall-formulu/siyaset/siyasetdetay/09.01.2013/1653063/default.htm>
41. "Eximbank to extend \$750 million in loans to Tunisia, Libya," *Today's Zaman*, January 24, 2012.
42. "Eximbank to extend \$750 million in loans to Tunisia, Libya," *Today's Zaman*, January 24, 2012.

HUMAN LANDSCAPE

Taner Öngür: The long and winding road

In Kadıköy, the select district of Istanbul's Anatolian side, stairs to the subway descend almost abruptly from the pier. Walking a few steps past the stairs, you will be first welcomed by Starbucks. If you turn right and walk along, you will stumble upon the arcade named Akmar Pasajı, with no trace of its popularity in the '90s. Once upon a time this was the gathering place for the heavy metalheads. When the heavy metal fashion took on among the urban youth, who were in their childhood and teenage years when the neoliberal Motherland Party (ANAP) took over the administration from the military junta that ruled the country from 1980 to 1983, Akmar Arcade was chosen as their gathering place.

There were record shops, black t-shirt shops, a few bookstores and "cafés" that used to sell tea and coffee to the metalheads who would complain about not being able to walk in the streets without being disturbed because of their long hair. As TV channels and newspapers kept on publishing superficial researches and interviews about these new youth trends and many more about "Satanism", the long-haired metalheads also voiced their complaints: "We have long hair, alright, but we are from good families. We are good students. We love our state. Do not treat us badly just because we have long hair. We are also Turks!" It is hard to believe but for the majority of these kids, the first rock album released in Turkey was Pentagram's "Trail Blazer" which "came to the market" with great fanfare.

Maybe they were completely unaware of the man about to turn 40 getting off a plane at Yeşilköy, the generation he represented or the music he made, but soon enough, Istanbul's rock community of the 90s would be divided into two upon the "provocation" of this old rock musician getting off the plane.

Leaving behind 16 stations, when you come out above-ground in Kartal, the last stop of the subway, you are welcomed by the combination of ugly buildings, factories and cargo vessels in the sea view ahead. The now 60 year-old rock musician who, in 1991, came back to Istanbul which he left in 1980, greets me with a smile at the entrance of his flat in the four storey building and asks if it has been easy to find the place. He laughs at my joke, "This neighborhood does not look like those where the rock stars live" and replies, "Well brother, this place is for the working class".

Taner Öngür was born in 1949 in Fatih, the old

neighborhood of Istanbul now known for its conservatism, as the second son of a family of Bosnian origin, whose father was a foreman in a textile factory. He did not like school. He did not like at all the textile workshop where he was placed after he failed two successive years at the secondary school. One day, as he saw a picture in Hürriyet Newspaper of four men with weird hairstyles, posing to the camera while jumping in the air, he felt something which he could not explain by words then: Nothing would be the same again! He was a very lucky individual as he discovered the meaning of life at such an early age when he listened to "Please Please Me" of the Beatles with three of his friends from the neighborhood on a record player: The meaning of life was to create sounds similar to those he was listening from that record!

First anti-nuclear rock festival

Taner Öngür was one of the pioneers of the Anatolian Rock movement, a fusion of local traditional tunes with rock and roll, which maintained its effect from the mid '60s until the '80s. With his band, Moğollar, he traveled to the remotest villages of Turkey and, despite the unfamiliar hippie image, was welcomed with screams, just like in the Beatles concerts of those years in the West. When he took off in 1980, for an adventure of Germany that was to last 12 years, he had a clear destination. He settled in an occupied house in Frankfurt where he lived with other punks, anarchists and surviving hippies. After his return in 1992, the young people of this society, whose memories were erased during the junta period, heard his name for the first time in a festival. It was the Anti-Nuclear Rock Fest. The festival was against the nuclear power plant planned to be built in Mersin-Akkuyu, and it had an interesting condition, only the bands which did not prefer to sing in English had been invited. Some people criticized the condition as being a "nationalist" attitude. For the majority of the heavy metal community, who already defined themselves as nationalists, the issue was simpler: "This music can only be made in English!"

He laughs again and says "Of course I did not have a nationalist attitude". "Back then everybody thought that heavy metal was music for the idiots. It was macho, discriminatory and nationalist... I tried to explain them that real songs could only be written if musicians made their music in their own language. Only then, the man on the street would listen to them. Anyhow, there was a band singing



Taner Öngür

Öngür was born in 1949 in Istanbul's Fatih district where he finished the Vefa High School. His musical journey which began in the format of the bygone Direklerarası theaters in Şehzadebaşı that took the shape of cinema films in the 1960's went on with live music performances preceding movie showings, the epochs of rock'n'roll and beat, and his 1969 union with the band Moğollar which took him all the way to the present.



Serkan Seymen

Born in İzmir in 1971. A graduate of the Bornova Anadolu Lycée. Has been a reporter since 1994. Writes for the magazines Express, Bir+Bir and GQ.

in Armenian in that fest and nobody asked them why they did not sing in Turkish.”

As a permanent member of Moğollar, the legendary band of the history of Turkish rock and as a musician who spent 1970s alongside stars such as Erkin Koray, Cem Karaca and Barış Manço, he does not feel like a rock star today: “Today, nobody in Nişantaşı or Etiler would see me as a rock star. Neither do I. I do not pursue such a life, that’s why it would be ridiculous if I felt that way. But for my landlord who lives in the same building, a typical guy from the Black Sea region, I am a rock star because in 1971, at the age of 16, he lost his mind and tore off his clothes as we were playing on the stage of a summer theatre. Whenever we chat, he reminds me of that day. What people failed to understand in the ‘90s was the fact that rock is the music of the working class. Once you get this, you will be able to see the rock and roll in your own folk music too.”

Solar powered music

This building in Kartal, a classic example of “Laz architecture”, where families from the Black Sea region live, now hosts small and large solar panels in the balcony and the living room of the top floor. In recent years, Taner Öngür has been “obsessed” with the necessity of alternative energy resources to be part of the lives of ordinary people.

We cannot achieve anything just by showing constant objection. While we ask people to be against nuclear energy, oil and hydroelectric power plants, we must show them other possibilities. I try to do it in my humble way. One day it occurred to me that it was meaningless to throw anti-nuclear concerts powered by big generators burning diesel

fuel. That is why I am obsessed with setting up a sound system working with solar power only.”

Taner Öngür and his band Awam (The Commons), composed of members who have recently began their music career, are now getting ready to play on the streets, in the parks and squares with their musical instruments and solar panels. They

“While we ask people to be against nuclear energy, oil and hydroelectric power plants, we must show them other possibilities. I try to do it in my humble way. One day it occurred to me that it was meaningless to throw anti-nuclear concerts powered by big generators burning diesel fuel. That is why I am obsessed with setting up a sound system working with solar power only.”

have had several trials in their neighborhood, Kartal, and they explain the people curiously examining the panels that it is possible to generate power at home, at much cheaper costs and without being obliged to the energy monopolies. “There are still some idiots in this country who say that we need nuclear power plants. However, the plant is right over there, on top of our heads” he says.

As I go back to where I began my 16 stop subway journey and come out above-ground again, another one of the divine coincidences in life amazes me. I hear music coming from a music store. Pentagram sings from Aşık Veysel: “I’m on a long and winding road, I roll on day and night, day and night...”

BAROMETER

“Terrorists” created by the law

Freedom of thought and freedom of expression are two of the most important democratic rights and freedoms. It is universally accepted that they cannot be restricted unless there is legitimate and justifiable reason to do so. Laws that restrict freedom of expression must be comprehensible and accessible to all citizens, and any such restrictions must be made in accordance with the principles of a democratic society.¹ The right to freedom of expression upholds not only one's right to make one's opinions public, but also the rights of others to have access to information. The universal principles that guarantee the right to freedom of expression protect one's right to express not only those thoughts that are deemed acceptable and harmless, but also those that might be unsettling or shocking, whereas antidemocratic² thoughts expressing a call for violence, armed action or racist views remain outside the accepted sphere of freedom of expression.

In Turkey, on one hand, there are restrictions on freedom of expression that are contrary to the principles of democratic society; but on the other hand, the “terror” in Anti-Terror Law (ATL) is not clearly defined and related articles in the law remain ambiguous and open to interpretation. As a result, freedom of association, freedom of religion and conscience, freedom of assembly and demonstration, the right to a fair trial and the right to political participation do not exist in practice.

Despite proposals to amend the anti-terror law so that regulations comply with universal human rights standards and ensure freedom of expression, Turkish governments have only been passing partial amendments in the law instead of developing policies that would fix the problem entirely. The current state of affairs is the result of the administrators' makeshift attitude that sets out to deal with only the tip of the iceberg, as well as the tendency of the police force and judicial bodies to interpret the law to the detriment of freedoms.

In 2012, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) convicted Turkey 123 times; eight of these involved violations of the right to freedom of expression. To date, a total of 450 appeals have been filed to the ECHR for violations of the right to freedom of expression. Most of these files involve persons who are accused of “praising a crime or criminal” and “doing terrorist propaganda.”

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), there are currently 76 journalists imprisoned in Turkey. However, it is impossible to determine the number of journalists who are being tried without being formally charged. Ultimately, these prosecutions do not only limit freedom of press and freedom of expression, but also the right of all individuals in society to be informed.

At present, eight members of parliament from various political parties are imprisoned. Since 2009, twenty-six

mayors have been arrested and tried for political crimes and offenses. Currently there are approximately 250 provincial council members and city council members being tried under arrest. Although the exact number is unknown, the number of students being tried under arrest is estimated to be around 800. No data is available as to the number of students who are tried without being formally charged.

As part of a recent anti-terror investigation, lawyers –all members or administrators of the Contemporary Lawyers' Association (Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği)– were taken into custody; nine lawyers were ultimately arrested. There are now 54 lawyers who have been accused of and are being tried for “being a member of a terrorist organization” and for “aiding and abetting.”

The figures mentioned in this article are taken from open public sources and they are meant only to give a general idea of the current situation. However, it must also be noted that the problem of freedom of expression in Turkey has many dimensions and the account given here represents only a part of the picture. To make sense of the whole picture, one must also take into account the following facts: Judicial bodies continue to ground their verdicts on double standards and thus provide de facto protection to those who express racist opinions or opinions with racist undertones are not subject to any effective investigation, and the party in political power is tolerant of the expression of such opinion; and the legislative body remains unwilling to take any action to create effective legal protection for freedom of expression.

Up until today, neither the prime minister, the minister of justice nor any other public authority has offered any other explanation to those who have spoken critically of these human rights violations except for this standard explanation: “they are not..., they are terrorists.” Authorities see no harm in using and reusing this phrase, adjusting it to the specifics of the situation, and accusing journalists, lawyers, students, administrative staff of political parties or non-governmental organizations of being terrorists. Perhaps we should be asking the prime minister and the minister of justice whether there is anyone who could not be considered a terrorist.



Nejat Taştan

Born in Adıyaman in 1964, Taştan has been involved in the human rights movement since 1986. He took part in the preparation of the Independent Election Platform's Observation Report on the Parliamentary General Elections on 12 June 2011 (author), the Education and Employment Status of the Handicapped in Turkey, Report on the Watch over Racial and Ethnicity-based Discrimination in Turkey and the Report on the Discrimination and Rights Violations against the Handicapped in Turkey (joint publication with ESHİD Publishing). He is a member of İHD, TIHV, and ESHİD.

Footnotes

1. Article 10 of the European Convention on Human rights as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights. The Johannesburg Principles, is a document -though a non-binding one- that was developed in 1995 by experts on human rights, international law and national security that emphasize similar principles with respect to the restriction of freedom of expression.
2. Belief in individual and social progress forms the basis of the right to freedom of expression, and this right is the cornerstone of democratic society. In this respect, all kinds of thoughts that aim to destroy the principles of democratic society qualify as anti-democratic.

Germany's energy transition

Turkey and Germany's energy related problems are very much alike. Both countries are dependent on energy imports, primarily on oil and gas with dependency rates being above 60 percent for Germany and 70 percent for Turkey. However, these two countries have very different takes on how to deal with their serious energy problem. While Germany chose to gradually abandon fossil fuel and nuclear energy and embrace renewable energy and energy efficiency, Turkey chose to act quite the opposite and decided to advance its nuclear program and turned to coal.

Heinrich Böll Stiftung Turkey Office organized a field trip to Germany and invited nine print journalists from Turkey to better understand the differences between the energy policies of these two countries and to deal with the disinformation governing the issue of Germany's energy transition. We spoke with scientists, politicians, and private sector and civil society representatives on "Energiewende", that is energy transition, and visited the Federal Ministries for the Environment, Economy and Foreign Affairs. On the last two days of our field trip, we visited the Gorleben interim nuclear waste storage as well as the final disposal site –the salt mine – which is not functioning due to public pressure. All through the trip, we paid special attention to listening to opposing views on controversial topics. We discussed Germany's goals, its efforts to reach these goals and also some heated topics first hand with the Federal MPs on energy and environment of the three major political parties. The outputs of this trip including subsequent articles of the participating journalists were closely followed by the public.

The concept "Energiewende" is nothing new for Germany as it can often be found in the anti-nuclear arguments of the 1970s. The oil crisis in 1973 challenged the energy agenda and encouraged the very first legal regulations on energy efficiency, a crucial component of energy transition. Nuclear energy was highly discredited as a result of the Chernobyl disaster. The developments in wind and solar energy further proved that energy transition was not merely a fantasy of the anti-nuclear movement. The law which guaranteed purchase of all renewable energy sources was yet another important turning point. The unfair competitive advantage caused by secret subsidies for "pollution rights" of fossil fuel and nuclear energy was somewhat removed by this law. Renewable energy sources are encouraged for not polluting the environment or polluting it to a lesser degree than the other sources by a purchase guarantee that grants, for a certain period of time, a relatively high price for the electricity produced. Thus, this guarantee becomes one of the fundamental factors contributing to the R&D efforts and development of renewable energy sources. Today, in Germany, one fourth of electricity is produced from renewable energy sources and approximately

400 thousand people are employed in the renewable energy sector. What is even more interesting is that 40 percent of the renewable energy sources are owned by private people and 11 percent are owned by farmers which pretty much explains why energy transition is not favored by giant energy companies.

The discussion on energy transition in Germany has become even more heated following the decision to abandon nuclear energy after the nuclear accident in Fukushima. Right after the accident, Germany shut down eight of its nuclear reactors and decided to close the nine remaining reactors by 2022. Public pressure played a very important role in the process that resulted in this decision. Germany, who chose to abandon nuclear energy, also continues to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions that causes climate change. Germany's guidelines for its energy transition by 2050 include the following:

- Reducing electricity consumption by 25 percent (by means of saving and efficiency)
- Increasing the share of electricity production from renewable sources up to 80 percent
- Reducing energy consumption by 50 percent (by means of saving and efficiency)
- Increasing energy consumption from renewable sources up to 60 percent
- Reducing final energy consumption in transportation by 40 percent
- Reducing heating energy consumption in buildings by 80 percent
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent below 1990 levels

The information gathered from the interviews conducted during the field trip in Germany is not limited to what has been mentioned above. In Turkey, it is often argued that the increased use of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency to prevent climate change are obstacles to growth. Yet, Germany's experience since 1991 proves this assumption wrong. Between 1991-2011, gross domestic product of Germany has increased by 27 percent and greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 24 percent. This clearly shows that economic growth and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions are not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, each country operates under different circumstances as it was frequently underlined by the government officials we visited. If Turkey is to undertake an energy transition, there is no doubt that Turkey itself will be the one to decide how to realize this transition. I think that the disinformation on renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate change are the main obstacles to such a transition similar to the one in Germany. We hope that this field trip to Germany contributes to overcoming these obstacles.

Özgür Gürbüz

One More Step to Peace with the Youth

In 2002, as Toplum Gönüllüleri (TOG - Community Volunteers), we started out with the vision to realize social peace, solidarity and change under the leadership of the youth.

In line with this vision;

- We aim to realize various social services projects under the leadership of the youth and guidance of the adults,
- To achieve the guidance and support of adult volunteers who believe in the synergy that the youth may create and are able to make a material and immaterial investment for a social purpose,
- To provide contribution to the creation of a self-confident, entrepreneurial and sensitive youth that is able to generate solutions for the problems around them,
- To raise awareness in the society about social responsibility.

We continue our efforts to transform the energy of the youth to social benefit on the path that we set out to “change, not criticize”.

The young people who are Community Volunteers provide social benefit with the social responsibility projects they developed related to the shortcomings and/or problems they identified in their respective cities; thus, they also achieve personal development.

In the year 2012, the Community Volunteers realized 989 local, national and international social responsibility projects/events/campaigns with 40,295 young volunteers from all over Turkey and it assures the participation of local people by also mobilizing the local resources. Young Community Volunteers acting in 123 youth groups or university communities/clubs in 71 cities of Turkey provided services for 336,111 people in the year 2012 in various fields.

In addition to the social responsibility activities and projects they realize in their cities and localities, the young Community Volunteers achieve mutual and permanent learning via mobility activities -namely, by establishing contacts with their peers, other individuals in the society, the others -, as well.

As part of these efforts, we organize reunions under the title “Youth Council” in various cities of Turkey where young fellows who act as volunteers come together. The Youth Council is a platform to which the young people in the university clubs/communities/groups in contact with the Community Volunteers Foundation send a female and a male representative they elected, where discussions are held, ideas are exchanged and good practices are shared for 3-4 days as hosted by the young people at a university.

The 21st edition of Youth Council organized by the Community Volunteers was held in Diyarbakır on 7–10, February. At the Youth Council, the young people exchanged their ideas during panels, sym-

posia, workshops and forums on “Social Peace”, the primary preoccupation and *raison d'être* of the Community Volunteers, and Community Volunteers Foundation.

Pursuing its activities for 10 years to provide contribution to the existence and development of a more democratic society and to be part of the social peace with the social participation of the youth, the Community Volunteers added the “Social Peace Panel” to the program of the Youth Council it organizes twice a year in such a way that it paved the ground for different stakeholders and people with ideas to come together to share their ideas on the media, religion, politics, law, civil society and co-habitation and to create platforms where the young people can share their ideas and intellectually nourish themselves.

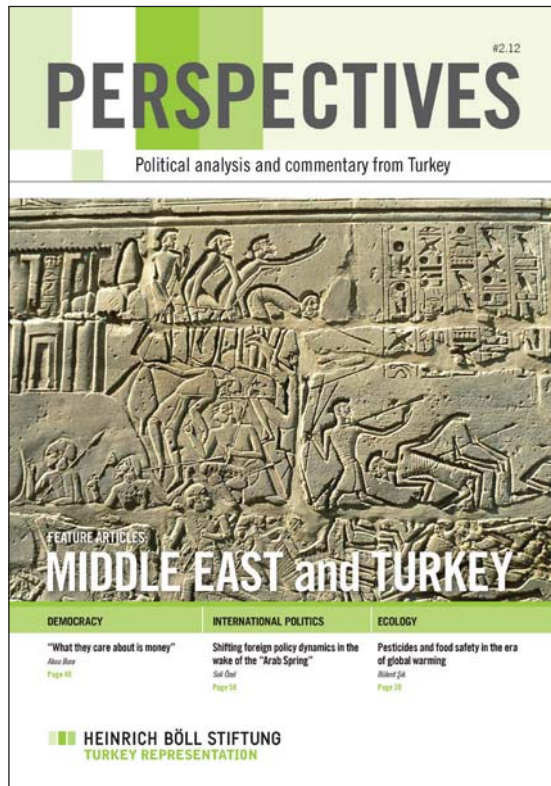
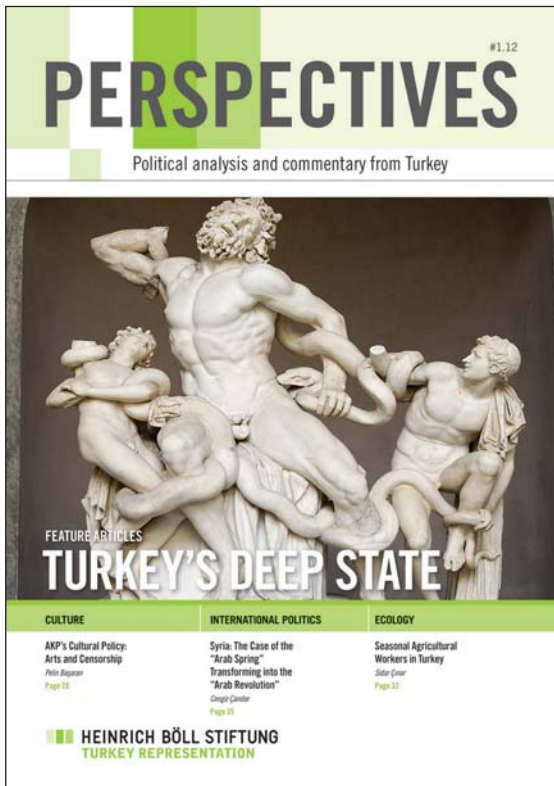
At the same time, the outputs of the Gender Mainstreaming effort of the Community Volunteers Foundation were shared during the Gender - Female Participation Symposium. The participants talked about what was done and what to be done for Female Participation in all bodies of the Community Volunteers. The fact that the young people who provide contribution to the symposium with their proposals think about the causality of the subject and reach some conclusions will enable them to see their current and future activities from the perspective of Social Gender.

The Community Volunteers Foundation attaches great importance to the participation of young people in the decision-making mechanisms, democratic processes and democratic representation and it has 8 young people in its Board with 4 of them being full members and 4 reserve members. At the 21st Youth Council, young people from 98 TOG (Community Volunteers) organizations were involved in a platform where they could have an active role in the management of the foundation by specifying their peers who were presumptive nominees for the Board.


Conducting its activities with the local participation, cooperation among the public, private sectors and the civil society, the Community Volunteers conducted an effort geared towards these cooperation activities in the realization of the 21st Youth Council. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to our stakeholders for supporting the organization of the 21st Youth Council and especially to Heinrich Böll Stiftung for their confidence in and support for the youth.

**Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı
(Community Volunteers Foundation) – www.tog.org.tr
TOG Gençlik Konseyi (Community Volunteers Youth Council) – www.togkonseyi.net**

21. Gençlik Konseyi Ön Kitapçığı (Preliminary Booklet for the 21st Youth Council) – <http://tr.scribd.com/doc/124011198/21-Genclik-Konseyi-On-Kitapcik>



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