

Non-Governmental Organizations in the 2013-2015 Resolution Process

Cuma ÇİÇEK



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- *Ulus, Din, Sınıf: Türkiye'de Kürt Mutabakatının İnşası [Nation, Religion, Class: Building Kurdish Consensus in Turkey]* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2015).
- *Zımanek Çima Tê Qedexkirin: Politikayên Zimanî û Rewşa Kurdî li Tirkîyeyê [Why is a Language Prohibited: Language Policies and the Situation of the Kurdish in Turkey]* (İstanbul: Peywend Publications, 2013).
- *Küreselleşme ve Yerel Demokrasi: Liberal Katılımın Söyleminin Sınırları & Diyarbakır Örneği [Globalization and Local Democracy: Limits of Liberal Discourse on Participation & Diyarbakir Case]* (İstanbul: Vate Publications, 2011).
- *Demokratikleşme Süreçlerinde Sivil Toplum Örgütleri: Bir Alan Araştırması Örneği Olarak Güneydoğu [Civil Society Organizations in the Process of Democratization: Southeast as a Case Study]* (İstanbul: Society and Legal Research Foundation Publications, 2004).

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PREFACE

Turkey is going through a painful and chaotic process. With the termination of the Resolution Process, which was initiated in order to terminate the Kurdish conflict, develop democratic solution ground in first days of 2013, we lost a lot and keep losing. In the Resolution Process, we have gained and learned a lot of things that are better understood today. Today we are very far from solution. It is now difficult to reach peace. There were new political, social, psychological problems. The social atmosphere of speaking the word of peace has weakened.

A series of evaluations of political actors and the primary parties to the problem have been made over the past two years and are being made, such as whose what kind of wrongs and wrong politics led this point and who sabotaged The Resolution Process by what purpose. For the first time, a research called “Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Resolution Process” was carried out, apart from political actors. The results of field work have been reported.

This report is, in a sense, a continuation of the report by the Turkish Peace Assembly on April 2015, entitled “Towards The Solution: Evaluation of Possibilities, Opportunities and Problems” (http://barisvakfi.org/tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61&Itemid=40) and of the report entitled “Resolution Process from Dolmabahçe to Nowadays: Understanding Failure and Finding a New Way” (<http://www.barisvakfi.org/tr/nisan.pdf>) published as the first activity of our foundation in April 2016.

The first report covers the reasons why The Resolution Process broke into crisis and the possibilities of emerging from the crisis, and the second report covers the possibilities of finding a new path and what happened after the termination of the Resolution Process.

With this latest work, it was aimed to analyse the positions and capacities of NGOs working on conflict resolution and peace-building in the period of 2013-2015 on the subject of terminating the conflicts in the Kurdish issue and firstly to make proposals for the work of NGOs. It is also aimed to contribute to Non-Governmental Organizations’ new peace researches in a more organized and effective manner.

In the report, the tasks and responsibilities awaiting us are reminded clearly. The report is a kind of route map of non-governmental organizations. This report is supplementing the energy that will improve the hopes of peace.

We thank separately to executive of our project Cuma iek (Paris International Research Center), members of Project Advisory Board Associate Professor Alev Erkilet, writer Etyen Macupyan, KONDA Manager Bekir Ađırdır, and Reha Ruhaviođlu and Veysi Altıntaş who did the field work for their valuable contribution to the report.

We hope that our work contributes to the pursuit of more effective and lasting peace and it will help us to make progress towards an equitable, free and democratic Turkey.

Board of Directors, Peace Foundation

December 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research aims to analyse NGOs' positions and capacities for ending conflicts in the Kurdish issue and building of social peace, and to set policy proposals for both civil society and political actors for possible negotiation and consensus processes. In this context, this evaluates the work of NGOs on conflict resolution and social peace-building at the 2013-2015 Resolution Process. This report analyses the place and the role of the NGOs by their own point of view concerning both the failed Resolution Process and a possible new negotiation process. Qualitative research technique was used as research method. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with a total of 45 NGOs and three experts in the cities of Diyarbakir, Van, Istanbul and Ankara between 15 May and 30 July 2017.

Studies on conflict resolution and social peace building show that NGOs can play an important role in such processes. In most cases, the termination of conflicts and the reestablishment of social peace that are causing considerable destruction in many areas, especially in political, economic, social, cultural, spatial areas, are too difficult to achieve with the negotiations between the conflicting parties alone. In this sense, the restoration of social peace requires a multi-level, multi-actor social relationship and negotiation. Studies on the role of NGOs in the context of social consensus highlight the seven functions of these organizations: (1) protection of citizens, (2) monitoring and accountability, (3) advocacy and public communication, (4) intra-group socialization and culture of peace, (5) conflict-sensitive social cohesion, (6) mediation and facilitation, and (7) direct service providing.

Participants have a common view on the limitations of civil society in Turkey and the weakness of civil society actors. Civil society's remaining distant to the Kurdish issue, the tradition of "strong state, weak civil society", political polarization between NGOs and civil society gains, regional disidence between NGOs, lack of institutional experience, weak democratic values and decision processes are the basic problems underlined. Initial attempts had been occurred in the field of civil society in Turkey especially in the 1990s. The 2000s can be noted as the period in which the field of civil society has expanded and the NGOs' activities have remarkably incarnated. Despite all of its borders, efforts in the field of civil society since the 1990s have created an indisputable accumulation in Turkey. The monitoring, accountability and developing public communication and advocacy on the axis of human rights and the socio-political mobilizations in the field of gender equality constitute the two main areas of conflict resolution and the remarkable accumulation of social peace building.

In the 2013-2015 Resolution Process, it is seen that NGOs took place at a limited level. NGOs mostly focus on the lobbying and advocacy activities that center the AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement in the Resolution Process. In addition, mediation and discussions of the Kurdish issue in the public arena have been partially carried out in the Resolution Process. Given the scope and difficulties of the Kurdish issue, the work outlined above shows that the participation and contribution of the NGOs to the Resolution Process is very limited. "Socialization of peace", "localization of peace", and the overcoming of political and regional ghettos with work focused on the coexistence of different social groups constitute "incomplete" or "unachievable" work that NGOs underline.

On the limited contribution of NGOs to the Resolution Process, NGO representatives point to the problems originating from the process parties, while underlining the problems caused by the civil society itself. It is noted that excluding NGOs from the process, making contacts with civil society as a mere formality, covered process for the public oversight, forcing NGOs' to take a side are main problems originating from Turkish State with AK Party and Main-stream Kurdish Movement. On the other hand, civilian political engagement and opponency, deprivation of strong social relations and support, non-preparation for conflict resolution and social peace, large-scale and country-wide effective NGOs' lack of support the process, CHP and its influential NGOs approach the process and lastly not developing of initiatives with the fear of not harming the process constitutes the main problems of the civil society originating from itself.

The civil society actors' contribution to the political solution of the Kurdish issue and the building of social peace is not determined by the attitude of the AK Party government and of the mainstream Kurdish movement or their institutional efforts alone. Alongside these efforts, the institutional partnerships of the NGOs are also important. Considering the findings of the field work, three main points about the relation between NGO-NGO can be underlined. First of these are political/ideological polarization between NGOs. Secondly, it is seen that the cooperation between the NGOs is largely sectoral/issue-based, and that there is limited cooperation between or along sectors/issues. Thirdly, it is observed that there is a regional division among NGOs. Although there are some initiatives in the Resolution Process for establishing bridges throughout Turkey, these initiatives were limited and dispersed without producing remarkable results.

In the context of NGO-political relations, it has been observed that in parallel with the political polarization in the social environment, there also

has been a sharp political polarization in the NGO environment. The NGOs have commonly preferred to stay in their “political neighbourhoods”. According to field work data, many NGOs have easily and frequently accessed dialogue with political actors in the Resolution Process. However, this comfort in dialogue does not demonstrate that there is a strong negotiation and cooperation between civil society and the political sphere in Turkey, but rather it refers to the existence of a “functional power-unity” of the NGOs and the politics in large measure. In a clearer sense, actors acting with similar motivations function that feed each other in different fields.

The NGO-academia relationship regarding the political solution of the Kurdish issue and the building of social peace is at a level that can be ignored in an institutional sense despite a remarkable revival in the Resolution Process. On the other hand, it is seen that a considerable level of partnership has been built among the NGOs and academics, especially those who are interested in the subject and work on it individually. Despite the very weak NGO-academy relationship, almost all participants agree that universities can play a critical role in the solution of the Kurdish issue.

In the field of NGO-media relations, most of the participants state that there is the dominance of state and political power over the media field as was the case for the civil society. Because of this relation of domination, mainstream media are state-oriented, state-centered just like the civil society. Therefore, the media is positioned according to the state’s position on the Kurdish issue. Throughout the Resolution Process, the media has supported this process in general, as the AK Party government has taken the issue into political turmoil and for the first time has been relatively open to the public. The mainstream media supporting the Resolution Process also opened up some space for NGOs working on this issue. However, with the AK Party government’s taking a negative attitude towards the process, the media has also renewed its position in line with this change. Especially after the July 15, 2016 military coup attempt, a large majority of the mainstream media came under government’s control and orbit.

There is a general consensus among NGOs that a process of negotiation and reconciliation towards the political solution of the Kurdish issue will resume. Most of the participants underline that there is no option other than the sitting at the negotiation table. Participants, however, argue that it is difficult to start a new negotiation and reconciliation process in the short term, given the current circumstances. The date or the turning point that is often reminded is the date of presidential elections in 2019. Accordingly, political turbulence in Turkey may end with the election. The Kurdish

issue can serve the purpose of the termination of this political turbulence or it can come into question after the end of political turbulence in the context of negotiation and reconciliation. Some participants underscored the role of political actors mainly for a new process, while others point out that rather than political actors, civil society actors must take part.

In view of the current obstacles and opportunities, participants are offering different suggestions that NGOs can do in a possible negotiation and reconciliation process. When the proposals presented by the participants are classified on the basis of the seven functions of NGOs in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the most prominent functions are as follows: “advocacy and public communication”, “conflict-sensitive social cohesion”, “mediation and facilitation”, “intra-group socialization and culture of peace”, “monitoring and accountability”, “direct service delivery”. It is seen that NGOs do not regard the function of “protection of citizens”, which is in seven functions of civil society, as a critical area.

INTRODUCTION

The new wave of violence on the Kurdish issue has been ongoing since July 2015. The Resolution Process 2013-2015, which created high hopes in the public opinion for the termination of the conflicts and the building of social peace, came to an end after the June 07, 2015 general elections. The conflicts that resumed with the end of July, unlike the past, have concentrated in urban areas and have caused socio-economic and spatial devastation in the last two years, which has resulted in a large number of casualties not comparable to the past. According to official figures, close to 11,000 people lost their lives within two years.¹ On the other hand, there were large-scale urban disasters in 11 provinces, including the historic cities of Diyarbakır-Sur and Şırnak-Cizre, and half a million-people had to leave their homes.² In this period, also the arrest of the deputies and mayors, the appointment of trustee to close to one hundred municipalities including Diyarbakır, Mardin and Van metropolitan municipalities, the closure of dozens of NGOs and media organizations sensitive to the Kurdish issue dealt big blow to the accumulation of both the civil society field and the political arena. Conflicts in the context of the Kurdish issue, the finding of a political solution to the problem, and the building of social peace are much more difficult today than before the Resolution Process.

While the Turkish society was not able to completely get out of the socio-political earthquake that was the result of urban conflicts that created very heavy consequences, it experienced a second political and social shock with the military coup attempt on 15 July 2016. For the first time in Turkey, a military takeover was hindered by civilian administration, with

1 According to the Anadolu Agency data, official news agency of the state, from July 2015 to January 2017, 823 security officers and 343 civilians lost their lives in domestic and international operations and about 10.000 members lost their lives or were severely injured. On the other hand, according to data from the Human Rights Association, between July 2015 and October 2017, life losses are around 3,000. Okur, Yunus, "Terör örgütü PKK'ya 557 günde ağır darbe," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 31.01.2017, <http://aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/teror-orgutu-pkkya-557-gunde-agir-darbe/738313>, access date: 11.05.2017.

2 United Nations, *Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey: July 2015-December 2016*, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, New York, February 2017, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf, access date: 26.04.2017.

citizens going out to the streets and resistance by political actors. This situation, which provided considerable opportunities not only to overcome the political polarization that has deepened in recent years and restore social peace, but also to deepen the democracy in Turkey, unfortunately, could not be assessed. Within the scope of the State of Emergency practices, which started after the coup attempt and extended for the fifth time after a 15 month-long period, the closure of hundreds of opposing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and media organizations, the arrest of more than one hundred journalists, exportation of opponent academics from universities, who are not related to the coup attempt, caused hard destruction in the Turkish democracy tradition, especially in terms of freedom of expression and freedom of association.

While there was a great earthquake in the socio-political area in Turkey, on the other side there were significant geopolitical breaks in the Kurdish issue. De facto autonomous Kurdish territory has expanded considerably geographically under the leadership of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the “sister organization” of the Kurdistan Communities Union (*Koma Civakên Kurdistanê* - KCK) in the Kurdish region located in the northern Syria. With the support of Russia and the US, Syrian Kurds have made significant progress both in the military and in the political arena. This has led to crises that have not been seen before, particularly in relations between Turkey and the United States. On the other hand, the search for independence in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, which has been operating in Iraq since 2003 as a semi-independent state, has increased in this period. On September 25, 2017, “Independence Referendum” was held in Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah provinces within the IKR and in disputed territories such as Kirkuk, despite the demands of “cancellation” and “postponement” from global powers like USA and Russia and neighbouring countries such as Turkey and Iran. 72% of the approximately 4.6 million voters participated in the referendum, and voted “Yes” with a ratio of 92.73%.³

The dynamics summarized above show that we have come to an important distinction as a society in the context of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. In a cross-border context, in a period where the Kurdish space⁴ is losing and becoming fragile, Turkey will either become a peaceful and stable island of democracy in a place that going down into the ambiguities which increasing day by day, or it will continue to remain a part of

3 Rudaw, “Resmi Sonuç – Yüzde 92.73 Evet”, 27.09.2017, <http://www.rudaw.net/turkish/kurdistan/270920177>, access date: 12.10.2017

4 I borrow the concepts of “Kurdish space” (espace kurde) or “Kurdish area” (sphere kurde) from Jean-François Pérouse. These concepts draw attention to the geographical, cultural, economic and political boundaries of the Kurdish mobility. Pérouse, Jean-François, “Reposer la ‘question kurde’,” in Semih Vaner (dir.) La Turquie, Paris, Fayard, 2005, 357-387

those ambiguities and conflicts which created by ambiguities itself.

Efforts to exclude the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the issue of violence from the agenda began at the beginning of the 1990s. After searching of weak dialogue in the 1990s, it is experienced three important dialogues: the İmralı Process in 1999-2004, the Oslo Process in 2008-2011, and finally the Resolution Process in 2013-2015. Nevertheless, despite almost 25 years of history, the end of conflicts and the building of social peace in Turkey has not been achieved.

The termination of violence and the construction of social peace are not possible through the dialogue and negotiation processes between the actors who are directly involved in the conflict alone, as shown by the internal conflicts taking place in different times and places in the world. Three dialogue processes in Turkey during the period of 1999-2015 confirm this situation. Dialogue and consensus processes between actors in different fields of society as well as conflicting actors are also important. The work of “construction of social peace” that aims to overcome the problems caused by conflicts in areas such as economic, social, cultural, political, psychological, plays a critical role in termination of domestic conflicts.

This research aims to analyze NGOs' positions and capacities for the end of conflicts in the context of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace, and to set policy proposals both for civil society and political actors for possible negotiation and consensus processes. In this context, it accounts for NGOs' work on conflict resolution and social peace-building in the 2013-2015 Resolution Process. This report analyzes the place and the role of the NGOs in the failed Resolution Process and for a possible new negotiation process, from their point of view.

Qualitative research technique was used as research method. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with a total of 45 NGO representatives and three experts in the cities of Diyarbakir, Van, Istanbul and Ankara between 15 May and 30 July 2017. Based on the seven basic functions of NGOs in conflict resolution and compromise construction, the NGOs that fulfilled any or a few of these functions in the Resolution Process were mainly preferred. In addition to conducting activities in the Resolution Process, it was tried to be discussed with NGOs that have different socio-political motivations and operate in different fields as much as possible. In order to reflect the voice of the Kurdish space where the conflicts intensified, Diyarbakir and Van cities, which have regional metropolitan area characteristics, were selected. In order to understand the general tendency in the scale of Turkey, Istanbul and Ankara were preferred as the

two cities where civil society activities intensified and have capacity to influence at the country scale.

The research results were classified under six sections. In the first part, a theoretical framework is presented about the role of NGOs in the termination of intra-state conflicts and consensus-building processes. In the second part, the role of NGOs in the dialogue and consensus struggles that have been going on since the 1990s are discussed. In this context, a profile of NGOs working on the settlement of conflicts originating from the Kurdish issue in Turkey and the construction of social peace is being build up. In the third part, the role of NGOs in the Resolution Process is analyzed directly. Topic of this chapter is what NGOs did do, could not do during the Resolution Process, and dynamics that limited their participation in the process. In the fourth part, the institutional partnerships of the NGOs are discussed. In this context, the relations of NGOs with politics, academia and media institutions are examined. In the fifth part, in the NGOs' representatives' point of view, the main obstacles and opportunities for a new negotiation and reconciliation process to put an end the conflict and solve the Kurdish issue, are discussed. In the final part, the context in which NGOs are located is examined, while policy recommendations are presented on the role of the NGOs and what the political actors should do to enable NGOs to play their roles more effectively when returning to negotiations.

1. CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACE-BUILDING: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conflict resolution and work on social peace-building show that NGOs can play an important role in such processes.⁵ In most cases, the termination of conflicts and the reconstruction of social peace that causes destruction in many areas, especially in political, economic, social, cultural, spatial areas, are too difficult to achieve with the negotiations between the conflicting parties alone. The elimination of conflicts and the resulting conflicts that lead to many different and complex problems in the field requires a multidimensional and multi-actor social relationship, negotiation, reconciliation.

1.1. Layers of Negotiation Processes

JP Lederach, one of the prominent figures in conflict resolution and social peace-building issue, in his work entitled *Building Peace: Sustainable Consensus in Divided Societies*,⁶ groups the negotiation processes and actors for peace construction on three levels: Top leadership, middle-range leadership and grassroots leadership. Accordingly, senior negotiations within top leadership take place among military, political or religious leaders with high visibility. These negotiations, which take place at a high level, deal mainly with issues such as ceasefire and are governed by a single mediator with a high level of visibility. Negotiations in middle-range leadership include respected leaders in various sectors, ethnic or religious leaders, academics, intellectuals and civil society leaders. Negotiation at this level consists of activities such as problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution trainings, peace commissions, internal or sub-commission studies. Finally, the grassroots leadership consists of leaders at the local level, NGO leaders, opinion leaders, managers of public service organiza

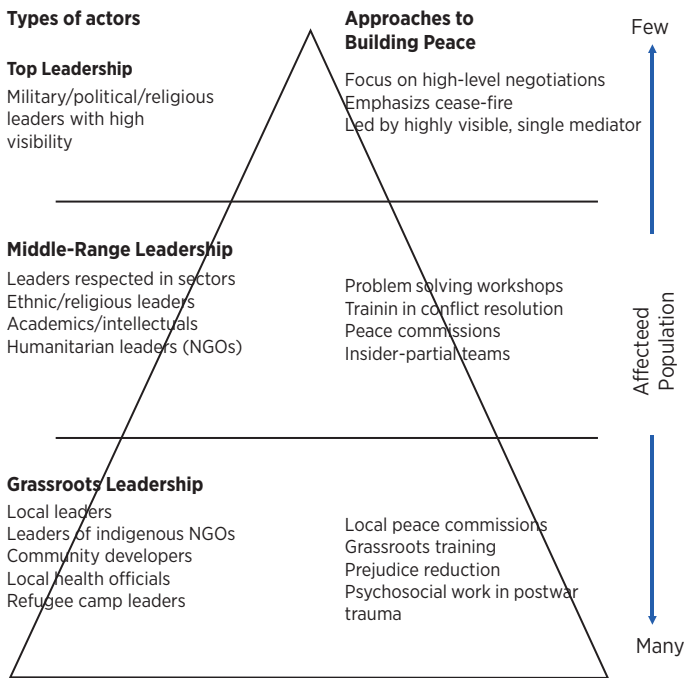
⁵ Daşlı Güneş, Alici, Nisan ve Flader, Ulrike, *Kadınların Barış Mücadelesinde Dünya Deneyimleri: Sırbistan, Kosova, Sri Lanka ve Suriye*, Ankara: DEMOS Research Center for Peace Democracy and Alternative Politics, 2017; Çelik, A. Betül "Etnik Çatışmaların Çözümünde Siyaset Bilimi ve Uyuşmazlık Çözümü Yaklaşımları," in, F. Nimet Beriker (ed.), *Çatışmadan Uzlaşmaya: Kuramlar, Süreçler ve Uygulamalar*, İstanbul, İstanbul Bilgi University Publications, 2010, 163-188.

⁶ Lederach, John Paul, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999, p. 39.

tions such as the field of education and health. Figure 01 shows this model developed by Lederach.

Lederach’s model provides a static framework that does not allow for dynamic relationships between actors at all three levels, but it is important that conflict resolution and social peace construction work is a very scaled and multi-actor process. In addition, the model demonstrates that community involvement and negotiations, particularly in middle-range and grassroots leadership areas, are as important as peace studies in the area of top leadership, taking into account the size of the affected population at each scale. In this sense, it emphasizes the importance of actors and their roles at the intermediate and societal level in conflict resolution and social peace construction work.

Figure 01: Actors and Approaches to Peace-Building



Reference: Lederach, John Paul, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999, p. 39.

The removal of the fears and threats that emerged during the conflict period, the removal of the social polarization of the different social groups, in short, the construction of “social peace” depends on the socialization of conflict resolution and consensus process⁷ and the establishment of social consensus⁸. As seen in this approach developed by Lederach, NGOs, which constitute one of the most critical actors of both middle-range and grassroots studies, play an important role in the process of social cohesion.

On the other hand, as demonstrated by recent experiences, NGOs can also play a critical role in top leadership. For example, conflicts between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front on the Bangsamoro region in the Philippines and those that have killed over 100,000 people for decades ended with the mediation of NGO-state mixed structure that consist of Britain, Japan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey states and also four international NGOs. Conciliation Resources based in London, Center for Humanitarian Dialogue based in Geneva, Muhammadiyah based in Indonesia and Sant’Egidio Community in Rome provided significant contributions to the Peace Process in Philippines.⁹ The International Contact Group, established in the Philippines, provided an important reference to peace studies with a mixed mechanism, in which state and non-state actors co-existed and were unprecedented¹⁰. In the process of monitoring the deal in the Philippines, NGOs played and still playing a critical role. There is also the Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Aid Foundation (IHH) from Turkey within the “Third-Party Monitoring Team” (TPMT), which is responsible for monitoring and reporting compliance with the peacekeeping steps taken by the parties after the agreement.¹¹ The TPMT is chaired by an impartial international actor and consists of local and international NGOs proposed by the state and the MILF¹².

In the Indonesian-Ache conflict like the Philippines-Bangsamoro, civil society has also played a critical role in high-level leadership. The 30-year con-

7 Çelik, A. Betül ve Mutluer, Nil, “Toplumsal Barış ve Barış Süreci’nin Toplumsallaşması,” in, Necmiye Alpay & Hakan Tahmaz (eds.), *Barış Açısını Savunmak. Çözüm Sürecinde Neler Oldu?*, İstanbul, Metis Publication House, 2015, 59-75.

8 Çelik, A. Betül, “Kürt Meselesini Dönüştürmede Toplumsal Mutabakat İhtiyacı: Neden, Nasıl, Kimle?,” in, Murat Akbaş (ed.), *Çatışma Çözümleri ve Barış*, İstanbul, İletişim, 2014, 131-152.

9 Democratic Progress Institute (DPI), *Briefing: International Contact Group for the Southern Philippines Peace Process*, Democratic Progress Institute, 2014; Söylemez, Hatice, *Moro: Uzak-doğu’da Bir Bağımsızlık Mücadelesi*, İstanbul, İHH İnsani ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2016, pp. 156-148.

10 Democratic Progress Institute (DPI), *Çatışma Çözümünde Filipinler Deneyimi’ Konulu Karşılaştırmalı Çalışma Ziyareti Raporu*, London, Democratic Progress Institute, 2016, p. 20.

11 DPI, *ibid.*, p. 40; Söylemez, *ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

12 DPI, *ibid.*, p. 40.

flicts in Indonesia have been reconciled as a result of five rounds of negotiations, led by Finnish former president Martti Ahtisaari, who is the mediator of the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), an international NGO.¹³ In addition, the principle of “No agreement has been reached on any issue without an agreement on every issue” developed by Ahtisaari in the negotiation process has become an important reference in peace studies. Ahtisaari make actual “the keeping the negotiation process alive” approach¹⁴ formulated as the “bicycle theory” by J. Powel, the representative of the Tony Blair government in the British-Northern Ireland peace process and directing the whole process at first hand. Accordingly, the irreconcilable differences between the positions of the parties can only be overcome by keeping the negotiation process alive, and this principle ensures this vitality.¹⁵

To sum up, NGOs play important roles in conflict resolution and peacekeeping at all three levels. What is more, the experiences that have emerged in the peace processes that NGOs have been involved in recent years, have begun to set an important reference for conflict resolution and compromise construction.

1.2. Seven Functions of Non-Governmental Organizations in Conflict Resolution

T. Paffenholz and C. Spurk, who work on the roles of NGOs in the context of social consensus, underline the seven functions of these organizations: (1) protection of citizens, (2) monitoring and accountability, (3) advocacy and public communication, (4) in-group socialization and peace culture, (5) conflict-sensitive social cohesion, (6) intermediation and facilitation, and (7) direct service delivery.¹⁶

13 Aspinall, Edward, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?* Policy Studies No. 20, Washington, D.C., East-West Center, 2005.

14 Powel, Jonathan, *Terörlümlerle Konuşmak: Silahlı Çatışmalar Nasıl Sona Erdirilir?*, İstanbul: Aykırı Publication, 2014.

15 Aspinall, *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

16 Paffenholz, Thania & Spurk, Christoph, “Civil Society, Civic Engagement, and Peacebuilding,” *The World Bank Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*, Paper No. 36, Washington, DC, October 2006; Paffenholz, Thania & Spurk, Christoph, “A Comprehensive Analytical Framework,” Thania Paffenholz (ed.) *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010, 65-76. Based on the seven basic functions of the NGOs, this work takes an in-depth look at Guatemala, Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Cyprus, Israel / Palestine, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Somalia and Nigeria cases. Ayşe Betül Çelik’s work on Turkey presents a remarkable analysis of the role of NGOs in terms of the end of conflicts in the context of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace, what functions are developed at what level and what needs to be done. See: Çelik A. Betül, “Turkey: The Kurdish Question and the Coercive State,” in Thania Paffenholz (Ed.), *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010, 153-179.

Protection of citizens includes protecting the lives, freedom and property of civilian citizens against state or non-state authorities during periods of conflict. Examples include the creation of peace zones where the entry of weapons is not allowed, the removal of landmines, the disarmament of child soldiers and their participation in social life, in context of the protection of citizens.

The monitoring and accountability function involves monitoring and identifying the activities of actors in conflict, particularly the state apparatus and the government. For example, human rights violations stemming from the conflicts of NGOs and demanding the accountability of the responsible actors and related actors can be evaluated within this function.

Advocacy and public communication's role involves NGOs' work on disseminating information on conflicts to the public, taking into account the interests of the public and the interests of citizens, particularly the exclusionary groups. Campaigns aimed at raising social awareness of conflict-related child deaths, mass mobilization for the resumption of peace talks or lobbying activities for political actors can be shown as an example of this function.

In-group socialization and culture of peace function involves the work of NGOs to disseminate peace cultures among different social groups. This can include talking about interdisciplinary dialogue, eliminating discriminatory ideas from radio or television programs/series, street theaters, sporting events, music festivals or school books on cohabitation.

Conflict-sensitive social cohesion function involves efforts to create the infrastructure for the conflicting segments to live together as equal citizens in society. This function mainly focuses on common activities between old and new hostile groups. Examples of bringing together those who have opposing political ideas, bringing together the families of those who have lived their lives on different sides of the conflict, or peace attempts initiated by these families can be given as examples in the context of social cohesion.

Intermediation and facilitation the function of involves the development of dialogue at local and national level between the conflicting group and the state or between different social groups supporting the conflicting groups. For example, an attempt may be made to release detained soldiers, to talk with the actors of the ceasefire or non-violent days, or to participate as an observer in the process of dialogue and negotiation between the conflicting actors.

Finally, the *service delivery* function includes services offered to the victims in social, medical, legal, economic areas during or after conflict periods. Service delivery can be in a variety of areas, from providing food assistance or providing legal or psychological support to displaced persons, to providing health services directly to those who have been tortured.

Based on the theoretical framework summarized above, the following sections analyze the roles of NGOs in the end of conflicts stemming from the Kurdish issue and in the context of social consensus.

2. CIVIL SOCIETY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN TURKEY

Participants have a common view on the limitations of civil society in Turkey and the weakness of civil society actors. According to this, the first activation in the field of civil society in Turkey developed with the 1990's and the real revival was seen afterwards of 2000s. However, the problem of the Kurdish issue, which has a lifetime of almost two centuries, is very narrow in the field of civil society and the effect of NGOs lacking sufficient accumulation on the issue is rather limited.

2.1. Civil Society Profile

The first issue to be underlined in this regard is that the concept of “non-governmental organizations” is used in a very flexible and inclusive sense in Turkey. According to the NGOs with Data Report (*Verilerle Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları*) prepared by the Foundation for Life (YADA) in 2015, there are a total of 126,730 NGOs in Turkey, including 108,712 associations, 4,968 foundations, 118 trade unions, 83 public officials' unions, 20 employer unions, 4,794 chambers and 8,575 cooperatives.¹⁷ Discussions continue as to whether or not chambers, professional associations, trade unions, employers' organizations, cooperatives will be accepted as NGOs on criteria such as profit-making, state relations, volunteering. However, considering only associations and foundations, there are more than 113 thousands NGOs in Turkey. Considering the population of the country and the number of NGOs in the developed countries, it can be said that Turkey has made a limited development in the field of civil society, despite the fact that there are NGOs that we cannot underestimate in numerical sense.¹⁸

When NGOs are classified in terms of their functions, it seems that there are very few right-based NGOs working in Turkey. While fellow citizen NGOs for socialization and solidarity are 17.2%, NGOs focusing on making, sustaining and beautification activities mostly in the construction of places of worship are 11.4%, NGOs focused on hobby activities, socialization

¹⁷ Yaşama Dair Vakıf YADA, *Verilerle Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları*, Ankara, 2015, p. 42.

¹⁸ YADA, *ibid.*, p. 43.

and social networking are 10.7%, sports clubs are 8.4%, NGOs focusing on charity are 5.3%, the proportion of NGOs operating in the areas of raising awareness and advocacy, which is at the bottom, is limited to 3.3%.¹⁹ According to another classification made at the level of associations and foundations, 65% of the associations in Turkey constitute professional associations and solidarity associations, sports associations and associations that are engaged in realizing religious services²⁰. On the other hand, the proportion of organizations operating in the field of education, social welfare and social services in the 4,968 foundations is over 69% in total. The number of foundations working in the field of law, human rights and democracy is only 27 (0.54%).²¹

It should be noted that the vast majority of NGOs with limited numbers working in the field of advocacy or charity do not work in the field of Kurdish issues or social peace construction. In a statement by one participant, NGOs in Turkey constitute two main groups in the context of the Kurdish issue: those who strive for a political resolution to the Kurdish issue and those who see the issue as a matter of “terrorism”. Accordingly, the first group of NGOs is already a small minority. A participant in the field of NGOs explains this situation as follows: “The Kurdish issue in Turkey is a matter which does not concern non-governmental organizations other than human rights organizations. Or it is something that NGOs are not interested in.”

Indeed, looking at the scene, it is seen that there are a very limited number of NGOs focusing on the Kurdish issue in general, and conflict resolution and social peace construction in particular. A limited number of NGOs, especially in major cities like Istanbul and Ankara, operate in any of the seven functions outlined in the previous section in the context of conflict resolution and social peace-building in Turkey. The vast majority of NGOs interviewed in the four cities have a common perception that, in general, the NGOs working in the field of rights-based, in particular, in the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and in the construction of social peace constitute a very small minority. A rights-based NGO representative working on the humanitarian aid, both nationally and internationally, summarizes this in the following words:

There is a very active and very enormous civil society side. No matter what opinion. But I think that when we look at the number, structure of civil society, associations, foundations' total effort and civil society are weak in this

19 YADA, *ibid.*, p. 24.

20 YADA, *ibid.*, p. 50.

21 YADA, *ibid.*, p. 54.

issue and civil society referred the effort to both politics and governments and a process between parties. But I think that the efforts of the civil society in the existing effort are also very brave and highly valuable, and I think that the any progress that we made is because of that effort.

An NGO representative working in the field of conflict-sensitive social cohesion and trying to bring together conflicting groups indicates that the NGOs operating in the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and social peace-building are mostly in the left and the opposition segments whereas the NGOs established by the right and conservative communities approach the issue on a nation-state basis, within the framework of “one homeland”, “one flag”, “one nation”. According to the participant, one of the most important reasons why the Kurdish issue in Turkey is not politically resolved and social peace is not provided is that “right conservative groups’ civil society conception and working styles are not sufficient”. The majority of NGOs established with right, conservative references operate in a hierarchical order-command chain, away from the perspective of civil society. As reminded by a NGO representative having a rights-based approach in Ankara, it is important to note that NGOs with left-secular references have a certain sense of civil society, but also these institutions suffer from same problems. In particular, problems such as decentralization, weakness of democratic decision-making processes, and dependence on leadership in the leftist political tradition are also experienced in these institutions. The development of cooperation between NGOs moving with right and left references could have made progress on this issue. However, apart from limited initiatives, there has been no remarkable progress in this area in Turkey.

2.2. Strong State, Weak Civil Society

NGOs’ representatives comment that although there are over a hundred thousand associations and foundations, the existence of a very limited number of NGOs’ conducting activity in the field of political resolution of Kurdish issue and social peace construction shows that there is generally a weak civil society tradition in Turkey. The most important dynamic underlined here is the “strong state” tradition, which limits the field of civil society. According to this, on the one hand, the state tradition in Turkey is managing and/or directing this area in a big way while the civil society has a limited space on the other hand. At this point, it is underlined that there is a “state-centered” or “state-focused” civil society tradition in Turkey.

A NGO representative in Istanbul, who is a rights-based advocate, points out that the limitations of civil society and the inability of NGOs to be a repressive force over the state are not specific to the Kurdish issue alone,

and that this is seen in every area and gives a striking example:

I think civil society should sit down and reassure itself, its existence, why it exists, and its own mission. Because this issue is not just about the Kurdish issue. Disabled organizations do not have such a will. Is there such a civil society? If you enter the department of associations, there are 117 thousand active associations. There are at least 10 disabled associations on each city. At least 10. Look, the disabled people do not go out on the streets of this country, they cannot walk on the pavements. They cannot talk to the state and say “you made this law, why do not you still edit this?” “They do not. Know what I mean? This idleness is general.

Undoubtedly, weakness of democratic standards and democratic culture in Turkey is the most important dynamic that strengthen the state in the social area. It is quite difficult for NGOs to play an active role in a political culture where freedom of association and freedom of expression is limited, and the concept of “organization” is equivalent to “crime” and “fear”. However, as many participants have underlined, it is also important that NGOs take the initiative and turn into a play-making actor out of the boundaries of the playground established by the state and political institutions. Nonetheless, it seems that such an accumulation in the civilian field in Turkey is not enough. A NGO representative working with a rights-based approach, both nationally and internationally, summarizes the general position of NGOs on the Kurdish issue with the following words:

When you look at NGOs, associations and foundations activities in Turkey, you will see that this work is at a low level and that they are trying to exhibit a passive stance in this issue as much as possible. [...] But the Kurdish issue is a matter of every aspect. Ultimately, human life side, right to live must be the common issue of all associations. Human rights violations are a common issue for associations, foundations and everyone. Moreover, education, employment, many other problems in the region, or discrimination, approaches to ethnicity, all of them, many topics, are issues that, foundation, civil society can bring up to the agenda. But when the issue is related to that part or the Kurdish problem, they preferred to remain passive.

A NGO representative known for his/her conservative and Islam-referenced values goes a step further, stating that NGOs have not only taken a passive position on the Kurdish issue, that they have taken positions according to state and government, and summarizes the state’s dominance in civil society as follows:

When we came here, to the west... Their view of the South-eastern issue was always state-indexed. I mean, it is state-centered. First, the west looks

at the state; what does the state say, what is the position of the state, and they position themselves accordingly. [...] In Turkey, NGOs are subject to a control, subject to an audit. So be it. They are well audited from the material point of view. But they are also politically audited, non-governmental organizations. [...] Civilian formation is always indexed to government and the state in the political issues. But it is a full non-governmental organization in social and cultural matters. [...] For this, perhaps the most important magic value that can offer a solution in Turkey is non-governmental organizations. They have a voice from grassroots, and the more they are far from politics or the state, the more they can offer relaxed, free solutions. But we have a problem here. We need to accept this.

2.3. Civil Society and Political Engagements

In addition to “strong state, weak civil society” and civil society’s distance to the Kurdish issue, the third important problem underlined is the engagement between civil society and politics. In a field work in four cities, the majority of the participants underline this problem. According to this, the vast majority of associations active in the socio-political field in Turkey operate in the shadow of the political institution with various political engagements. These are “organizations that are given roles, not take roles with their free will”, the expression of an NGO representative in social field in Diyarbakir. An NGO representative, who provides direct services to the victims of the conflict, expresses this in the following words:

Let’s say there are a thousand non-governmental organizations in Diyarbakir. The three hundred of them are using the same words, doing the same analysis. The other three hundred of them, and rest of them are doing the same. That is, their contribution via their originality, analyses and observations, are very limited. So, they cannot be involved in the process. While their superior (political organization, party, etc.) is in the process, they do not have the opportunity to make much contribution to the process.

Field work in Van reveals that the problem is not specific to Diyarbakir, and that the engagement relationship between civil society and the political institution is a general problem. An NGO representative who chooses to stay away from political engagement in Van and faces various difficulties at the local level because of his position states that political engagement creates conflicts by digging in the ground of cooperation between NGOs:

In Turkey, unfortunately civil society is organized as a satellite of political formations and ideologies. So, everyone is creating their own civil society field. Therefore, [...] a civil society is not developing that will provide the right, impartial, objective participation of people in decision-making mechanisms. I still think this problem exists. Civil society, unfortunately, could not go beyond being a satellite turning around its power elites, and

everybody came to act with arguments of their political opinion or power elites. This removed their ability to act jointly. They have come to live in conflicts and rivalry as in between the political parties. And eventually it became so that civil society went one step ahead of the competition of political parties. They even engaged into very serious conflicts.

A rights-based NGO representative in Istanbul evaluates the fight against human rights for nearly 40 years and states that NGOs could not turn into an independent actor and they tried to “play the roles of other actors”: “We do not want to be an actor. We are trying to play roles that others, other actors give us. I do not mean this order-command chain either. [...] Some of them are creating approaches that intercept the idea of civil society expressing ideas on this issue. We are surrendering to that roles”.

Also, YADA report confirms this situation, which dominates all the different political traditions in Turkey. According to YADA’s data, the proportion of politically oriented NGOs in Turkey is 9.8%.²² YADA describes politically oriented NGOs as follows²³:

They are organizations that bring together people who share a certain worldview or belief, perform activities in the sharing or in the promotion and/or dissemination of what they shared. Such organizations often have organic or indirect ties to politics. Although these organizations are more passive expansionist, they often become parties to the main problems of Turkey and make statements, even actions and rallies to influence the public.

There is a second piece of data confirming the above data and referring to the social infrastructure of the current trend. Accordingly, NGOs formed by communities and groups constitute the vast majority of civil society in Turkey. In general, the NGOs that individuals come together with are very limited in number and they are at the bottom of the rankings because of their proportion.²⁴

The relationship of engagement between civil society and politics, in a more precise way, NGOs’ remaining in the orbit of the political institution prevents the development of a “gray area” in the field of civil society. Some participants in the field suggest that many NGOs in the region are

22 YADA, *ibid.*, p. 21

23 YADA, *ibid.*, p. 24.

24 YADA, *ibid.*, p. 25.

stuck between the AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement²⁵.

2.4. Civil Society Ghettos

The fourth problem area, underlined in the context of state, politics and civil society relations, is the polarization between NGOs and the tendency to stay in their own “neighbourhood”. It is seen that there is a kind of political ghettoization in civil society field in Turkey. This trend of ghettoization around political movements and parties throughout Turkey is emerging in the Kurdish geography on the axis of political polarization between the AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement.

This limits the cooperation and partnership between NGOs to a considerable extent in Turkey and makes it hard for actors to go beyond “their own neighborhoods”. Political resolution of the Kurdish issue and social polarization in the social arena are also taking place in the field of civil society. NGOs that are expected to play a role in overcoming social conflicts and constructing consensus are reproducing social conflicts in their fields. As a result of this, cooperation and partnership between NGOs with different ideological and political orientations in Turkey seems to be very limited. With the expression of a NGO representative, there is not “cooperation” but “union of forces” between NGOs in Turkey. In other words, while the cooperation brings together NGOs around differences and creating partnerships and synergies, the “union of forces” builds fronts by bringing together NGOs with similar motivations, political opinions, and point of view regarding the relation with the government. This process of confrontation, consequently, gives the “civil society ghettos” result.

25 In this study, the “mainstream Kurdish movement” is being used for broad socio-political and socio-cultural mobilization around the Kurdish issue in Turkey. The main political movement in which this mobilization is represented is the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) in the field of politics in Turkey and the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) in the Kurdish region. However, this mobilization cannot be reduced only to political parties. It includes different fields and actors such as political parties, civil society, media, trade union movement, cultural studies, social movements in the field of women and youth. On the other hand, this movement cannot be reduced to legal activities. Legal institutional studies as well as illegal socio-political mobilizations can be considered as a component of this movement. In this sense, KCK and illegal socio-political mobilizations and armed mobilizations in its orbit are considered as a component of this movement. It is not alleged that there is an organic link between legal and illegal field and actors, and that these actors are different components of the same institutional structure. However, it is argued that the social groups that these two areas have addressed and mobilized have come to the clash in a significant way, and that although the tools and methods are different, they have similar normative frame based on shared values, norms, symbols and political goals.

An NGO representative who works in Istanbul for knowledge-based advocacy states that this situation has arisen especially after the 2010 Constitutional Referendum. According to this, in the beginning of the 2000s, limited contacts and partnerships could be established among the political groups, which directly affected the field of civil society. However, after the 2010 Referendum on Constitution, the political polarization that deepened and hardened in the country spread to the field of civil society. With this period, “everybody started to speak and to do activities aiming at their own community and to their own mass”.

In the fieldwork, it has been observed that there is a limited level of efforts to shift from “union of forces” to “cooperation” between NGOs in Van. Unlike Diyarbakir, Istanbul and Ankara, attempts have been made in Van over the last 10 years to bring together and form partnerships between NGOs with different values, ideological and political orientations for the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace. The Brotherhood Platform for Peace and Justice, which was established in the late 2000s, is the first platform that participants often recall. With this initiative, both left-secular and conservative, NGOs founded by Islam and NGOs founded by the business community came together for cooperation. However, the initiative is dispersed without transforming into a permanent structure. In 2015, a second initiative emerged in the name of the Peace Initiative and a structure with similar qualities was built. However, this structure is also dispersed because of the negative attitudes of the AKP government and the mainstream Kurdish movement on the “gray area” of civil society’s engagement with political movements. Another important reason for the ineffectiveness of the platforms is that the participants instrumentalize these constructions to dominate their original “peace” perceptions, rather than approaching this as a field of construction consensus and cooperation.

To sum up, the “state-oriented” civil society tradition, the engagement relations between civil society and the political establishment, the narrowness of the gray areas and the ghettoization show that the legal, material and intellectual conditions necessary for a strong civil society is very weak in Turkey.

2.5. Civil Society and Regional Distinction

With the dynamics summarized above, it is seen that there is also a regional ghettoization between the NGOs on the Kurdish issue and conflict resolution. Apart from the limited number of NGOs in Istanbul and Ankara, there seems to be a distinction that cannot be ignored between the

Kurdish geography and the rest of Turkey. One participant from Istanbul expresses this situation with the following words:

It is hard to say that this is a matter that covers all of Istanbul and felt by entire Istanbul population. So, let's say in Istanbul, if we are going to talk symbolically, it is actually a matter of those who have ties between Istanbul and Diyarbakır. In other words, we do not talk about a matter that those who live in Istanbul and have no tie with Diyarbakır worry about. So, who cares about the Kurdish issue? Kurds living in Istanbul or non-governmental organizations founded by Kurds living in Istanbul. Or I can say that the Kurdish issue, is a matter handled in the context of human rights by the organizations or names who are not Kurdish, in other words, the opinion leaders. Therefore, I have difficulty to say that Istanbul has a connection with it. Because I do not see many signs that indicate that the big circles of Istanbul show a lot of relevance to the subject, frankly. So, there is a considerable Kurdish population in Istanbul. There are non-governmental organizations in Istanbul that the Kurdish population has founded. There are various political and civil initiatives that these non-governmental organizations can act on. I can say that I see a photograph consisting of these limited items.

A participant known for working in the field of NGOs states two main problems constitute this situation. First, the way of contextualization of the problem by both the state and the mainstream Kurdish movement, more clearly, the way they handle the situation and the way they involve other parties into the problem constitute a considerable obstacle. The fact that the state treats the Kurdish issue in the context of a “security and terrorism” problem pushes NGOs out of such a militarized issue. On the other hand, the mainstream Kurdish movement has addressed the issue so far around certain topics such as identity, right to life and forced migration, and in this sense, it has failed to socialize the problem by drawing attention of large segments of civil society into the matter. Secondly, the vast majority of NGOs in Turkey see the issue as a problem of a geographical region and consider themselves remote to that geography. This distance is not only physical, but also a mental distance.

An NGO representative who has been operating in the field of enforced disappearance for many years has also emphasized the way state and mainstream Kurdish movement contextualize the issue, as well as the limits of NGOs in reaching to society. According to this, in Turkey, NGOs are institutions with a limited capacity to reach large social segments and to socialize the social problems. In this regard, a participant that stands out with its Islamic conservative identity reminds us that capacity of NGOs' socializing an issue is very limited, even on a topic supported by large segments of the society such as a headscarf. Thus, NGOs' socialization of

a “hand-burning” issue such as Kurdish was much more limited.

Some participants from Istanbul argue that instrumentalizing the Kurdish issue by the NGO community which is based on left-secular references is also effective in the regional ghettoization. Accordingly, the Kurdish issue is not the priority of this community. This community is in contact with the problem in the context of their relationship with the AK Party government rather than the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace. In other words, the relation of the western left-secular community with the Kurdish issue is determined by “them, their own positions, their own politics, their relations with the party in government, their approaching to governing party”. The Kurdish issue is actually instrumentalized by these groups. Another participant states that this situation is not pertain to the AK Party era. According to the participant, the left-secular community treats the Kurdish issue “as an instrument that they include during periods when it is useful, and which they exclude in the period they think it is harmful themselves rather than an issue to be resolved”.

An NGO representative from Ankara, on the other hand, makes a contextual comment and analyzes the issue as a matter of priority rather than instrumentalizing it. Accordingly, “in general, western organizations look at the Kurdish issue in terms of their work fields. Generally, the organizations in the region also look at their work fields in terms of the Kurdish issue”. The participant, along with some periodical changes and exceptions, claims that this point of view determines the relationship between NGOs operating on the Kurdish issue. Again, some participants argue that a distinction like “Kurdish region” and “west” is not correct, that it is a homogenizing interpretation, and in reality, there is a heterogeneous structure that contains different groups.

2.6. Civil Society and Capacity Issue

Institutional experience in the field of civil society and its institutional capacity seems to be quite limited. Participants argue that NGOs’ capacity problem is a major constraint in their getting involved in the Kurdish issue. As expressed by an experienced participant in the NGO field, “it is not a very correct approach to expect an active participation of an actor having a story with 20 years, maybe 25 years (civil society) to a 200 yeared story (Kurdish issue)”.

In connection with the capacity question, participants also emphasize that NGOs do not have the necessary knowledge and experience in con-

flict resolution and social peace construction, and that they do not know exactly what they can do about it. In other words, NGOs are experiencing a remarkable capacity problem in terms of conflict resolution and peace building both theoretically and practically. An NGO representative working in the field of human rights states that because of the capacity problem, the actors in the civilian field are dealing with the matter within the framework of the actors, such as the state or the EU, and that NGOs do not have power both in society and in the political arena. According to this, NGOs carry out activities according to the political wind rather than making comprehensive preparations for the problem and socializing of the problem. This situation limits the contribution of NGOs to the building of social peace.

Another issue highlighted in the context of the capacity issue is related to the method of study. Some participants state that along with theoretical knowledge and experience, there is a remarkable method problem in the work to be done in the field of conflict resolution and social peace building. Instead of focusing on different functions depending on the way things are going, rather than trying different ways, NGOs often tend to pursue their own work and their way of doing things without considering the changing context.

Capacity is finally being talked about in terms of human power, financial resources and institutional limits in the field of information. In general, there is an NGO profile that does not include enough people to work, has limited financial resources and has a very low level of specialization in certain areas. One of the most important obstacles preventing this improvement is the inadequacy of cooperation between NGOs and their efforts to complement each other. Due to limited cooperation, in most cases, NGOs cannot benefit from the work the others do, and they repeat similar work. This creates a considerable obstacle to the formation of co-operation, synergy and accumulation in the field of civil society. In this regard, some participants say that in recent years there has been a significant increase in competition rather than cooperation between NGOs. They underscore the emergence of a non-negligible inequality, especially in accessing funding sources. Some participants argue that this inequality is also at the regional scale and that it is in favor of NGOs located in the western part of the country.

2.7. Civil Society and Self-Introversion

Another issue that may be associated with the capacity question but surpasses it is the cross-border relationship of NGOs. The cross-border

co-operation of NGOs working in the field of conflict resolution and social peace construction in Turkey seems to be very limited.

At least three points must be underlined in this regard. Firstly, it is seen that especially the NGOs in Diyarbakır and Van are more introverted than the NGOs in Istanbul and Ankara. It has been observed that, except one or two, there are almost no cross-border cooperatives and partnerships of NGOs that interviewed with in both cities, Diyarbakır and Van. Although NGOs in Ankara and Istanbul are in a better position in general, civil society actors working in the field of conflict resolution and social peace construction are seen to have reached a very limited distance in developing relationships that transcend local and national borders.

Secondly, it is observed that the limited relations developed are largely established with the Europe-centered western world, whereas almost no relation could be established with the Middle East geography. Civil society actors in Turkey are hardly ever connected with NGOs in the Middle East, especially in neighbouring countries. In recent years, it is seen that some NGOs both in Diyarbakır and in Istanbul had various initiatives in this regard. Especially, it can be said that NGOs working in knowledge-based have a bridge building capacity. However, it should be noted that existing relations are very limited and that common projects that can influence the sphere of society are hardly ever developed.

Finally, it can be seen that there is almost no link to NGOs working in the field of conflict resolution and social peace construction in other countries. Although it is a long period of conflict in Turkey, it seems that there is a very limited connection with NGOs who have similar experiences in different times and places. It has been observed that although there is a certain level of relationship with the Western world, there is almost no cooperation and partnership focused on conflict resolution and social peace construction. Outside the western world, there is a considerable number of ethnic/religious identity-based intra-state territorial conflicts both in the Middle East and Asia. Nevertheless, in Turkey, NGOs that are sensitive to the Kurdish issue have not made any significant efforts to network, share experiences and build mutual learning processes in these regions with civil society actors working on conflict resolution and social peace-building.

The limited interest, inadequate energy and limited capacity of the NGOs in Turkey in terms of establishing cross-border networks, in other words, "introversion" leave these actors weak in terms of both function and self-confidence.

2.8. Civil Society and Democratic Norms

In addition to the above problem areas, some participants point to institutional problems within NGOs. The weakness of internal democratic norms and limited participation of the members are the most underlined point in this issue. It is stated that many NGOs are identified with people, and in some cases, they are governed by the same people for as long as 20 years. An NGO representative working in the field of women and gender criticizes this situation as saying, “the one who found it, has the lead till he/she is dead”.

Secondly, in this issue, the NGO’s elitism is pointed out. In particular, the participants in Ankara and Istanbul argue that the NGO world is a very limited and elitist community. Another issue highlighted in connection with elitism is that the NGOs do a lot of desk-work and a few field works. In this regard, a NGO representative who performs knowledge-based advocacy activities in Istanbul states that as a result of elitism and distance from the field, NGOs do not do field works, but when they do, in most cases they stay away from the suburban regions.

Finally, some participants argue that conflicts and divisions within NGOs constitute a major problem area for NGOs with already limited power and space. An NGO representative operating in Ankara describes this as “multiplication by division”:

We need to analyze the multiplication issue well. How do we multiply? We multiply by division. More people are not involved. We divide and multiply as existing non-governmental organizations. Unfortunately, the number of people who are involved in civil society or who believe that they should consider themselves as citizens and should talk about the issues is unfortunately not growing. Or it does not grow in the same proportion.

2.9. 1990s: Dark Years

As the dynamics summarized above show that there is a weak civil society tradition in Turkey. It seems that the first activation in the field of civil society appeared especially in the 1990s. This movement has also affected the Kurdish issue. As field work confirms, especially in the 1990s, rights-based NGOs began to emerge, and these organizations have carried out irrefutable work on the Kurdish issue. Frequently referenced organizations are the Human Rights Association (IHD) and the Association for Human

Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed (Mazlum-Der)²⁶. Despite these initial developments in the field of civil society, it has to be said that the field was very limited and it was very risky for civil society activists during these years. According to one participant from Diyarbakir, “NGOs in the blind darkness of the 1990s could not even fight the life struggle”.²⁷ An NGO representative focusing on the production of knowledge for the public and advocacy expressed the atmosphere of the conflict zone in 1990s in the following striking words:

There are photographs of those who lost their lives more when we go to establishments that are related to the quest for rights, especially the unions that we have known in Diyarbakir, which we have now defined as non-governmental organizations or democratic mass organizations. Photos of former presidents are posted in metropolises and big cities. In our institutions, photos of those who lost more lives would hang.

During the 1990s, NGOs’ works concentrated on advocacy via public communication, detection and reporting of violations of rights activities. In the Kurdish issue and in the field of social peace, human rights, forced migration, loss, assistance with prisoners and sentiments have been the main working areas. In this sense, when we evaluate the 1990’s in terms of seven functions of NGOs we can see that “service delivery”, “monitoring and accountability” and especially “advocacy and public communication” functions via report, press release, symposium and conference activities are outstanding.

Although the work done was limited in quantitative terms, it was important in terms of its effectiveness. These years of work made it possible to revitalize after the 2000s. As a NGO representative of a rights-based NGO

26 Mazlum-Der was divided in 2017 after the various debates and separations that formed one of the main headings of the Kurdish issue. Despite the objections and protests of many chambers, as a result of the extraordinary general meeting convened by a court decision, an Istanbul-based group decided to close 16 out of 24 branches and move the Association’s Center from Ankara to Istanbul. Istanbul Branch President Ramazan Beyhan was elected as the president and the branches of İzmir, Sakarya, Mersin, Kocaeli, Bursa and Antakya were closed as well as the regional branches of Diyarbakir, Urfa, Van, Antep, Muş, Batman, Bitlis, Bingöl, Şırnak and Hakkari. One of the most important factors that caused this separation was the Kurdish issue. The closed branches continue to work under the name “Right Initiative” and are expected to become institutionalized in 2018.

27 In these years, only 23 executives and members of the IHD have lost their life after the unsolved murders. Hundreds of executives and members of the association have been tried for their activities in the field of human rights, condemned to prison and fines. IHD President Akın Birdal was attacked in Ankara on May 13, 1998 in his room in the association building. Birdal, who was seriously injured with six bullets for his body, was treated for a long time.

in Istanbul underlined, NGOs in the 1990s “essentially registered the consequences of violence”. Moreover, remarkable studies were carried out within the possibilities for “legal”, “medical” and “psychological” compensation of the victims. Finally, a “collective social memory” was created about the Kurdish issue and conflicts. For example, with Saturday Mothers’ actions on unsolved losses constructed a memory beyond Turkey’s boundaries.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s, when conflicts intensified, a consensus was widely made publicly on the scale of Turkey as to the suppression of the Kurdish issue by violence. Against this, NGOs have not been able to produce another consensus based on social peace, justice, and trust. The limited monitoring, accountability and advocacy works’ impact on the broad society segments were limited in this sense. In addition, civil society actors could/have not do/done widespread work on the country scale, focusing on functions such as in-group socialization and culture of peace, conflict-sensitive social cohesion, mediation and facilitation.

2.10. 2000s: Expanding and Revival in Civil Domain

The 2000s can be noted as the period in which the field of civil society in Turkey has expanded and there was remarkable revival in NGO activities. One of the most underlined points in the field work in this regard is the effect of the European Union (EU) membership process on the field of civil society. The EU membership process which accelerated with the acquisition of the candidate status of Turkey in December 1999 provided important contributions to the development of NGOs in Turkey. On the one hand, democratization process, freedom of expression, freedom of association and legislative reforms, on the other hand, the institutional support provided by the EU gave rise to a considerable revival in the field of civil society in Turkey.

The second issue that needs to be underlined in this regard is the period of upside down and regeneration that takes place in the field of politics in Turkey. The newly formed Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power alone in 2002, when the majority of mainstream political parties in Turkey were marginalized and withdrawn from politics after the 2001 economic crisis. The EU membership in the founding years of the AK Party, the discourses of democratization and reform-oriented change, and the legal and political regulations made were the second important step strengthening NGOs.

In addition to reflection of the general revival in the field of civil society to

the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace, two important developments in the Kurdish area should be underlined. As field work confirms, first, the search for political resolutions to the Kurdish issue, which has intensified in the 2000s, made possible the participation of NGOs in the process. After the capture of Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* - PKK) leader A. Öcalan in 1999, the five-year conflict-free period between 1999 and 2004 made a significant contribution to the enlargement of the civil society area as well as the EU membership process. Despite various ups and downs, the search for a political resolution to the Kurdish issue lasted until 2015. Imrali Process between 1999-2004, Prime Minister RT Erdoğan's speech in Diyarbakir in 2005, emphasizing the resolution of the Kurdish issue in the frame of the democratization, law and prosperity of the Kurdish issue by accepting the state's mistakes in the past, the Oslo Process between the years 2008-2011 and 2013-2015 Resolution Process can be noted as certain "stops" of political resolution seeking in the Kurdish issue. Civil society actors are also seen to be involved more in these years when the search for political resolutions increases and the state tends to solve the issue by dialogue and negotiation within the framework of democracy.

Secondly, it is necessary to underline the original dynamics emerged in the Kurdish area. Alongside the EU membership process, general democratization reforms, and the five-year conflict-free period, the mainstream Kurdish parties came into power in local governments as from 1999. This process has provided legalization and institutionalization of the socio-political mobilization especially in the Kurdish area. The main bearer actors of the transformation in both areas was the NGOs. In this period, many NGOs have been established and made considerable efforts in various fields, such as women, youth, children, language, culture, struggle against poverty, socio-economic development, social and political researches as well as human rights.

Unlike the 1990s, both the number and the field of NGOs participating in the political resolution and social peace studies of the Kurdish issue in the 2000s increased. In this period, NGOs carried out activities to provide direct service, monitoring and accountability, public communication and advocacy, albeit limited, as well as in-group socialization and culture of peace while remaining in "their own neighborhoods". Again, mediation activities at local level emerged periodically among the conflicting parties in Diyarbakir. On the other hand, functions such as mediation and facilitation both between the parties and at the social level and conflict-sensitive social cohesion seem to be limited. Direct service delivery, monitoring and accountability, advocacy and public communication are still the basic

functions of NGOs working aimed at the political resolution of the Kurdish issue.

As some participants underlined, it seems that in the 2000s, unlike the 1990s, there was a variation in the work on the Kurdish issue in the field of civil society. Together with the 2000s, human rights, democracy, forced migration, etc., and the advocacy activities carried out on them, maintained their position. Nevertheless, with the influence of the forced migration to social field, Kurdish issue were correlated with fields of the urbanization, women, children, ecology, relations with the Armenians, which have never been at the agenda or have been approached very limited, and a remarkable civil society mobilization has emerged in these areas.

Another important feature of the 2000s is the revival in conservative, Islam-referenced NGOs, and these NGOs' struggling for the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace, unlike the past. Except Mazlum-Der, conservative, Islam-referenced NGOs have largely been away from the Kurdish issue in the 1990s. In the 2000s, a large number of conservative, Islam-referenced NGOs have been established in the region, and these NGOs have begun to take up positions with their western partners. The Justice Platform for Brotherhood (*Kardeşlik İçin Adalet Platformu*) established throughout the region and the East-West Brotherhood Platform (*Doğu-Batı Kardeşlik Platformu*) established at the country level should be noted especially in this regard.

However, it can be argued that the Islam-referenced NGOs are challenged at various levels in their attitude towards the Kurdish issue. Some of the participants in the field study suggest that Islam-referenced NGOs could not build a theoretical framework for the Kurdish issue. According to a conservative, Islam-referenced NGO representative, the "Islamic community" could not build a specific attitude in the context of the Kurdish issue and therefore could not develop appropriate practices. According to this, Islamic tradition in Turkey could not create an ecologie in terms of "umma", "nation", "coexistence", and "separation". The second point drawn in this regard is the method of struggle and the relationship established with the state. Unlike the left-secular movements, the conservative, Islam-referenced political tradition has a reforming character and gives its power struggle without fighting the state directly. While this creates opportunities for progress in other areas of Anatolia, it causes to not having a position regarding the Kurdish issue and unable to have strong ties within Kurdish society. Another underlined important feature is that Islam-referenced NGOs in Kurdish geography are regional components of the western-centered camps and their relationship to the government.

Finally, it is stated that conservative, Islam-inspired NGOs are based on the officer grassroots at a remarkable rate and this worry for protection of this grassroots prevents them to having a position in the Kurdish issue.

Despite the revival of civil domain in the 2000s, as pointed out by a representative of NGO focused on peace “in Turkey, it is very difficult to talk about a non-governmental organization that would impose peace”. As participants remind, there is a wide social segment in Turkey that wants peace. Nevertheless, there is no question of civil society organization and civil society mobilization that could transform the demands of this circle into a pressure on politics for the construction of social peace:

I think that the majority of the 13 percent of votes of HDP on 7 June are the ones who advocate 100 percent peace and the number of those who want the peace and voted for the AKP and those who voted for the CHP is very high. I think that, in Turkey, we are so far away from reaching to civil society that can create pressure on government uniting all these. I think that civil society in Turkey is not fully capable of putting pressure on politicians, the government and parliament.

A participant who works in a knowledge-based NGO argues that why the civil society could not adapt to changing context in the Kurdish issue and in the political field in Turkey, especially in the post-2000, is important matter. Accordingly, in the 1990s, NGOs focused on rights violations and advocacy activities had to focus on other functions in the 2000s, when reforms began and the search for political resolutions in the Kurdish issue intensified. However, the vast majority of NGOs working in the Kurdish issue and conflict resolution area continue to address the issue around advocacy activities, especially because they have left-wing reference or Kurdish politics-oriented. However, the context of the Kurdish issue is constantly changing, and depending on the course of action, civil society needs to do work by centering on different functions. Generally according to the field work findings, it is seen that NGOs are mostly focused on monitoring, accountability and advocacy activities. Especially the work done in the field of conflict-sensitive social cohesion is at a level that can be ignored. Of the 45 NGOs interviewed on four cities, there is only one organization directly focusing on this area.

2.11. Two Outstanding Areas in Conflict Resolution: Human Rights and Gender

Despite all of their limits, efforts made in the field of civil society since the 1990s have created an indisputable accumulation in Turkey. The monitoring and accountability that develops on the axis of human rights and

the public communication and advocacy that develops on this basis are undoubtedly the first areas to be underlined. In the context of the Kurdish issue, considerable accumulation was created in this area. Studies conducted under the leadership of IHD and Mazlum-Der have been both diversified and become widespread in the last 20 years.

Secondly, it is necessary to underline the socio-political mobilization that emerged in the field of gender inequality. As in the field of human rights, gender equality and women's liberty also constituted a human, institutional and knowledge-based accumulation that would not be underestimated both in the Kurdish space and throughout the country. The political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the progress made in the field of socialization of peace have been made possible through multi-level mobilization in the field of gender as well as works in the field of human rights.

The experience and accumulation that emerge in both human rights and gender fields can be an important contribution to the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace. Because progress in this area has the potential to overcome the boundaries shown above. First, the impact and direction of the state in both areas is more limited than in other areas. Secondly, it can be seen that political engagement in these areas is limited and the potential to cross political boundaries is high. Lastly, in both areas, considerable experiences have accumulated to cross civil society ghettos and regional distinction, and to build multi-level cooperations and partnerships.

3. RESOLUTION PROCESS (2013-2015) AND CIVIL SOCIETY

It is seen that NGOs are involved in a limited level in the 2013-2015 Resolution Process. The management of process relatively with the knowledge of the society, symbolic events such as the announcement of Öcalan's letter to the whole Turkey with the mainstream media channels in the Diyarbakır Newroz event, unlike the past, encouraged the participation of many NGOs in the process, especially the civil society actors in the Kurdish space. With the expression of a rights-based NGO representative in Diyarbakır, "as the sphere expanded and weapons were withdrawn, people felt closer to taking responsibility, acting, and contributing to solution". Relative liberty have allowed widespread self-censorship to be weakened in the NGO world, resulting in greater exposure accumulation in the field of civil society than in the past. However, both the inadequate space that the AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement opened for the NGOs, and the civil society issues underlined in the previous section, have largely limited the participation of NGOs in the Resolution Process.

3.1. What Did the NGOs do in the Resolution Process?

When the involvement and contribution of NGOs is examined in detail, the first point that should be underlined according to the results of the field work is as follows: The NGOs focused mainly on the lobbying and advocacy activities directed to the AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement. It is seen that most of the NGOs tried to get involved in the policy-making process by presenting their opinions both verbally and in writing to the AK Party government and the components of the mainstream Kurdish movement at various levels. For example, an NGO representative in the economic field in Diyarbakır notes that, the state had a remarkable archive of the Kurdish issue and that NGOs played an important role in the accumulation of this knowledge. He also underlines that most of the information transferred by the bureaucracy from the local places to the center was "corrected" by the NGOs. On the other hand, most NGOs express that they convey their views to the government and mainstream Kurdish movements, but these were not effective and most political actors did not pay regard to themselves in most instances.

Secondly, although the state and the mainstream Kurdish movement did not take account of the information produced by NGOs sufficiently, as some participants pointed out, the Kurdish issue in this period was visible to the public in a size that would not be compared to the past, and was spoken by large segments of the society in different details. For example, an NGO representative in Ankara on the social field states that many issues that they have not been able to talk about in the past have become easily debated during the Resolution Process. NGOs have played a critical role in discussing and debating the issue at this level in the public sphere. In this regard, most participants especially point to the Wise People's Committee. Most NGO representatives, together with different critics, consider the Wise People's Committee as a civil society work. The two main reasons for this evaluation are that the committee had many reputable and institutional persons in the field of civil society and that the regional delegations contacted NGOs in the cities where they went to.

Thirdly, although NGOs could not participate in the process as a formally recognized third party, they were seen to mediate between both local government officials and the components of the mainstream Kurdish movement, as well as between HUDA-PAR and HDP. This goes especially for Diyarbakir. These mediation initiatives were effective in most cases such as the 6-8 October Kobani incidents, the road closures, and the release of detained public officials, during the Resolution Process continued. However, attempts to mediate in trench and urban conflicts that occurred after the end of the Resolution Process failed. In the regard of mediation, it has also been observed that some civil society actors advocating knowledge-based have played bridge building role and constructed dialogue mechanism sometimes directly or sometimes indirectly between actors who taken different position in Kurdish Issue such as political groups, business communities and NGO communities.

Fourthly, during the Resolution Process, it is seen that some NGOs, especially rights-based NGOs, took the initiative and opened up new domains related to their work fields and tried to contribute to the process. For example, the de facto Monitoring Committee of 25 people created in Diyarbakir can be given as an example. Throughout the process, this delegation, monitoring both the PKK and the state actors and trying to intervene in times of crisis, has worked to prevent the failure of the process by giving feedback to the parties. It has also been observed that an NGO working in the field of gender and peace in Turkey has made considerable efforts in order to continue the process in a gender-sensitive way. The NGO in question, has made efforts to make the delegation's efforts to become gender sensitive by negotiating with 14 women in the Wise People's

Committee. The efforts of the institution have continued through similar negotiations both to the two parties of the process and to other political actors. A NGO, operating in the field of confrontation the past and justice, has been at various levels of contacts with the government, the HDP and the CHP, in order to put this issue on the agenda of the political parties.

Civil society's works seem to be more successful in Van city, perhaps because of the city's two hegemonic powers and dynamic political configuration. Unlike Diyarbakir, Istanbul and Ankara, efforts to dialogue and cooperation between NGOs working in left-secular and Islamic-conservative motivations in the city of Van have emerged and a remarkable mobilization of local peace building has been created. Some NGOs have worked on the construction of social peace taking initiative. A representative of an NGO with an Islamic-conservative referenced in this initiative summarizes the works done in this way:

With the beginning of the Resolution Process, we have created an initiative and, like I said from different environments; from HUDA-PAR to AK Party and to HDP, we tried to get everyone into this initiative. We tried to visit operational areas with the commission we created on this initiative. A consciousness-raising work about peace. For example, we went to the battalions, governorships, district governorships, municipalities, parties ... The districts of Başkale where the operations made, we went there. We went to the battalions there. We were guests of the battalions. This created an extraordinary morale both on the public and on the conflicting parties.

An NGO representative in Van states that the active involvement of several NGOs with critical roles in the local created a movement throughout the city by causing a domino effect. The participant expresses the dynamism and effects of it that emerged in the city with the following words:

Almost all structures in Van - both Islamic and the other side - have contributed positively. In fact, discussing was a contribution. This work was a contribution. Even from the Islamist or Islamic tradition segment that stands in the most controversial point on this issue had to engage in the Kurdish issue after a certain point. In this case, beyond the situations of 20 years ago, they had to accept new situations, which was a development. Or here, let me say the extreme one, even the representatives of the CHP or the MHP had come to be able to argue in this intense agenda.

Fifthly, in this period, it is seen that some of the NGOs did researches more effectively which they do routinely perform in the social field or they could not perform before and postponed. For example, an NGO working on conflict victims expresses that they have been able to do field work to create an inventory including all conflict areas that they could not do due

to political and legal problems in the previous period. Another NGO representative, providing psycho-social support for the victims of the conflict, states that they strengthened their institutional capacity to make more contributions in their field of expertise in case of a possible political resolution. An NGO representative, working in the field of women and the economy, underlines that they have done works to reduce violence-enhancing effects of the conflicts in the streets, daily life and workplace.

Sixthly, some NGO representatives argue that the pressure of civil society is effective not only during the Resolution Process, but also at the beginning of the process. The issue was socialized largely and there was a social demand for solution as a result of the studies carried out in the field of civil society throughout the country. Accordingly, the works in the field of civil society had a remarkable effect on this social demand and the need to step. It can be said that this situation is especially valid in the Kurdish space. Since, the contribution of NGOs cannot be ignored in the fact that both the conflict resolution and the awareness of social peace construction reached wide circles, and that the sense and idea which it is not possible to solve the issue by violence became dominant in the Kurdish space. With the expression of a rights-based activist in Diyarbakir, NGOs in one sense “disseminated to country-wide what the Kurdish people, the people from Diyarbakir think, want and desire”.

Finally, it appears that some NGOs worked on improving the capacities of civil society actors on conflict resolution and social peace construction. The most prominent activities in this regard are the workshops and field trips in which similar cases are examined and discussed. In the field work, it was observed that many NGO representatives interviewed were involved in experience sharing projects to see similar conflict resolution processes in different countries.

3.2. What Could Not NGOs Do?

Given the scope and difficulties of the Kurdish issue, the work outlined above shows that the participation and contribution of the NGOs to the Resolution Process was very limited. Civil society actors have generally been influential in the areas of “declaring their views, making meetings and conducting diplomacy in this sense”, as underlined by a representative of a rights-based NGO in Diyarbakir. However, in the Resolution Process, they could not “think ahead, design it, and put it in front of the parties as a route map”.

A participant who is knowledge-based advocate in Istanbul points out that NGOs could neither facilitate the process by smoothing the way for the parties producing information, nor fulfill their duties in the fields of “social peace”, “coexistence with the differences”, “despite differences, solving issues by talking without arming”, “expressing differences democratically”, which the society “poisoned” by the 40 year-long conflict was expecting from them. Some participants, particularly through the Wise People’s Committee, claim that peace has been attributed to people significantly and that a social consensus about peace has been created, but many participants underline that “peace is not socialized”. In this regard, most participants remind us that even the regional reports of the Wise People’s Committee have not been declared out. A participant working in the field of discrimination and building of equality between differences in Istanbul expresses the passive position of NGOs in the Resolution Process with the following words:

The most important cause of the failure of the last process is that the process was not attributed to the social segments. Because, if it was a process attributed to the social segments, warning mechanisms could be produced from civil society to state’s or PKK’s every attitude as “we want peace, this can prevent it”. They were not produced. We watched. They went to İmralı, negotiated, then to Kandil, from there to National Intelligence Organization (MİT - *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*) the things like this... We watched this process. We watched in this way: When the demands we want to defend appeared, we stood around them, we were clustered. But we did not produce a demand.

In the regard of socialization/publicization of peace, some participants argue that in the Resolution Process the NGOs could/have not do(ne) enough activities to disseminate especially the peace culture in the social field. In this issue they argue that the civil society actors themselves were not very familiar with the “peace culture”, that they could not build a “language of peace” and that it is influential in the weakness of the work towards the construction of social peace. An NGO representative working in the field of human rights, going a step further suggests that especially left-wing NGOs have “militarist discours”, very centralized decision-making processes and that it is therefore not possible for these institutions to make civil decisions within themselves and to implement democratic methods.

Some of the participants are discussing the debate on socialization/publicization of peace through concept of “localization of peace”. Accordingly, peace was required to “localize” in the Resolution Process. In this regard, the Wise People’s Committee could play an important role despite all its

borders. NGOs could play an important role in this issue. However, neither the AKP government nor the mainstream Kurdish movement set a such a goal, nor did the NGOs be involved in the process by taking the initiative in this regard. A participant working on NGOs states that the socialization the peace was completely ignored in the Resolution Process: “There is such a thing in this matter. First, it has to be a dialogue between the conflicting parties. Secondly, there must be a connection between the subject, the dimensions of it and the society. I think this second part was not even planned in the Resolution Process”. The participant states that this can be achieved through topics such as women, the environment, disability, children, not the subjects. Because, speaking of the Kurdish issue by subjects “free from issues” does not lead to a solution, on the contrary, it prevents talking about the multidimensional Kurdish issue:

We were talking about stone-throwing children 7-8 years ago, did not we? Now we are talking young people who fight for the trench. We saw the that the children who threw stone that day become the youths who were fighting for the trench. Thousands of them lost their lives in this thing (urban conflicts). Now, what will we talk about in the new generation? If the evolution of this situation is so, if Kurdish youth, stone-throwing children turned into the ones who fight for the trench, what will the next generation of Kurdish young people become? So as long as we do not deal with these social dimensions of the issue, pay attention to stone-throwing children, develop a civil society activity to understand it, make connection with here and there, I think it will be pointless political debate nothing more than an effort transmit unilateral declaration to the other.

Some participants state that NGOs are not able to follow up and cannot claim “peace request”. A participant who works in a rights-based field in Istanbul remind us the “Monitor Request”, which is transformed into a crisis through the “Monitoring Committee” in the Resolution Process, and argues that NGOs can actually do without waiting for the parties, but no significant work has been done in this regard. A participant who works in the gender field in Ankara reminds us that we still do not know why the process was terminated, who terminated, and who has how much share of it is due to the lack of this “social arbitration”. Another participant who stated that peace was a political promise of the PKK and the AK Party government, is expressing that NGOs did not stand for:

Peace is a political promise given to this society, to the people of Turkey, to the nations of Turkey. Just like we have to pursue it as a promise of financial matters, retirement or hiring. We do not do that. The right, the left, the opposition, “Hang on. You negotiated in seven geographical regions with Wise People’s Committee and other people. You went İmralı to interview, Kandil you did this, the other did these.” This is the words given after the of-

ficial announcement of the PKK and the state of Turkey. Therefore, while I am waiting for peace, I must be a claimant. I must be owner of the demand.

The development of partnerships that will overcome political ghettos and make dialogue among different social groups is another domain where NGOs were weak. Many participants state that NGOs preferred to “stay in their neighborhood and did not engage in co-operation with different segments during the Resoluiton Process. In this regard, ghettoization, gray areas, political engagement in the civil process, which was underlined in the previous section, continued in the Resolution Process. An NGO representative in Ankara states that “the confrontations of different social groups” were not provided, and the fears that exist in this issue were effective. Again, a knowledge-based NGO representative in Istanbul underlines that the left-secular community and the Islamic-conservative community could not have partnerships with a few exceptions. In the Resolution Process, while the left-secular community established associations in itself and involved in the process, the Islamic-conservative community remained largely out of process and referred the work to the ruling party. An NGO representative who is working in the field of conflict-sensitive social relations, which brings together conflicting social groups, supports this argument and states that the right-conservative sector is moving held themselves at a distance to the process and waited in the expectation that “when is this issue going to come to end and our being right will be understood?”.

On the other hand, an NGO representative from Istanbul, known for his/her Islamic-conservative identity, states that for the first time the Islamic community, with the Resolution Process, considerably involved the Kurdish issue. The participant expresses the works of the Islamic-conservative community with the following words:

For the first time, the Islamic community has got involved in this issue almost immediately. At least 30-40 meetings were held in the south east, Urfa, Diyarbakır. All Islamists went to this region. From the Islamist madrasah and theologians of the region, to the civil society organizations, they sat around the same table for the first time. So, they came to the table. It was a very important thing. So, it’s been an atmosphere that anyone have not seen for 80 years. It was a nice situation. Everyone trusted this situation.

It seems that the regional dissidence as well as the political ghetto could not be overcome in the Resolution Process. As some participants underlined, there was no dialogue between the east and the west of the Euphrates, and the necessary ways for it were not opened. NGOs could play

a role in this area. However, a remarkable activity was not performed in this regard. A NGO representative working in gender field in Ankara states that the Kurdish Women's Movement, which includes many NGOs, participates in the process as a direct party, but this is not valid for women's organizations operating in Ankara. Just because of this situation, according to the participants, the regional dissidence is being reproduced in the field of civil society and it is becoming difficult to talk about the Kurdish issue, conflict resolution and peace for a very limited number of NGOs in Ankara that do something about social peace. In this regard, another participant from Ankara reminds us that the activities to produce social consent for peace in the western region have not been done sufficiently. According to the participant, in the west, there is a limited number of NGOs who are willing to contribute to the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the social peace. These NGOs need to focus on activities that produce consensus on social peace, spread peace culture in the western part of the country rather than to engage in solidarity activities with institutions in the Kurdish space.

Some participants point out that problems such as political ghettoization and regional dissidence, which are prevalent in the field of civil society, can be overcome, in particular by truth and confrontation, but that NGOs did not contribute adequately to this issue. Although this issue has a very important place in world experiences, has been spoken in Turkey for many years and has been expressed in the Resolution Process, the works on this issue has been limited.

3.3. Dynamics Limiting the Participation of NGOs in the Process

On the limited contribution of NGOs to the Resolution Process, NGO representatives point to the problems originating from the process side, while underlining the problems caused by the civil society itself.

Problems originating from the process direct side

Most respondents state that the Resolution Process is closed to civil society participation. They argue that the limited negotiations with NGOs were more "procedural" and that they have instrumentalized NGOs to create legitimacy for the work they do. Accordingly, both sides managed the process by "an authoritarian peace organisation" and did not want to involve civil society as a playmaker. The AKP government and the mainstream Kurdish movement demanded civil society to be excluded from the process or to involve civil society in the direction of their own will.

An example often reminded in this issue is the Wise People's Committee. Many participants underlined that this committee actually functioned as a kind of civil society and that many people from NGOs were involved in it, and that NGOs could not intervene in the formation of this delegation. As expression of a NGO representative from Diyarbakir, the Wise People's Committee was "prepared not by the non-governmental organizations' power, demand or the labor they gave to this process, large part of it prepared by the government, some of it by the PKK, we can say by asking Öcalan". A rights-based NGO representative in Ankara states that the Wise People's Committee should have been established as an independent structure consisting of experienced NGOs in various fields such as gender, children, urban rights, disability, human rights, but the government preferred to form the committee by appointment in accordance with the political culture.

Another participant working in the gender field claims that the AK Party government has not only appointed members of the Wise People's Committee, but that kept the NGOs out by hand over the role of civil society to this committee. An NGO representative in Ankara states that the AK Party and HDP did not speak enough of this issue even with their own grassroots aside from NGOs, reminding the crisis that emerged from the leak of an interview minute with Öcalan at the beginning of the Resolution Process. Because the basic consensus was not to talk about the issue:

For example, if an essay contest was held in which all the middle schools as "what would happen in peacetime?", people could have started talking more about it. It is not possible for civil society or anyone to claim this as a social demand, as long as it proceeds only through the minutes of interviews between certain delegations behind certain gates. Even the political parties of the sides did not even talk about this issue with their own grassroots. Because the basic consensus was not to talk about the issue.

Secondly, it is important to note that most of the NGOs expected from the state and the mainstream Kurdish movement to "open space" for their participation in the Resolution Process. It is seen that the tendency to intervene within the roles given to them in the playground determined by the direct parties of the conflict is seen to be dominant within the NGOs, rather than being involved in the process as a party, a collocutor and a subject of the issue. As an expression of a NGO representative rights-based advocating in Istanbul, NGOs in Turkey do not position themselves so much as actors of a certain process. However, NGOs constitute a structural part of many peace processes in the world.

It has been observed in the fieldwork that NGOs approach the conflict resolution and social peace construction issues as a process of negotiation at the top-level leadership and do not sufficiently consider them as negotiation processes to be carried out at the grassroots or middle-range leaderships. In this sense, many NGOs limit their roles to mediation, arbitration or monitoring among the parties and advocacy functions. These organizations seem did not to work adequately in the field of activities that can be summarized as “socialization of peace”, such as protection of citizens, direct service providing to conflict victims, int-group socialization and dissemination of peace culture, strengthening of conflict-sensitive social cohesion.

Thirdly, it is stated that the fact that AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement had a very limited space for civil society actors and that the NGOs had an expectation rather than taking initiative and that the Resolution Process was not open enough to allow public debate, limited the participation of NGOs. Most participants emphasize that public oversight must be provided, although they acknowledge the necessity of closeness to some degree so that the process is not spoiled by actors who oppose it. Most participants state that they still do not know why the “table was knocked over though two years have passed since the termination of the Resolution Process. To summarize, closure to public oversight was one of the most important obstacles preventing many NGOs from being involved in the process, according to many participants.

Finally, some participants argue that the state and the mainstream Kurdish movement did not only exclude NGOs, but also forced to take sides. Accordingly, both parties have forced the civil society actors to stand with themselves and support their political arguments. This situation, on the one hand, prevented the parties from receiving criticism, views and suggestions from the society, but on the other hand, caused especially the NGOs who preferred to stay in the “gray area” to become ineffective.

Problems caused by the civil society itself

In addition to the problems stemming from the direct sides of the conflict, which are summarized above, many of the problems arising from civil society itself are underlined. The most important issue that is often emphasized in this regard is the problem of prejudice and political engagement that dominates civil society. According to many participants, these partisanships and political engagements prevented NGOs from taking a critical position in the Resolution Process, and in most cases directed them to legitimizing their political discourses and to doing business on the axis of

those discourses. A participant working on NGOs states that in the Resolution Process, the problem of political engagement and prejudice is very decisive at NGOs' exclusion by political actors or at not opening enough space for civil society. As a result of political engagements and partisanship of NGOs, political actors have treated such organizations as actors who support themselves in the process and as political contributors. In this regard, for example, an NGO representative from Van argues that the Justice for the Brotherhood Platform (*Kardeşlik İçin Adalet Platformu*) has essentially lost its function and dispersed due to this partisanship and political engagement. An NGO representative trying to stay in the "gray area" in Van suggests that this partisanship has also arisen in the work of the Wise People's Committee and that there was in fact no real ground for dialogue as a result of this problem:

For example, in the provincial meetings of wise men, this was very obvious. The pro-government, or civil society advocating the ideology of the government, assessed issues from the point of view of the government. Also, opponents looked at the issue from that perspective and criticized. At those meetings, nobody actually nurtured the process by taking a step back or getting close to each other, raising common discourses. In other words, everyone again approached with their own ideological point of view, party, guard at that time.

A participant in the field of civil society goes one step further and argues that the NGOs' political engagement and their partisan participation in the process behind the political actors makes dialogue and negotiations impossible:

Participants are involved in a kind of partisan participation. As far as I can tell, the state also preferred it, and so did Kurdish politics. Now this is not a good negotiation method for me. More precisely, it does not produce good negotiations, quality negotiations when it comes to solving a problem with social or security-oriented dimensions, when the parties take their civil society's support. Then you are gathering the NGO behind its policy engagement. When everybody brings their NGO into their own engagement, there may be the environment of those one-sided declarations. That cannot make sense.

As an expression of a participant from Diyarbakir, NGOs, as a result of their political engagement and partisanship, "got into the wind of politics instead of developing creative projections". The NGOs who lost their criticism affirmed the process in public sphere, but this prevented them from contributing to the process and seeing weaknesses of it. Moreover, while this situation has inactivated NGOs on the one hand, on the other hand, it has also damaged the credibility of these organizations in society.

A participant working on NGOs states that the main conducive and facilitating actors in the negotiation process may be actors in the gray area that have not been involved in political engagements in the past but this have not been provided in the Resolution Process as well:

NGOs who have not been involved in political engagements in the past, who can explain to us what kinds of victimization are experienced by different social groups in Turkey, and can convince society that such victimization is experienced should have got involved in the issue. They did not get involved in. There were no environmental organizations, no disabled organizations, no organizations that make an effort for urban rights. There were no organizations that struggle for gender equality. All these organizations are actually institutions that have not involved in any political engagement within the Kurdish issue, but have the capacity and potential to understand the consequences of the problems. Because they did not participate in negotiations, we could not tell the society that Kurdish issue caused what kind of victimizations. Society, therefore, did not understand what we wanted to solve. They just thought that what we wanted to solve was a war that was going on. In other words, ceasefire. However, we were trying to solve something beyond the ceasefire. Therefore, the involvement of civil society with this incomplete or equipped with political engagements participations have not contributed to the .

The fact that they did not have a strong social base as well as partisanship played a significant role in the fact that NGOs have not been sufficiently effective in the Resolution Process. An NGO representative in social fields in Diyarbakir summarizes this situation with the following words:

But there still was something missing. It did not reach the parties. We need to look at a bit the civil society like this. Because the base is weak, these works can be undesirably a little more elitist. And civil society, which have a base, has a higher effect on mediation and monitoring and evaluation of these issues. Like I said, because of two reasons: being not able to maintain its impartiality and especially not having a societal base.

In addition to partisanship, weakness of the societal base and elitism, thirdly, some actors state that NGOs were unprepared about the political solution of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace. A knowledge-based NGO representative in Istanbul expresses that NGOs were caught unprepared to the process and therefore could not offer a “constructive” or “creative” contribution. An NGO representative in Van known for his/her Islamic-conservative identity states that despite the many studies, civil society actors were highly dispersed, could not conduct systematic studies, develop problem-focused solutions, that the inexperience in respect of political sphere and civil society were intense

and widespread, and that all these activities diminish the capacity and productivity of NGOs. An NGO representative who provides direct services to the victims of conflict in Diyarbakir states that the AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement were unprepared for conflict resolution and social peace-building and that this created a great opportunity for NGOs to get involved in the process. However, instead of creating practical resolutions in their own fields, preparing and making the ground suitable, NGOs just took a side in the process and supported it at the discursive level:

For example, the bar. The bar is actually a very important institution of our society. It is one of the most important institutions of every country in the whole world. The Bar Associations should prepare the legal ground for me, rather than discussing the political advocacy of this matter or the rightness of wrongness. How is this going to happen? What will happen to our tens of thousands of young people? What will be their reflections in the framework of those rights and constitution? And these are useful when transferred by projecting. Otherwise “I am side with peace process”, “long live peace”, “this terminated the process”, “these did this”, all this rather than contributing to... Let’s say passivity.

Fourthly, it is underlined that that large-scale NGOs, especially those located in the western part of the country, which have an impact on both the government and the public, did not support the process. A NGO representative working in the economy sector in Diyarbakir states that distance of institutions to the process such as Bar associations, Chambers and employer’s associations are effective in the failure of the process. Some participants state that NGOs in the Kurdish area had various initiatives to convince such civil society actors which were influential throughout the country for supporting the process, but that these efforts have not resulted.

Fifthly, NGOs both in the Kurdish space and on the western side suggested that especially the distant and critical stance of the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (CHP) to the process also affect the field of civil society in a negative manner. It has been stated especially in the left-secular civil society, the statements such as “AKP and HDP came to an agreement” and “give presidency, take democratic autonomy” were widely circulated and this has caused CHP and civil society under influence of it to stay distant from the process.

According to a NGO representative advocating knowledge-based rights in Istanbul, “we went through a political climate where positive consideration of the peace process was equal to positive consideration of the AK Party”, which did not contribute to finding solutions to Kurdish conflict and

constructing social peace. As some participants underlined, debates and criticisms over the issues such as “peace with a right-wing government?”, “peace with an anti-democratic government?”, “democracy first, then peace”, are constantly held on the agenda by the left-secular community. These debates and criticisms show that the relationship that the left-secular community have established with the AK Party was more primarily than the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the social peace-construction. The anti-AK Party community has always been skeptical about this process, has not contributed, nor supported it and has not even wanted the success of the process. Another NGO representative in Istanbul, who works in knowledge-based activities, goes a bit further on this issue and argues that the Kurdish issue is “a secondary issue” for the western left-wing NGO community. Accordingly, during the Resolution Process there was a sharp distinction between the priorities of the actors in the Kurdish space and the priority of the left-secular communities on the western side. A participant known for their work on NGOs points to Gezi Park Protests in this regard and states that the Resolution Process was not the primary agenda for most of the actors in the Gezi Park Protests period, and that the discussions on “Gezi and Kurds” was denoting this separation. Since, the Resolution Process was announced to the public on March 21, 2013, just two months before the Gezi Protests, it was necessary to protect this process that began with the aim of finding a solution to such a painful and deadly issue.

Some NGO representatives also point out that anxiety about not harming the process drove most of the civil society actors to stay passive and not to take the initiative. Accordingly, matters such as the process’ closure to the public oversight, the mainstream Kurdish movement and the AK Party’s preference to exclude civilian actors, the strength of the anti-process actors and the protection sensitivity of the process against these have caused NGOs to be “too cautious” and not take initiative for not harming the process.

In sum, the limited participation of civil society actors in the Resolution Process, because of the limiting dynamics stemming both from the state, the AKP government and the mainstream Kurdish movement and the civil society itself, played an important role in the collapse of the last dialogue and negotiation process. It is also necessary to look at the institutional partnerships of NGOs in order to better understand this failure, as well as to better understand what civil society actors can do in any possible process of negotiating and consensus, what arrangements needs to be made. The next chapter examines the institutional partnerships of NGOs in the in the context of NGO-NGO, NGO-politics, NGO-academia and NGO-media relations.

4. NGOs AND INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN THE RESOLUTION PROCESS

The attitude of the AK Party government and of the mainstream Kurdish movement or the NGOs' institutional efforts alone do not determine the civil society actors' contribution to the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and to the construction of social peace. As far as these efforts, the institutional partnerships of the NGOs are also important. In this research, NGO-NGO, NGO-politics, NGO-academy and NGO-media relations were also covered in the framework of institutional partnerships of NGOs.

4.1. NGO-NGO Relations

Considering the findings of the field work, three main points about the relationship between NGO-NGO can be underlined. First of these are the political/ideological polarization between the NGOs. Social and political dissidences throughout the country as a result of political engagements that NGOs get involved in not only do spread civil society, but also are reproduced in this field. It will be appropriate to characterize this political polarization, which has led to the formation of civil society ghettos, as a polarization between the Islamic-conservative NGOs and the left-secular NGOs in general. It is important to note that the Nationalist-Kemalist structures under the influence of CHP outside of these two structures have largely stayed out of and dissented to it. It seems that there was a limited degree of cooperation in both the Islamic-conservative and the left-secular civil society ghetto. However, these cooperations are far from constructing periodic and permanent mechanisms.

Secondly, it is seen that the cooperation between NGOs is largely sectoral/issue-based, and that there is limited inter-sectors/inter-issues works. Human rights, gender, migration studies, children are the main areas in which such sectoral cooperations have emerged. Cooperations in which NGOs working in different sectors/areas come together to solve the different dimensions of a complex problem together are almost none. This shows that already politically dissident NGOs have a weak culture of collective

work even in their neighborhoods, and that their tendency to perform routine work instead of differentiation or diversifying their work is strong.

Thirdly, it is observed that there is a regional distinction among NGOs. While vast majority of the NGOs in the Kurdish space - perhaps as a result of the necessities of everyday life - are in an effort to interested in the Kurdish issue, a very limited part of NGOs on the western side of the country are in an effort relating to the issue. With the AK Party government's tendency to solve issue by the political way and create a political atmosphere accordingly during the Resolution Process, a revival in the civil society area has taken place in the west. Along with this, however, in paralel with the changing position of political power over the issue, the NGOs on the west side quickly withdrew from the scene and adapted to the new conflict-oriented political atmosphere.

In the Resolution Process, it is seen that there are some initiatives aimed at building bridges throughout Turkey. Civil Solidarity Platform, Yes to Resolution Coalition, Women Initiative for Peace, Peace Initiative for Children are some of them. However, many of these initiatives seem to have been limited and disintegrated without producing remarkable results. One of the "softest" areas where cooperation between the Kurdish space and the West can be established is "socio-economic" cooperation. However, cooperations even in this area seem to be very weak. The representatives of one of the NGOs of the business community explain this disunity with a striking example:

In June 2013 [...], we wrote to 365 chambers-stocks, including organizations such as TÜSİAD, associations, associations organized in national context, TÜRKONFED, TÜSİAD, to all organizations of Turkey's western business world. We invited western world of business to discover the potentials of the geography we are in, and to eliminate the regional disparities. We have clearly stated this in our writing: We do not force you to come here and invest in here. We only invite you to see the potentials in place, at least to discuss possibilities of cooperation, that is, we want to welcome you. Apart from 3-4 chambers, unfortunately [...] the western business world did not take responsibility.

The East-West Fellowship Platform established among Islamic-conservative NGOs to transcend regional distinction should be noted in this regard. Nevertheless, in the field work, it can be seen that this platform had a very limited impact, although it has built a bridge between the Kurdish space and the west side. Some project-based partnerships have been established between the Kurdish area and the left-secularist NGOs in the west side. However, the NGOs in the Kurdish space point out that project-based

relationships are unequal. They claim that mostly the NGOs who come from the west have objectified themselves. A participant from Diyarbakir criticizes this way of association with the following words:

There is a great deal of hegemonic behavior in civil society organizations. This is mainly for Istanbul-based NGOs. When we look at non-governmental organizations working in this 20-year time frame, especially project-based NGOs, they come to the region and meet with various sources such as a European Union project or otherwise. Somewhere in these negotiations, they hold maybe a few meetings or something. Then they walk away. There is not much left of them after their walking away.

A participant from Istanbul confirms the observation in Diyarbakir and defines these relations established on a project basis as “relations of domination”:

The secular NGOs, especially those who approach the Kurdish issue like human rights, establish a connection with the Kurdish NGOs, establish a relationship. But I do not term this as cooperation. Let me say why. I see a more patronage relationship there. These NGOs take their resources from international organizations, the European Union, the United Nations, and so on. They manage the source themselves. They go to Diyarbakir and do some works. They work in partnership with a NGO in Diyarbakir. However, the NGO in Diyarbakir does not participate to management equally. Hence, they establish a relationship with the NGO in Diyarbakir which in purpose of dominating it, giving money, delivering information, expertise and know-how. Relation of domination. In other words, a relation of domination similar to the one that the state established in the Kurdish region is also established between these NGOs and the Kurdish NGOs.

On the other hand, in the Kurdish area, both the left-secularist and the Islamic-conservative-oriented NGOs seem to have established partnerships and cooperations on a limited scale. It is seen that Islamic-conservative NGOs are trying to communize policy-making processes on the Kurdish issue. On the other hand, a considerable impact of the mainstream Kurdish movement on the left-secular-oriented NGOs has been politically engaged. It should be noted, however, that there is also a considerable area of civil society that is far from this engagement. One participant from Diyarbakir states that in the Kurdish space, remarkable cooperations in three areas within the left-secular-oriented NGOs have been constructed. The first of these is partnerships formed around rights-based work. Cooperation in the gender field, especially among women’s organizations, is the second area. Finally, it appears that in the field of culture, NGOs have become “easier to recognize each other, to understand each other, to listen to each other, and to be much easier to relate with others”.

4.2. NGO-Politics Relations

In the context of NGO-political relations, four main issues were underlined in the previous sections. Firstly, the vast majority of civil society in Turkey is away from “political” issues. Rights-based NGOs who are in contact with “political” issues do not exceed 15% of the total. Secondly, the vast majority of NGOs that have somehow come into contact with “political” issues are “state-centered” or “state-focused”. These institutions are often located in political matters such as the Kurdish issue, taking into account the position of the state and political power. Thirdly, NGOs are the actors of political polarization that have taken place in the social field in recent years. On the one hand, the tough competition between political actors and its influence on the society spreads to the civil society. On the other hand, the NGOs that are in political engagement, “follow their leader”, and create “civil society ghetto” are recreating this political polarization. Finally, both the state’s active influence on the civilian area and the political engagement of NGOs have narrowed the “gray areas” in the world of NGOs in Turkey, and have limited the influence of NGOs in this field to a great extent.

When we look at the NGO-politics relationship in the 2013-2015, it is seen that the problems experienced in this field continued largely in this period as well. According to the data and observations in the field work, first, the Resolution Process was shaped by dialogue and negotiation among political actors alone. Secondly, the AKP government and the mainstream Kurdish movement have managed the process by developing a limited dialogue even with their own social bases. It has continued largely as a dialogue and negotiation process between the high-ranking political elites. Third was it is seen that both parties have opened up very limited space to NGOs. Fourth, the NGOs took position on the side on which they are mostly politically engaged, and focused largely on the legitimizing activities of the politics they support. Political actors have either tried to find support for their positions or have made “formal” calls to create public opinion, rather than building a genuine dialogue and negotiation environment as NGOs move through themes. Fifth, the AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement have not been in a struggle for creating a remarkable dialogue and negotiation process with the civil society actors in the “opposing neighborhood”. A participant working on NGOs states that the AKP government and HDP excluded even those who have different opinions in their own neighborhood, let alone include the civil society actors in their neighborhood in to the process.

I mean, I see those who have a problem with their own neighborhood, even if they are from that neighborhood, have not participated in that process. The ones who had a problem with HDP, specialized in the Kurdish issue, could contribute to this issue have not been involved in to the process and the ones who was Muslim and conflict, struggle, had a problem with AKP have not been involved in to the process.

In this regard, the NGO representatives in “gray area” in Diyarbakır and Van stated that the AK Party government attaches more importance to contact with civil society actors than HDP. Accordingly, the AKP government has tried to make more use of civil society’s accumulation than HDP. For example, the AK Party government and various public institutions have supported some projects of conflict resolution of some NGOs advocating knowledge-based, and have benefited from the knowledge and experience of these institutions in certain matters. Finally, a limited number of NGOs who prefer to stay in the gray area during this period either have been forced to become parties, or have been instrumentalized or excluded from the process, limiting their impact.

It has been observed that in parallel with the politicization in the social context, NGO community has also experienced a hard politicization and that NGOs mostly prefer to stay in their “political neighborhoods” despite limited initiatives. According to field work data, many NGOs have easily and frequently accessed and developed dialogue with political actors in the Resolution Process. However, this comfort in dialogue does not demonstrate that there is a strong negotiation and collaboration between civil society and the political sphere in Turkey, but rather it refers the existence of a “functional power-union” of NGO-politics relations in large measure. In a clearer sense, actors acting with similar motivations functions that feed each other in different fields.

4.3. NGO-Academy Relations

In the context of institutional partnerships of NGOs, thirdly, the relationship between NGO-academia was examined. Despite a remarkable revival in the Resolution Process, the NGO-academia relationship for the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace is at an ignorable level in an institutional sense. Nevertheless, it has been observed that a considerable level of partnership between NGOs and academics who are particularly interested and engaged in the issue individually has been constructed. On the other hand, almost all participants agree that universities can play a very critical role in solving the problem.

Some participants state that the Kurdish issue has started to find its place

in the Turkish academy, even if it is very limited in recent years. It is expressed that many issues such as mother tongue (first/native/arterial language), conflicts and children, forced migration, gender, state reform, which have never been studied in the past, have become thesis subject and many young academics working in different dimensions of the Kurdish issue in recent years have been educated. Especially in the Resolution Process, these studies have become widespread and more visible. Nevertheless, almost all participants agree that the Turkish academy is not in a good position on the Kurdish issue, conflict resolution and social peace construction. As a matter of fact, as in the past, there was no notable contribution of the universities in the Resolution Process. A rights-based NGO representative based in Ankara describes the vacancy created by universities' staying out-of-process as follows:

It is important that universities were involved in this process. Because this would have an effect on the students. This would affect families through students. Publications would multiply, scientific publications. Research would be conducted, scientific research. Their international relations are very good. From there, Turkey would be supported faster and these would contribute positively. But this has not happened.

Academy – power relations

Most of the NGO representatives interviewed regard the relationship between universities and government and political power in Turkey and the lack of administrative, financial, and scientific autonomy of the universities as the most important reason limiting the relationship between the NGO and the academia in the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace. The first issue underlined in this regard is the influence of the “official ideology” on the universities. According to a participant working on NGOs, “the university turned into an institution that the official ideology of the state intervened and shaped as it wanted, in the real sense”. A rights-based NGO representative in Istanbul states that the influence of the official ideology makes the universities ineffective about the Kurdish issue, one of the most important problems of the country:

For God's sake, can someone ask “what's in the academy except for three to five very specific studies?”. At most you can count a few academics who work on this issue. Maybe you can count eight, and I can count ten. That is all. But what is the thesis that the university has produced for 30 years on the Kurdish issue that has affected freedoms, democratic standards, economy and human resources so much in the society? What about it? See TMMOB is a professional organization. TMMOB has a report on conflicts, a period of time, something that it produces. Or the Human Rights Association. An association that is not a group of experts, but a non-gov-

ernmental organization. Is there anything from any university about conflict resolution? This is Turkey's conflict resolution. This is the problem of Turkey. Every university has a faculty of economics, an economics faculty, there is a faculty of law.

An NGO representative from Diyarbakir goes one step further and states that the official ideology is not limited to the universities, but is also produced by the universities themselves. Accordingly, universities in Turkey are "advocating the official ideology". An NGO representative working in the gender field in Van expresses how universities produce the official ideology with the following words:

I see that a person in the academy is doing immigration work without referring to the Kurdish issue. There was a symposium on tribalism in Van, 100th Anniversary University, and I joined it. For example, there were some theses and presentations made there. The presentation was completely established in the state language. They were using jargon that the state used completely. So, academy does not really meet what society needs for this war to end, the academy is doing what state needs.

With the influence of the official ideology, the academy in Turkey is away from the social problem areas, which also affects its institutional structure. For example, another NGO representative, known for his/her Islamic-conservative references in Diyarbakir, reminds us that there are no universities specializing in social sciences in Turkey, and that in universities these areas are weak as "originated from structural problems". Because of these structural problems, the universities are far from being a solution to social problems, and they are nothing but an educational institution. According to a rights-based NGO representative in Ankara, the academy in Turkey does not consider itself responsible for the Kurdish problem, and there are only a handful of people in the academy who are interested in social issues. "The academy lives considerably far from the realities of Turkey". The academics who are interested in social problems are also people who work in social sciences. According to a rights-based NGO representative in Van, "there is no difference between the university and any governmental agency such as security directorate, or office of mufti".

On the other hand, according to an NGO representative working in the field of human rights and health, universities are ineffective not only in the Kurdish issue, but in many fields, and cannot establish a bond with not only social field through NGOs, but also, for instance, with technology production:

Of course, non-governmental organizations and academia should be an integral part. Because what the academy produces must be a part of the healthier reconstruction of non-governmental organizations and society. But academy how much possibly part of the technology production, so, it can be part of reconstruction of the civil society and society. In fact, we are talking about an academic away from the field and from practice. Which should not be like that. For example, in social sciences, academics do not even go to college in the summer. Nobody sees their face. Are they on the field? No, they are not on the field. Maybe only archaeologists are in the field because they go an excavation. Apart from them, none of them are on the field.

Academy and scientific freedom

In addition to the effect of the official ideology, secondly, many participants underline the obstacles stemming from the institutional structure of universities. A participant working in the field of NGOs emphasizes the hegemony of the Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu - YÖK*) on universities. According to this, the structural problems of YÖK, the hegemony of YÖK on its own and on universities make such cooperation impossible. According to a representative of NGO in Diyarbakir, advocating based on the knowledge, the cooperation of NGO-academia in this area will not be possible as long as the universities do not work in peace processes themselves:

The YÖK-centered, state-centered university structure, the absence of autonomous universities in Turkey, prevent these studies from being carried out within the university. It is impossible to carry out a study that cannot be done within university by university-NGO partnership. There is no way to fix this. As long as there are no free, autonomous universities in Turkey, I do not think it is possible to work on the peace process with the university - NGO partnership.

In addition to the institutional structure of the YÖK, some participants also point out that the universities have their own problems. A rights-based NGO representative states that universities are very timid in the face of social problems such as the Kurdish issue and that they act with “civil servant mentality and logic”. It is another point underlined that, as well as the institutional structure, the academics working in these institutions avoid from social issue with various individual concerns such as not building career, losing their jobs, being blacklisted and exclusion, and refrain from doing business in this respect.

NGO representatives interviewed in Diyarbakir and Van are particularly critical of the regional universities for not contributing to the solution of

the Kurdish issue. For example, a representative of an NGO known for his/her Islamic-conservative identity in Diyarbakir evaluates the situation of universities on social peace construction by giving Dicle University as an example:

Between the NGOs and the academy, I speak for the Diyarbakir, no connection was established. If we give the Dicle University as an example, what is the contribution of the Dicle University to the solution of the Kurdish issue? It's far behind than any other university in the west. The fact that a university like the Dicle University, which is at the heart of the Kurdish problem, does not have a perspective like the Kurdish problem is a serious nuisance.

Another point is the political polarization between academics who are interested in social issues. Some participants argue that polarization which is experienced in social and political contexts, also spread to academics. Accordingly, academics who are interested in social issues and participate in NGO activities often only work with NGOs they see close to them and do not make a remarkable effort to contact different groups and work together. The tendency to “stay in its own political neighborhood” among academics is quite widespread and powerful, as it is in the political and civilian field.

Despite all these limits, many participants remind us that some state and private universities have made various efforts in recent years. Bilgi University, Sabancı University, Marmara University, Boğaziçi University, Hacettepe University and Ankara University are the main universities mentioned by participants. Some of these universities have various institutional activities in the context of conflict resolution and social peace construction. There are also research centers, graduate programs and certificate programs for the civil society.

As regards the NGO-academy relationship, some participants point out that knowledge-based NGOs have recently been conducting important work in social problem areas and offer significant contributions to other NGOs. The most important feature of this contribution is that these knowledge-based NGOs are mostly made up of academics or their projects are carried out by academics.

NGO - academic relations

Both the restrictive effect on the universities of the state and the limited contribution of the academic institution in Turkey to the Kurdish issue due to the concrete institutional structure has caused many academics who work on the subject to participate individually in the works done in the

field of civil society. It is difficult to talk about the relationship between NGO and academy in Turkey with the expression of a rights-based NGO representative in Ankara, and there is largely a NGO – academic relationship. Despite the negative attitude of the universities, most participants appreciate the individual efforts of some academics, even in limited numbers. As confirmed by fieldwork, there are academics in many NGO projects. A rights-based NGO representative in Diyarbakir expresses this in the following words:

NGO and academy relations in Turkey are not really strong. Its situation is not good. Sabancı University has been doing this a little bit recently. This is actually something about the structure of the academy in Turkey. It is about academics' freedom. We are working with a lot of lecturers from Marmara University, we do a lot of work from Ege University, Dicle University. But this is not an institutional cooperation. Even when you get in contact with institutional identity, the study you did with lecturers will be blocked. Therefore, we are doing a lot of work with academics and lecturers who are our associates, are specialized in these works, and do activities in these fields.

It seems that this area has considerable problems notwithstanding that there is certain relationship between NGOs and academics. According to an NGO representative known as an Islamic-conservative in Van, academics and NGOs are stranger to each other. According to this, academics are establishing a hierarchical relationship with NGOs and positioning themselves on a higher level. On the other hand, NGOs do not take advantage of the accumulation of academics, but rather abstain from cooperation showing this hierarchical relationship reason. Nonetheless, civil society actors can work with academics, especially on what might be the role of NGOs in conflict resolution and social peace-construction.

Another problem area underlined by participants in the context of the NGO-academics is lack of knowledge based on field research. Some participants state that academics can provide a great deal of support to NGOs and that they can get support from NGOs on the field, especially in field works. However, according to participants, academics in Turkey are reluctant to do field research. In Istanbul, an Islamic conservative NGO representative points out that academics are very active in commenting on the media, but have hardly taken part in civil society and fieldwork. According to the participant, the civil society and the politics need for information based on field research, and Turkey has a major deficiency in this issue. Yet, they are trying to meet their own needs as an institution. A civil society activist working in the gender field in Ankara states that NGOs generate considerable field knowledge, which is a great source for

academics, but that academics are also passive in the sense of benefiting from NGO works, not just in providing support to NGOs. Another point that is underlined in this regard is the tendency of “populism”. As in some NGO representatives, populist tendencies are very strong in the academic field, and most academics are seeking to be popular with comments rather than with long-term, labor-demanding researches.

On the other hand, the weakness of the NGO-academy relationship is not solely due to academy and academics. For example, a participant working on NGOs states that the tendency to work with experts and academics within NGOs is very weak. Expert knowledge is not consulted in most cases during the preparation of the projects. As long as the projects are compulsory in times of crisis, academics are consulted as specialists. Projects are being consulted by academics as experts, in times of crisis. Another participant working on NGOs states that the academy has not done much work on the Kurdish issue, but along with it, civil society has not force the academy in this area. However, the knowledge produced by the academy must be operationalized by civil society actors in the field:

What do we actually expect from academy? They should produce information about how the conflict resolution processes are experienced in the world, right? Or they should produce information about what the dynamics behind the deadlock of the Kurdish issue in Turkey are. For example, we wait for these kinds of things. Civil society is capable of translating it into operations when it receives such information. I think the civil society does not get the support of the academy much in this sense. They do not get support of the academy to learn and understand how such issues are resolved in the world. They even go and try to understand this directly; many non-governmental organizations are doing trips to explore examples around the world, going into things. I cannot say that the academy is feeding there very well. But secondly, civil society does not force academy too much. So, study it, produce knowledge of it for me, you produce knowledge, I carry it operationally with the knowledge you produce. I will make different applications that will solve conflicts in social sphere.

Lastly, concerning the Kurdish issue and the NGO-academia relationship in the field of social peace construction, most participants points out that the situation is much worse today. Accordingly, the detentions, arrests and widespread exports, especially after the declaration made by the “Academics for Peace” for urban conflicts, have almost neutralized the academy, which is already very troubled in Turkey. One participant from Van described this as “no one left to speak in the universities demanding peace”. A representative of a rights-based NGO throughout Turkey describes the academic environment after the State of Emergency as “a bureaucratic environment that operates under chain of command”.

This affected not only individual academics, but also many NGOs working with academics. Some participants state that they have been working with many academics before, today they are experiencing a lot of difficulties in this regard. On the other hand, some interviewees point out that when they determine the academics who will work in their project, they take into account the political atmosphere and how the academics are perceived by the government, as well as the quality of the work done. For example, an NGO representative working in the field of gender and economy expresses the fact that when choosing academics to take part in their projects, they have to take into account that whether they have signed the Academics for Peace's call text or not: "When we were choosing academics, we also had worry for 'not choosing Peace signer'. Because they would kill the baby before birth. They would not take our report in consideration". In summary, the already problematic NGO-academy relationship, after the State of Emergency, experienced a recession which takes a long time to repair it.

4.4. NGO - Media Relations

Finally, NGO-media relations have been examined in terms of institutional partnerships of NGOs in the Resolution Process. Most of the participants point out that as over civil society field, there is state and political power dominance over media field. Because of this dominance relationship, just as civil society, mainstream media are state-oriented, state-centered. Therefore, they take positions according to the position the state has taken regarding the Kurdish issue. Throughout the Resolution Process as AK Party government has taken the issue into political grounds and for the first time managed the process relatively open to the public opinion, media, in general, supported this process. The mainstream media supporting the process also opened up some space for NGOs working on this issue. With the AK Party's government taking a negative attitude towards the process, the media has also renewed its position by keeping up with this change. Especially after the July 15, 2016 military coup attempt, a large majority of the mainstream media came under the government's control and orbit.

Media-economy-politics relations

Many participants attribute the relationship of domination between the state and government and the media field to the media-economy-politics relationship. Accordingly, today, the mainstream media are largely in the hands of large investment groups, and these groups are politically dependent because of economic benefits. Therefore, mainstream media

organizations in Turkey are not based on public interest but rather on the economic interests of the investment group to which they are affiliated and they therefore associate with political institution. State and political institutions in Turkey, in the favour of their power and dominance over the economic field, either get under control or neutralize investment groups and their mainstream media organs.

According to many participants, in the Resolution Process, the mainstream media had a positive attitude in parallel with the state. An NGO representative in Diyarbakır who is a knowledge-based advocate states that, the mainstream media could not exactly clarify where to take the position because we experienced the peace process for the first time, but it also made a significant contribution to the process. Because, with the relief in the political atmosphere, the mainstream media played a positive role in the construction of social peace. However, because of the dependency relations between the media-economy-politics, the mainstream media is quickly stepping back in the face of a negative attitude of the government. In this sense, it can be said that the mainstream media in Turkey generally have an attitude according to the political power of the government. An NGO representative working in the field of confrontation the past and justice expresses the rapidly changing attitude of the media during and after the process as follows: “As a general thing, the language of the media was, yes, relatively much better. But it quickly turned to offensive language. For example, that language changed in a day. There was no trace from it.” An NGO representative, known with his/her an Islamic-conservative identity in Van, describes the relationship established between the civil society and the media as a “periodic relationship” in the process:

In the Resolution Process, NGOs were on television all the time. They had contacts with the media, had statements, or sent letters. When the issue was terminated or the option changed, the civil society's bond between media was automatically broke. It was a periodical relationship. This is not a very acceptable situation, actually.

An NGO representative in Ankara, who do activity in the gender field, states that the media is power-oriented in Turkey. Accordingly, when you look at the general media, we can say that it is a media producing discourse in the direction that the government desires. Again, an NGO representative known for his/her Islamic-conservative identity working in the field of humanitarian aid argues that, as well as the social and civilian field, the media is also power-oriented, and that this was also valid in the Resolution Process and afterwards:

For the first time, in the matter of southeastern issue, the media, the civil society and the government have focused on the same issue at the same time. But once the Resolution Process was over, everything was over. It was the same thing again. In other words, in Turkey, the intellectuals, the media and the civil society always go by the power. If politics are in line with the power, there is no problem. But if the government take a negative attitude about a situation, the media, the intellectuals and the civil society are dissident and split there.

An NGO representative focusing on women works states that, such as the academy, the media is also an insecure field and therefore most of the employees in these fields mince their words in most instances:

I mean, neither academy nor media are the areas where you can stay when you tell the truth in any particular subject. There is no guarantee of academic staff; for being expelled, being prevented. We have also such examples. They did not allow an academic who worked on the Kurdish issue in ODTÜ (Middle East Technical University) for many years to become a professor. Other universities have other forms. These areas are not reliable areas. These are the places where the words that people can say -regardless of the person- are very limited.

A significant number of participants argue that the mainstream media, after the Resolution Process, especially after July 15, came under much more control of political power. This have an effect directly on the works for the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace. According to a NGO representative in Diyarbakir who is advocating knowledge-based, “the state is not talking about the solution at the moment. It does not want the media to speak either. Now, the media is hesitant to put forth a policy, a study, out of the government’s in every dimension”. Another participant from Diyarbakir states that this situation is not specific to the government and that every political movement is doing the same. According to the participant, the people on the media before and after the Resolution Process radically changed with the activities of discrediting and popularization.

An NGO representative working in the field of human rights in Diyarbakir notes that some of their institutional activities were in the mainstream media during the Resolution Process, but today people who “win a qualifying test” are on the media. What’s more, during the Resolution Process, the media played a role in preparing the society to the political resolution. Today however, movies, series, which deal with the Resolution Process negatively are playing in all of the mainstream TV channels. By the expression of a participant, in these series “district governors are arming and going into combat in mountains, hills, incliness”. In this sense, the

mainstream media does not only include different voices, promulgate militarism, and prepares a militarist society.

Media and political polarization

In addition to the domination of the state and political power over the media, secondly, some participants state that social and political polarization has spread to the field of media as well as to the civil society. According to this, the social polarization in Turkey is all over the politics, civil society, academy and media. According to a participant working on NGOs, fronts have emerged in Turkey as a result of polarization, and political institutions, civil society, academia and the media are acting in unison on every front, and today, the channels of dialogue between these fronts are quite limited:

I think there is such a triple cluster on the Kurdish issue, and each of those triple clusters have their own NGOs, their own media and their own academics. So, there are two or three places where you can find news of NGOs closer to those who are left-leaning today, for example. What are they? There is Birgün, online T24, Diken and so on. But the NGOs close to the state have everything. The Kurdish movement has another. And nationalists have other things. Therefore, this polarization is so under our skin, academy, media, NGO, all of them go on as a cluster.

A representative of an NGO known for its Islamic-conservative identity in Van, indicates that the government media and the media close to mainstream Kurdish movement are not impartial and independent reminding that this polarization experienced between AK Party and HDP in the region. The representative states that there is a “statist” press on one side and a media “making propaganda for an organization” on the other. The representative argues that, in the Resolution Process, the voice of the NGOs especially in Van, was not heard much by the dominant media organs, especially because of this situation.

Institutional problems of the media

Some participants point out that the mainstream media’s negative attitude towards the Kurdish issue and social peace is not only about the relationship between media-economy-politics. Accordingly, the normative framework of the mainstream media is also problematic in this regard. They argue that the idea of “don’t let the Kurdish see his/her mother”, which is dominant in Turkish politics, is widely adopted in the mainstream media. In this sense, the media alone cannot be seen as an actor who “has to make” what politicians and capital say. The media on the Kurdish

issue is not free from issues related to the normative framework such as nationalism, militarism, exclusion, ignorance, underrating. In many cases, it is an actor who reproduces and disseminates this normative framework. For example, an NGO representative working in the field of losses suggests that the mainstream media almost always “promulgates the official ideology”, not just in the Resolution Process.

Some participants remark the language of the mainstream media. There is a “need for a terminology, a language that construct a language of peace, present the resolution process to the attention”, according to an Islamic conservative NGO representative who is a rights-based advocate. But even in the opponent media, which is seen as a party to social peace aside from the mainstream media, “a language which is always otherizing, insulting, I speak for the most part, in terms of both opponent media and media we can term opponent, showing no respect is predominant”.

Some participants also point out that the personal/intellectual capacities of media workers are also very important. They remind that people who are an announcer or anchorperson on television channels play a critical role. They state that journalists should have intellectual/theoretical accumulation, historical and geographical knowledge relating to the issue. However, most employees and reporters do not have enough accumulation in this regard.

NGOs-based problems

In addition to media-related problems, some participants point to problems stemming from the NGOs themselves. The first issue underlined by NGO-related issues is the capacity of civil society actors to mobilize mainstream media. Some participants state that NGOs do not pay enough attention to accessing the mainstream media, contacting and developing relationships, which is a considerable capacity issue. Accordingly, the structural problems of the mainstream media constitute a major obstacle for NGOs. However, it cannot be said that NGOs have made sufficient efforts to force these boundaries and to use existing facilities. An NGO advocate in Van explains this as a weakness of civil society’s “perception-managing” capacity:

In civil society there is an inability to manage the perception or to maintain the mentality. It is society’s fault. This is about supply and demand. You do not need to transform your mentality. Or the media is not interested in you too much if you do not impose yourself. It is civil society’s problem. So, they can go and create very good perceptions about this position, they can make very good contacts and connections. Issues are managed

over perceptions and today media manage the perception. This is a serious shortcoming.

A participant working on NGOs suggests that there are structural problems of the media in NGO-media relationship, and that the main problem is related to NGOs. Accordingly, civil society actors cannot produce “representable content for the media”. This is a major obstacle in the fact that NGOs are not adequately represented on the media:

In other words, I do not think that NGOs in Turkey are successful in carrying their issues to the media. The content that NGOs produce cannot appear on the media. I think NGOs produce two types of text, two types of content. One of them is redundant, tough texts which are hard to read, understand and operate. These are big, deep reports that I think they are doing works what the academy should do. Secondly, NGOs write political texts, that is, propaganda texts. An environment NGO sends a text imposing its position to reader, which makes a beginning with “Hardly a day passes without ecocide, environment slaughter”. So, the citizen does not establish that ties with the NGO. Media never does it. These are not texts to be represented in the media.

NGOs and “dissident” media

As a consequence of the capture of the mainstream media by the economy and politics, many NGOs operating on “sensitive” issues such as the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace can find place in the “dissident” media that can address the limited segments of society. A participant working on NGOs states that despite all the limits of the dissident media, it provides chances to civil society:

It is necessary to divide the media into two on this categorization issue. First of them, what we term mainstream media or pool media, in a colloquial manner, is a field that does not take civil society seriously into consideration and has a very different perspective. There is also another section that is out of this. There is a field that exists through media which we term internet media. There are also projections in print, in written. This field is a bit closer to civil society. Relations with these are more common. I can say that second part is civil society world oriented. This is an opportunity in terms of civil society. And these are really creating new opportunities when everytime the state turns towards them, to be able to open up again, to make themselves heard again.

Many participants remind that within the scope of the State of Emergency declared after 15 July, majority of the opponent media organs which gave wide coverage to Kurdish issue, positioned in the field of social peace construction, published systematically in this issue were closed and oppo-

ment journalists were arrested. The opposition media field are too narrow today. In this sense, it is important to note that the opportunities available today are too limited. Moreover, as the participant underlined, civil society actors' having access to the mainstream media in order to reach broader social segments is important, even if the alternative/dissident media provide considerable opportunities to the NGOs.

Social media

Social media is another area that has become widespread in the field of civil society in recent years in reaching broad social segments. NGOs generally view social media as an alternative medium for publicizing their activities. However, they point out that the social media field has considerable limits. In this sense, social media is often considered as a complementary field to traditional media. Although many participants are aware of the growing impact of social media, they underline that NGOs are making a limited investment in this area. Participants underline some of the threats in the matter of social media.

Most NGO representatives emphasize that the growing importance of social media tools like twitter, facebook, periscope to make the voice of NGOs heard. Some participants emphasize the increasing importance of social media in the world of communication on a global scale, independent of the context in Turkey. It is reminded that especially young people use social media in a very common and effective manner. Accordingly, social media is increasingly being used by all communities, especially the young population, as an alternative communication and news channel. Although it is not systematic, it seems that the NGO world is involved in social media in parallel with change in social field.

Some participants underline this tendency in the global dimension as well as the context in Turkey. Accordingly, the state and political domination over traditional mainstream media have led many actors, including NGOs, to social media. A NGO representative working on the information-based advocacy claims that social media, especially after 15 July, is “the only alternative” and “a strong alternative”. Another participant working in the field of law and justice defines social media as an “compulsory alternative”, recalling that with the State of Emergency, political power has increased its dominance over traditional media and that opponent media organs have been closed down.

However, some participants state that the pressures on social media in Turkey considerably reduce the effectiveness of this field. For NGOs to use

these areas effectively, it is necessary to first “decriminalization activities that are universally accepted at the global level and fall within the freedom of expression and thought”. Because, in the expression of a participant, “the jurisdiction in Turkey remains incapable account on this issue”. In this regard, an NGO representative working in the gender field in Van reminds of widespread arrests due to social media sharing. Again, an NGO representative working in gender field in Ankara underlines that there is a widespread self-censorship in Turkey regarding the use of social media.

Some observers state that NGOs have reached very limited levels of traditional media in Turkey, but however they can release their activities to the public more effectively through social media. An NGO representative working in the field of humanitarian aid expresses that social media has become some kind of means of transport NGOs to people and they use it very effectively. An NGO representative known as Islamic-conservative in Diyarbakir expresses that the most important indicator of the effect of social media is the number of people reached, and states that NGOs have reached far more people with social media:

Social media has become a serious alternative for both civil society and written, verbal media. That is, a tweet shared by a person with 10 thousand, 15 thousand followers, or a share diffused by facebook user can easily reach three or five thousand people. So, when you look today on a local basis, the best local newspapers’ reading level is one thousand – one thousand and five hundred. So when you look nationally, if the best national newspaper sells seven hundred and eight hundred thousand, then, there are two hundred and three hundred thousand readers. It may not be two hundred or three hundred thousand sometimes. But a tweet that someone has written can reach hundreds and thousands of people.

Another participant noted that it is possible to influence traditional media through social media. Because, when NGOs are effective in the field of social media, the effect that emerges here is also reflected in the traditional media and it is possible to get a place there.

An NGO representative working in the field of women and economy in Diyarbakir also states that they have much more control over social media, they can customize their own news and create “some sort of their own media”. Accordingly, there is no or very limited chance that NGOs will lead the traditional media. The information produced by NGOs is organized by media organizations according to their priorities, and in most cases, they narrow down and sometimes manipulate and publish it. On the other hand, NGOs have much more control over social media and they can directly shape and convey the messages through their “own press”.

In the context of social media and NGO relations, most participants argue that social media contributes to democratization. Social media that create opportunities for organization, transparency and social bridging can be an alternative field for NGOs. Accordingly, social media contributes to organizing by providing fast and effective communication. It also benefits transparency by making it possible to access different sources of news and making confidentiality difficult. Finally, it creates opportunities to build social bridges by creating opportunities to reach different social segments. Most participants agree that social media is effective in the context of the first two functions. Nevertheless, most participants have negative attitudes in the regard of reaching different groups and building social bridges. Because, social media also has groupings and people often reach similar people. According to a participant working on NGOs, the most critical issue in social media is to go beyond “own community”:

If classic mass that you always address sees your posts, if they are following, if you cannot go beyond them, you are actually broadcasting to your own community, only those who follow you. This is probably the most critical issue is how we will go beyond it.

On the other hand, most participants indicate that social media is not used effectively by NGOs and that there is not enough investment in this area. According to an interviewee in Diyarbakir who is advocating knowledge-based, civil society does not fully benefit from social media. “They do not have accumulation in this subject, no knowledge, no self-development. Rather, one or two people in NGOs undertake this fatigue duty”. A representative of a NGO founded by the business community states that most NGOs, including employer organizations, have serious institutionalization problems, limited financial resources, and lack of qualified staff. All these aspects prevent NGOs from using social media effectively. However, in a limited way, some NGOs seem to have paid considerable attention and invested in this area. A participant working on NGOs, in particular, states that institutionalized organizations use social media better. NGOs advocating knowledge-based, human rights organizations and professional organizations use social media better in this sense.

Many participants underline the limits of social media as well as the opportunities it offers. A NGO representative working in the human rights field in Diyarbakir states that social media cannot be an alternative to traditional media, especially television, because it allows to reach a very limited segment in the numerical sense. In addition, a major part of the people reached is already using social media with special interest and can reach alternative information. Except this group, the number of new people reached through social media is rather limited. A rights-based NGO

representative in Van underlines the limited use of social media, especially among citizens living in the countryside, and that it is impossible for NGOs to reach people widely through social media alone. According to an NGO representative working in the field of conflict-sensitive social cohesion in Istanbul, while it is a good way to access the younger generation, social media is not a useful tool for reaching the middle and upper age groups. An NGO representative working in the human rights field in Ankara draws attention to the relationship between social media and the class. According to this, social media is widely used by the middle and upper class, but the opportunities for using the social media by the poor, who have limited access to resources such as smartphones and continuous internet connection, are very limited.

At this point, some participants state that social media should be viewed as a “complementary” field rather than an alternative field. An NGO representative working in the field of human rights in Ankara expresses this complementary feature of social media with the following words:

It is needed to use all the media tools at the same time. Of course, social media should be used. It's contribution in visibility, recognition, awareness studies is great. But unless there is an individual face to face communication, it is an illusion that communication is established only with the social media. In order to modify a behavior, it is necessary to look eyes to eyes at the same place.

In this regard, a participant in Ankara who advocates knowledge-based, states NGOs should insist on access to the traditional media. The relationship between NGOs and traditional media contributes to the NGO community as well as to the media itself: “I think NGOs should not aim to social media. We should not leave mainstream media. Because if the mainstream media finish with NGOs, human rights organizations and women's organizations, it may be worse.”

Participants also underline problems stemming from social media-related. An NGO representative working in the field of women and economy states that there is a monopolization in social media as well as in traditional media, and these monopolies direct social media. An information-based advocate in Diyarbakir claims that social media also de-mobilize people. According to this, instead people are really involved in social events, they “confess their sins with a tweet”. A participant working in the gender field in Istanbul agrees with this view and argues that social media prevents the development of social movements in a real sense by substituting direct contact and communication. An NGO representative working on children states that in some cases it is possible to react through social media but

it is hardly possible to “touch and contact” with people through this field.

A rights-based NGO representative in Van reminds us that social media is easy to manipulation at the same time. Most information can change while roaming in social media, or some groups can deliberately change the content of this information. A NGO representative working in the social welfare field in Istanbul states that social media is open to provocations and that the values you build with years of labor as an institution can be destroyed in a social media through perception operation:

You may have worked in something a year-long and arranged finances. And you have a responsibility. How do you take responsibility? You have a corporation, you have donors, members, a state, jurisdiction, law and society to account for. Am I clear? There is no such thing in social media. At most, you can counteract through jurisdiction if a threat constitutes a crime. But your efforts can be upside-down without a crime. After all, the ones who operate perception do not give an account of their acts. An irresponsible area. Because it is irresponsible, it is dangerous.

Some participants underline the polarizing effect of social media. According to an NGO representative working in the field of humanitarian aid, discriminating, calls for violence, hate-making discourses can easily and widely get into circulation in fields which social polarization is deep, such as the Kurdish issue. A participant in information-based advocacy in Istanbul states that with social media, information is no longer hidden and that people can access different information about the same situation, in this sense social media contributes to democratization. However, “the social media, which is an uncontrolled area, makes the parties very hard, which makes them very strict. Reasonable one disappears there”. According to a rights-based NGO representative in Ankara, this uncontrollable led to “informatics ignorance” and made it possible to “build a sector of trolling for the power holders”. According to the participant, because of the “controllessness” itself turned into the ontological nature of the process, the power groups turned social media into a field where “they can control society by uncontrolled information”.

To summarize, there are considerable problems in institutional partnerships established by civil society in Turkey. It is necessary for NGOs to be able to improve their institutional partnerships as well as their own institutional structures for the political solution of the Kurdish issue and contribution to the construction of social peace. In this section, NGO-NGO, NGO-politics, NGO-academy and NGO-media relations were discussed in the context of institutional partnerships and the problems experienced were summarized. Before moving on to the proposed role of the NGOs

on the political resolution of the Kurdish issue, it is useful to look at the possibilities and limits of a new negotiation and reconciliation process. The next chapter is about this issue.

5. NEGOTIATION AND CONSENSUS POSSIBILITIES ON THE KURDISH ISSUE

There is a general agreement among NGOs that a process of negotiation and reconciliation towards the political resolution of the Kurdish issue will resume. Most of the participants underline that there is no option other than the “table”. Participants, however, argue that it is difficult to start a new negotiation and reconciliation process in the short term, given the current circumstances. Often reminded date or turning point is 2019 presidential elections. Accordingly, political turbulence in Turkey may come to an end with elections. The Kurdish issue can see a function in the ending of this political turbulence or it can come into political agenda in the frame of negotiation and consensus after the end of political turbulence. Some participants underline the role of political actors mainly for a new process, while others point out that rather than political actors, civil society actors must take part.

On the other hand, most participants indicate that a new negotiation and reconciliation process will be different from the previous process. The new geopolitical equation of the Kurdish issue, the continuing crises in Iraq and Syria, where global forces are involved in, its reflections on the Kurdish issue, the city-conflicts and their consequences, and the actors of the negotiation process are the main focuses of the discussions in the regard of “novelties”.

5.1. A New Negotiation and Consensus Process?

There is a normative consensus among the participants that there is no option other than a political resolution in the Kurdish issue and that a new negotiation and reconciliation process will start again. Most participants state that such a solution is not possible in the short term, but the issue will come back to the table. The main arguments put forward about “the inevitability of the table” are as follows:

- The widespread societal segments’ demands of peace and political solution,

- As the world experiences show, the fact that such conflicts often result in reconciliation,
- The centurial history of the Kurdish issue and the fact that sufficient knowledge and experience has emerged that it cannot be solved through violent,
- The fact that the Kurdish population dynamics and socio-political mobilization make it impossible to direct and suppress the problem with “violence-based” means,
- The fact that it is not possible for the two parties to annihilate each other physically,
- The fact that there is a widespread belief that the issue cannot be solved through violent within the Kurds and that political resolution is the only option,
- The fact that the mainstream Kurdish movement can not be reduced to the KCK, and has already included the mass and widespread socio-political mobilizations beyond the armed movement,
- The fact that the Kurdish issue has exceeded national level,
- The fact that the “cost” of the Kurdish conflict is increasing day by day,
- With the inclusion of global forces such as Russia and the United States, the increasing further of the cost of the Kurdish issue in terms of Turkey,
- Considering political stability, investments and economic growth, the fact that security policies and conflicts are not “sustainable” for Turkey,
- The existence of a deep integration between Kurds and the rest of the country at the social level in Turkey,
- Social fatigue caused by conflicts that are widespread among the broader social segments, especially among the Kurds.

Although there is a normative consensus among NGO representatives

that there will be no solution other than politics, most of the participants think that it is not possible to turn back to a negotiation and reconciliation option in the short term. In this context, civil society actors generally point out that Turkey is drawing a “unpredictable” table, and it is very difficult to have a new negotiation process and a consensus process in this table in short term. The views of a participant on NGOs summarize the general trend in this regard:

I am not sure that none of us really have an idea about what kind of a place is Turkey going to be until the 2019 presidential elections. Everything we say would be prophecy. There are a lot of factors. America-Turkey relations, Europe-Turkey relations seems to be a factor here. Where will happen in Syria, whether the Kurds will be autonomous there or not, and Turkey's tendency in this issue, they all seem to be a factor. However, the Kurdish issue now became a historical issue having international background that ever before. There are so many actors here, there are many factors, many dynamics. I am not very hopeful that this whole multi-player, multi-actor, multi-dynamic environment is going to produce a resolution process in the short run.

The vast majority of participants state that the current situation is already making the process of negotiation and reconciliation impossible in the short term referring to the effects of the city conflicts, the ongoing conflicts in the Kurdish issue, the arrest of the key persons of the legal Kurdish politics, the increasing restrictions on the freedom of thought and expression and the freedom of association, the closure of the NGOs and media organizations and common dismissing from professions within the scope of the State of Emergency. In this regard, secondly, references are made to developments in Syria and Iraq. Accordingly, the course of the Syrian crisis, what kind of a path the Kurdish formation there will follow, the ongoing crisis and emerged uncertainties in IKR, deactivate negotiations and consensus options in the Kurdish issue for the short term in Turkey.

In this regard, some participants argue that the AK Party government has brought “sustainable” balance with the “security policies”. According to a NGO representative working in the field of conflict-sensitive social cohesion,

Turkey is managing a sustainable process with security policies, at least in Turkey. I mean 15 July, FETÖ issue, struggle against this is somewhat in balance within itself -we term this balance in engineering-. There is no need to change this balance.

According to the participant, the AK Party government, at least until the elections, may respect the Kurdish identity and focus on economic invest-

ments and support the Islamic NGOs, madrasahs and imam hatip high schools in the region and on the other hand may continue the existing security policies.

In this regard, small part of the participants state that elections can also create an opportunity to negotiate and consensus. Accordingly, the Kurdish issue determines the results of elections in Turkey. Taking into account the Kurdish votes, the government may take some steps in the context of recognition of the rights even if the government does not negotiate with the mainstream Kurdish movement as before. According to a knowledge-based NGO representative in Istanbul, the government needs a success story and it is likely that the government will take steps taking the Kurdish votes into consideration for influencing election results:

I think that government take a step about these rights of the Kurdish people, equal citizenship. Because the government also needs a success story. I do not think a government that does nothing in this area can manage a very sustainable Turkey. In all elections, we see how the Kurdish regions' votes change election results and that votes' effects on the political equation in Turkey. But I think as in the past, the process we saw at the end of 2012 and between 2013-2015, seems to be a more difficult process.

One of the most underlined issues about the possible innovations of the negotiation and consensus process is the new geopolitical equation of the Kurdish issue. The first issue pointed out by the participants in this regard is that the possibilities for considering and solving the Kurdish issue in the context of Turkey's borders are now less than in the past. In this sense, Turkey has to take Kurdish issues in neighbouring countries into account while looking for a solution to its own problem and finding solution to Kurdish issue with cross-border perspective. Often reminded issue is the ongoing civil war in Syria and Iraq and the search of Kurds and political actors in these countries.

Ankara-centred rights-based NGO representative states that Turkey has lost the chance to solve the issue on its own. According to the participants who reminded the discussion of the Observation Commission, Turkey, which has not established its own "national arbitration committee", will probably face the international observers' delegation in a new negotiation and consensus process. While Turkey has the chance to manage the issue on the regional scale, today it is a country that is not affecting but affected:

I think this was an issue that Turkey could solve in 2013 with its national possibilities. But we wasted it. Since it could not establish its own arbitra-

tion commission, it wasted. There will be no turning back. Now it is possible only with the international observer commission. This was already an international issue. But there was not this situation we see in Rojava. If Turkey had succeeded in itself, it could be a model to both Barzani, Iraqi Kurdistan and Rojava. Now developments there are a model to Turkey. Process is reversed now. For example, how many Kurds are there in Turkey? 20 million. We do not know let's suppose. 20 million need to affect 3 million, mathematically. But now the political gains of a 3 million people will press here.

Second underdrawn point in the context of new geopolitical equation is actors. Accordingly, Turkey had a possibility to solve the Kurdish Issue in its own. However, global forces such as the US, EU and Russia are directly involved in the Kurdish issue, which its cross-border character become the primary axis. Many participants agree that the position of cross-border actors will be a much more controversial topic in a possible negotiation and consensus process. Some participants perceive this as positive, while others regard it as a serious danger. On the other hand, some participants argue that Turkey can solve the issue approaching it as a "domestic issue" and that this opportunity is not missed. Accordingly, the main determinant dynamics are parties' and "mostly the state's will".

Participants, in the matter of innovation, lastly focus on the local actors of the negotiation process finally. Accordingly, a new negotiation and consensus process may not take place directly between the organization and the government as it was before. With different actors, with different processes a new reconciliation is possible. The main thing that stands out in this regard is that the state can recognize "the rights of the Kurds" independently of negotiation with the organization. The mainstream Kurdish movement, which regards the political resolution of the Kurdish issue as its own political/ideological priorities and demands that it must be accepted as an interlocutor, can resist this resolution. However, such an option can be brought to agenda. Some participants point out that the state can take some steps in the matter of rights, in this regard, unlike the past, it can exclude the mainstream Kurdish movement or simply not negotiate only with it and diversify the actors. This diversification may involve different political actors as well as civil society actors.

In Diyarbakir, an NGO representative working in the field of women and the economy argues that NGOs will be much more involved and will provide more diversity in a new negotiation and consensus process. An NGO representative in Istanbul, who is a rights-based advocate, suggests that the government is in search of "getting the different Kurdish circles to the table or associating them informally on the table" in a possible negoti-

ation and consensus process, and there are signals about it. In this regard, the representative points out that the mainstream Kurdish movement could take a more inclusive position, given the past experiences such as the HDP project, that especially Öcalan might be a pioneer in this issue.

5.2. Obstacles

Participants underline different dynamics in terms of obstacles to a new negotiation and reconciliation process. The most important issue that is frequently underlined is ongoing conflicts in Turkey. Most participants state that a new negotiation and reconciliation process will not be possible unless as long as conflicts continue. An NGO representative working in the field of law in Diyarbakir states that the parties did not show any will to ceasefire and that this constitutes the most important obstacle. Some participants, in the matter of ceasefire and finding political resolutions, suggest that the state have the initiative and responsibility. According to this, despite the mainstream Kurdish movement, the state can solve this issue if it makes an effort. According to a civil society actor in Van who advocates with Islamic-conservative references, no Islamic group, including themselves, will be involved in as long as there is no ceasefire: “We are not involved in this matter, as long as there is armament. Because in place where there is armament, both parties do not take you seriously. So, it is like an useless effort”.

The second point underlined as an obstacle is the detention of many people who might have a say in Kurdish politics. Participants in Diyarbakir and Van state that it is not possible to start a new negotiation and consensus process, especially as long as politicians in detention are not released and the municipalities continue to be governed by trustees. Because “there is no one to speak at outside the prison, the ones who speak are also afraid to use the correct word”. It is not possible to proceed with this fear and without talking politics again. A participant working in the gender field states that not only HDP politicians, but also opposition media, NGOs, academics and journalists are squelched. Accordingly, the narrowing of the opportunities for speech is a major obstacle to negotiation and consensus. A rights-based civil society actor in Ankara goes one step further, indicating that the political sphere has become dysfunctional in general. Not only the HDP, but the CHP has also become dysfunctional, and the state has taken control of the whole political arena on the pretext of fighting with FETÖ.

Participants especially in Ankara and Istanbul states that the State of Emergency itself is one of the most important obstacles. They state that

with the State of Emergency, it became impossible to do work on organization and peace. The dismissing of academics from profession, the squelching of opponent media organizations, the arrest of journalists, and the closure of the majority of NGOs have made the construction of social peace in Turkey much more difficult. Some participants point out that the state has centralized that it cannot be compared with the past and has strengthened its control over the society, which has made negotiation and political consensus difficult in the near future. A participant in Istanbul who is a rights-based advocate analyzes this situation with the following words:

I think the state has a field of hegemonic discourse that it has not been able to achieve for a long time, except for a short period of 80's. It dominates the media. [...] There is not much chance of producing a new discourse that will destroy this hegemony. So, for the near future, I hope I'm wrong, but I do not foresee a peace negotiation again.

Some participants argue that with the presidential system adopted on April 16, 2017, the power has become centralized and that this will make the state hegemony last at least for a while.

The third underlined issue is the presidential elections, scheduled for 2019. Many participants indicate that current political preferences, which emphasize security policies, are accepted in large social circles in Turkey. Accordingly, as long as there is no clear trend in the society towards the political resolution of the Kurdish issue, existing security policies will continue until elections. In this sense, we should not wait for a political resolution until the 2019 presidential elections.

Fourthly, some participants point out that what happened after the Resolution Process created a social trauma, and that this trauma constituted a considerable obstacle to a new negotiation and consensus process. This trauma has showed up in the Kurdish space, especially with the lethal and devastating effects of urban conflicts. After nearly 20 years of search for a political resolution, the conflicts in the cities, the loss of the lives of thousands of people, the collapse of the settlement areas including the historical cities like Diyarbakır-Sur and Sırnak-Cizre, the forced migration of close to half a million-people caused great trauma in the Kurdish space. With the expression of a participant working in the field of children's rights, the "deep grief, sadness and pain" that arised in the Kurdish space constitutes a considerable obstacle to negotiation and consensus.

On the other hand, according to an NGO representative working in the field of social aid with Islamic-conservative references, there was also a

“political trauma” in the west. Thanks to Erdoğan’s leadership, with a tremendous effort, the Turkish right-wing and Islam-referenced politics were persuaded of the Resolution Process. However, first it was the solution of the Kurdish issue, but the process had come to the city conflicts and then the state building at the south of Turkey. The participant expresses the “political trauma” in the west with the following words:

Not only people living in Diyarbakır, Sur experienced trauma. If there was a physical trauma, there was also a political trauma in the west. Mr. Tayyip has tried to persuade here for years, persuaded the west. Although, half of the AK Party’ grassroots is Islamist, the other half is a nationalist and right-wing nationalist. Although the Black Sea region and the Central Anatolia region trust Tayyip Bey, they hold themselves at a distance against the Kurdish issue. Mr. Tayyip tried to overcome this. [...] They came one after the other. Rojava, Yasin Börü, Sur etc. In 2013, (while expecting to solve the Kurdish issue), PKK arrived a level to build a state at our border. Now you can tell this in the Southeast, you can discuss this etc. But you cannot tell this in Black Sea, Central Anatolia, Aegean, Mediterranean, Marmara. Because the AK Party itself is not very homogeneous about the Southeast issue.

Fifthly, some participants argue that the AK Party government has shown traditional state reflexes both within the country and across the border in the context of the Kurdish issue, and thus deviates from the aims of the establishment. For example, a NGO representative in Diyarbakır, who is a knowledge-based advocate, views the current position of the AK Party in the Kurdish issue as “the same reflex that has come from the foundation of the republic”, and argues that this tendency “does not conform to the spirit of AK Party politics”. Another participant from Diyarbakır suggests that the “nationalist” and “ultra-nationalist” circles, previously pushed out of the state bureaucracy, have dominated the AK Party. Another issue underlined in this issue is the alliance that the AK Party has established with the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* - MHP) since the June 07, 2015 elections. This alliance, which is consolidated, especially with the Constitutional Referendum of April 16, 2017, is seen as a major obstacle by many participants. Accordingly, the Kurdish issue is now depended to “approval” from nationalists and ultra-nationalists.

Sixthly, some participants also argue that normative walls constitute a major obstacle. According to this, in the Kurdish issue, all sides have remarkable normative walls and the most important barrier is these walls. For example, according to a representative of an NGO known for its Islamic-conservative identity, the government continues its approach of seeing “Kurdish political formations” as a threat to itself. The fact that Kurds in Syria and Iraq having a political statute are seen as a threat, in fact,

shows that there is a continuity in the state on the normative level in the regard of the Kurdish issue. According to a civil society actor who advocates knowledge-based in Diyarbakir, the most important normative wall constitutes the understanding of “sovereignty”, which dominates Turkish politics. Accordingly, regarding the Kurdish issue, there is an approach saying that “I am still the older brother and know everything, I justify, I shape your destiny”. The perspective that “there will be a solution in the framework that I determine” constitute a significant obstacle to negotiation and reconciliation.

Another normative wall underlined on the state front is the view of the “PKK issue” and the “Kurdish issue” as equal and interdependent. Many participants argue that these two issues are related but that making both of them equal and interdependent constitutes a major obstacle to the political resolution. According to this, it is possible to proceed on the “Kurdish issue” without being dependent on the “PKK issue” when the issue of “justice”, “equality”, “freedom” is actually approached with a perspective that interests all citizens beyond Kurds. In this regard, some participants state the PKK has a similar normative wall. Accordingly, the PKK’s handling of the Kurdish issue in the shadow of its own political priorities and centralizing itself in the interlocutor issue is a major obstacle to negotiation and reconciliation. Because the Kurdish issue transcends the political priorities of the PKK, and all the social segments with different ideological and political orientations and preferences are at the first order interlocutor of this issue.

Seventhly, some participants underline that Turkey has gotten into a serious intellectual narrowing in the Kurdish issue. Accordingly, analysts and academics who provide information to the society, civil society actors, media are much fewer today and this is a major obstacle. According to a participant working in the gender field in Ankara,

unlike previous period we passed, we had the ones who can evaluate politics both in civil society, in the Turkish politics and the Kurdish politics. They would evaluate politics, processes. Today we also do not have them. I mean there are a few people who can evaluate, assay, analyze the process and dominate civil field, masses, media. The possibilities of assaying are also more limited. Everyone is surprised by the developments.

Finally, some participants point that the common “hate speech”. A civil society actor working in the gender field in Ankara states it will be very difficult to persuade society to a new peace process after all these hate speeches. Because, “two people who are cursing each other today cannot sit on the table tomorrow”.

In addition to the dynamics within the country, many civil society actors underline the cross-border dynamics. With the expression of a participant working on NGOs, “the actors have multiplied”, “the geographies diversified” in the Kurdish issue. The issue often reminded here is the continuing civil war in Syria and Rojava region under PYD leadership. Some participants point out that the Resolution Process failed due to Rojava rather than dynamics in Turkey and that a new negotiation and consensus process in Turkey will not be possible before the end of the civil war in Syria and the clarification of the status of the Kurds. In this regard, some participants state that the “Rojava issue” initially offered an opportunity to solve the Kurdish issue in Turkey, but that Turkey could not evaluate this opportunity. Accordingly, the missed opportunity has now become a major obstacle. Because, Rojava’s current situation revealed a “perpetuity” concern in the state. Rojava, on the other hand, caused a self-confidence in the PKK and changed the demands and expectations of the organization. Moreover, a remarkable tension emerged between the Kurdish movement in Turkey and the Kurdish movement in Syria. Because the priorities, actors, international alliances in both areas differ considerably. This situation is an obstacle to negotiation and consensus because it creates uncertainty within the mainstream Kurdish movement.

The developments in the Iraqi Kurdistan as well as the Syrian civil war and Rojava are seen as an obstacle by some participants. Accordingly, the crisis and uncertainty in the cross-border context prevent Turkey from taking steps towards negotiation and consensus. Between May and July 2017 when the interviews were made, some participants underlined that the Iraq/Kurdistan Region as well as Syria/Rojava will have a direct impact on the negotiation and consensus process in Turkey indicating to the Independence Referendum, which took place on 25 September 2017 in the Iraqi Kurdistan. As a matter of fact, the referendum was held, and all the mainstream political parties in Turkey, especially the AK Party government, reacted excessively. The AK Party government handled the issue around the “national threat”. The uncertainty and the effects created by the referendum continue to a large extent.

In the cross-border context, some participants regard involvement of global forces such as the US, Russia and the EU and regional forces such as Iran and Israel, especially to the Kurdish issue in Iraq and Syria, not comparable to the past, as a major obstacle. According to an NGO representative advocating with Islamic-conservative references in Van, the “independent political conditions” in terms of both the state and the PKK, especially after the developments in Syria and Iraq, disappeared.

Independent political conditions do not exist for both sides. Neither the Republic of Turkey nor the PKK has independent political conditions. In this case, those who constitute these political conditions have very serious reserves about the formation of a peace here. We fall into this error. There is a cliché comment. As we talked about the Lebanese civil war, it was our first youth years, what we read was actually a paragraph, a headline for us: “In order to understand Lebanon, it is necessary to understand the world.” The reason for the civil war in Lebanon was actually the world. But in Lebanon, actors were needed. Ideologies were needed. Shia militias, Sunni militias, these were supposed to be there as actors. It seems that we have actually the same here.

According to some participants, on the one hand, the global and regional powers are interfering with the Kurdish issue to a degree that is not comparable to the past, on the other hand, the AK Party’s relations with the actors in question are constantly strained. This situation turns cross-border actors’ involvement in the Kurdish issue not a positive but a negative dynamic.

5.3. Opportunities

Civil society actors underline various opportunities alongside the obstacles outlined above. However, it should be noted that there is a pessimistic atmosphere in the NGO world regarding the Kurdish issue to return to negotiation and reconciliation in the near future. In the context of the dynamics of the country’s scale, first, many participants point out that broad support for peace and political resolution within the Kurdish society is an important opportunity. The arguments of an NGO representative advocating Islamic-conservative references represent these views well:

It is a great opportunity for all circles of the Kurds to talk about peace, brotherhood and solution on every platform. The fact that a community whose rights were taken away and ignored, geographies were seized speak of solution, peace and justice on every platform is a tremendous opportunity in the matter of beginning of a new process.

The fact that people did not support “trenches” in the 2015-2017 city conflicts is considered an important opportunity for some participants. Accordingly, this distance to violence and the peace within the broader social segments offer an important opportunity to return to negotiation and consensus. In connection with this, some participants express that new references emerged in the 2013-2015 process offer a significant opportunity. According to this, in the Resolution Process, people saw that the matter could be solved by talking, and this became an important reference. Some participants state that not only the last resolution process,

but also previous experiences constitute important references. According to this, both Turkey and Kurds has accumulated important experiences. In this regard, a civil society activist advocating peace in Istanbul states that not only the Kurds supporting the HDP but also the Kurds supporting the AK Party demanded rights such as education in the mother tongue, localization and democratization and this creates an important opportunity for the political resolution.

Another important point underdrawn in connection with the claim of peace is the “political fatigue” that arises in the broader social segments. This political fatigue, according to some participants, will force the parties to take steps. According to an NGO representative working in the field of humanitarian aid, Turkey has no chance to continue with this fatigue:

There is a very tense inside borders of Turkey and everyone needs to relieve. Every segment. The ones who are in the active politics are uncomfortable with excessive activities, intense election processes, continuous quarrel. For this reason, I think that neither political power nor political parties will anymore carry this tension in the coming period. Any way or another, everyone will have to resolve the tension in the environment. Of course, one of the most important topics will be the Kurdish issue.

Secondly, some participants state that the AK Party has created a softening and accepting of the Kurdish issue within the nationalist-conservative constituents in Turkey and that this presents a significant opportunity for a new negotiation and consensus process. An NGO representative in Van, who advocates with Islamic-conservative references, states that the main political vein in Turkey is the nationalist conservative stream and that this circle was largely convinced by the AK Party to the political resolution.

Thirdly, the presidential elections scheduled for 2019 are seen as an opportunity as well as an obstacle. Accordingly, it is not easy today to foresee the 2019 elections. In the election period, if the demand for social peace increases, the parties seeking to stay in power or go to power bring up the option of negotiation and consensus on the Kurdish issue to the agenda. Furthermore, the results of the referendum held on 16 April 2017 created two blocks of 50% - 50% in Turkey. This situation makes the Kurdish issue and the attitude of mainstream Kurdish politics important in the elections. The Kurds and those of the mainstream Kurdish politics have a critical value for both the “Yes” front and the “No” front, which can serve as a positive source of return to the negotiations and reconciliation.

Fourthly, according to some participants, dynamics such as Turkey’s accumulation of past, democracy accumulation compared to neighbouring

countries, socio-economic conditions, the fact that it aimed for the west constitute an important opportunity. Accordingly, the fact that both Turkey and the Kurds aim for Europe is an opportunity for the country and Turkey can return to the EU process with the peace option. For example, an NGO representative in Diyarbakir who advocates knowledge-based states that “EU train has not been missed” and that “this train” can be recreate with a peace process provided with the Kurds.

Fifthly, some participants consider the presidential system, which was adopted by the Constitutional Referendum of 16 April 2017, as an opportunity. Accordingly, Turkey is in the process of a regime change and the political system will be restructured in this period. In case of making it count, this restructuring process can be turned into an opportunity for the political resolution of the Kurdish issue. According to a participant in Van who advocates with Islamic-conservative references, in an environment where global actors are involved in the Kurdish issue negatively, Turkey’s rapid solving of the Kurdish issue will contribute to the transition to the presidential system.

Sixth, some participants point out that the July 15, 2016 military coup attempt can be turned into an opportunity in the meaning of “deriving lessons from a negative case”. Accordingly, the lack of solution of the Kurdish issue played an important role in this growth of the actors who made the coup. The political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace will remove the institutional grounds of the coups. In connection with the coup, some participants state that clearing the state from Gülen Organization provided an important opportunity. One of the most important actors in the failure of the process was the Gülen Organization.

Seventhly, some participants argue that “the organization was defeated” in urban conflicts, and it gives the state a significant opportunity to recognize the the rights to the Kurds and to find a political resolution to the issue. According to an NGO representative in Van who advocates with Islamic references, the government’s recognizing the rights is easier than it was five years ago. If these rights and freedoms had been recognized at that time, it would have been said that “the state was obliged because of the pressure and the mobilization of the organization [...]”. However, now the state can take a step by saying, “I do not consider any organization or political formation, [...] this is the need of my people as a requirement of my democracy”. This situation can also increase the social support of the AK Party government.

Eighthly, some participants consider the fact that two political traditions

that play a critical role in the solution of the Kurdish issue have strong leaders as an important opportunity. Accordingly, R. T. Erdoğan is the leader of the nationalist-conservative movement, the largest political tradition in Turkey, and has the power to persuade his followers. Öcalan, on the other hand, is an unrivaled leader in the mainstream Kurdish movement. This presents a great opportunity for the political resolution of the Kurdish issue.

In the context of the dynamics in the country scale as well as in the context of cross-border dynamics, some NGO representatives consider the Kurds' increasing power in the Middle East in general as an opportunity. Accordingly, the Kurds have become very strong actors in the Middle East. Most countries are aware of this situation and are seeking cooperation with the Kurds. This situation will prompt Turkey to cooperate with the Kurds and initiate a new negotiation and consensus process. An NGO representative working in the field of law in Diyarbakir argues that the rise of the Kurds in the Middle East will create significant opportunities for Turkey if Turkey set the "Kurdish phobia" and the "separation phobia" aside:

In the search for new roles in the Middle East, there are many opportunities in the context of the Kurdish issue, with a logic to be reconstructed. But I think there is a basic condition. There are prior actions for the Republic of Turkey such as meeting and making peace with Kurdish, and making up with the Kurd by the setting aside Kurdish phobia, the division phobia. In other words, if the Republic of Turkey gets rid of this phobia, it is the way of being an authority that has a say in the region that it desires. So, the Republic of Turkey will have solved the Kurdish issue that it has been dealing with for 200 years, and it will reach the point that it wants to reach with the policy that it has now carried out. But for this, the state need to change its logic.

According to a participant in information-based advocacy in Istanbul, the Kurdish issue in Turkey may have a political solution on condition that the Democratic Union Party (PYD) separates itself from the PKK and PKK disarms in Turkey. In this sense, Rojava can play a role in determining the future of the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

Rojava also offers an important opportunity for the PKK's civilianization and political solution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey, according to an NGO representative who advocates rights-based advocacy with Islamic-conservative references. An NGO representative who is advocating knowledge-based in this regard, based on the Iraqi Kurdistan Region experience, notes that Rojava can have a transformative influence on the PKK and contribute to the settlement of the Kurdish issue in Turkey:

Rojava is also an important opportunity in this regard. [...] Fighting is another thing, managing is something else. PKK is a fighting organization now. Tomorrow, when it becomes an organization that manages, it will come out of a position that do this through war. We saw this in the Peshmergas. We know South Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan Region) as Peshmerga. Today South Kurdistan is on the world scene with its diplomatic steps. There was almost no power of Peshmergas. In the last two years the Peshmerga has got its power. It must be analyze well. Once you become acceptable in your area, you become a management model. This is threat-opportunity. Turkey should not prevent PKK from turning from a fighting organization into an organization which governs Rojava, in this way, this process will already develop. And after the development, the association of the Kurds and the Turks, which I have already expressed, will prevent Kurdish-Turkish conflict in these lands.

Some participants argue that Iraqi Kurdistan Region, like Rojava, offers a significant opportunity. Accordingly, the efforts of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region to develop political and economic relations with Turkey is an important opportunity and will contribute to the political settlement of the Kurdish issue. According to a civil society actor working in the field of women and economy in Diyarbakir, the efforts of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region will soften Turkey's position on the Kurdish issue:

I think the wind it will create will soften this place. Because the South Kurdistan administration, the government and the current president are in an effort to maintain good relations with Turkey. Because it is the only window to the world. It is important to maintain relationships with them. The largest living Kurdish mass is there in some sort. I think that their relationship will soften the point of view of Turkish government or Turks.

Finally, in the context of cross-border dynamics, some actors underline the relations established by Turkey in the western world. A participant from Van states that this relationship will bring the Kurdish issue back to the "table" recalling Turkey's NATO membership.

5.4. Critical Actors

In addition to the obstacles and opportunities for a new negotiation and consensus process, critical actors who will play a role in such a process have been discussed. While some actors focus on negotiations at the grassroots level, some focus on negotiations at the top level. Civil society actors focused on the first level point to broader segments that will be effective in "socializing peace", while those who focus on the second level highlight the role of leaders at the top level. Finally, many actors suggest that regional and global forces will be much more influential in the forma-

tion of a possible process of negotiation and consensus than they have in the past, recalling that the issue is now largely border-crossed.

In the context of key actors, Erdoğan and Öcalan are the most pointed actors. Approximately two-thirds of the participants argue that the main actors to determine a formation of a new process would be Erdoğan and Öcalan. Accordingly, there are two main sides to this issue: the state and the AKP government under the leadership of Erdoğan, and the mainstream Kurdish movement under Öcalan's leadership. Both Erdoğan and Öcalan have an indisputable power over their supporters. If these two leaders compromise and make a decision, a new negotiation and consensus process may begin. Many participants in this issue allege that especially Erdoğan is determinant. According to a rights-based NGO representative working with Islamic-conservative references in Van, "Erdoğan can restart and conclude the process, despite Öcalan, despite America".

Some of the participants underlining Erdoğan's leadership point to the importance of the attitude of the nationalist-conservatives forming the broadest and strongest socio-political group in Turkey on the political resolution of the Kurdish issue. According to this, the solution of the matter is largely dependent on the nationalist-conservative social segments and Erdoğan's leadership is also important when it is taken into consideration the unquestionable power on these segments.

Some participants claim that government and the KCK are the determinant rather than the leaders. For example, a civil society actor working in the field of law in Diyarbakir, while accepting Erdoğan's leadership, argues that the main actor is "the state";

I am defining the state itself (as a key actor). So, I do not agree with these, "AK Party state", "AK Party government". Okay, Erdoğan is unquestionably strong, authoritarian. I mean, almost he has the power to do whatever he says. So, this was like this before the referendum, and after it. But the state apparatus has its own functioning, a logic.

On the other hand, in the face of Öcalan's leadership, some participants emphasize Kandil's power. According to this, Öcalan's strong leadership is indisputable, however Kandil is one of the key actors to determine a new negotiation and consensus process. Especially the developments in Rojava made Kandil strong enough to be compared with the past among the components of the mainstream Kurdish movement.

The actors who are discussing on the axis of Erdoğan, Öcalan, state and

Kandil attribute a limited role to CHP, MHP and HDP. However, there is a common consensus that these actors should also be taken into consideration. It is stated that HDP has experienced a remarkable decline after the June 07 2015 elections and has moved away from being an actor who determines the playground. On the other hand, some participants state that CHP's support for the process is important, given the breadth of the social base they represent. The MHP's potential for disruption process is generally highlighted and it is suggested that in order to eliminate this negative effect, it should be included in the process even though indirectly. Finally, some participants also recall non-parliamentary opposition and underline that these actors should be included in the process. This demand is expressed not only for parties and political groups that do politics on the scale of Turkey, but also for political parties and political groups that organized in the Kurdish region and opposed to the mainstream Kurdish movement.

The majority of participants argue that cross-border and international actors will play a much larger role in the negotiating and consensus process than previous processes. The regional and global forces that are often pointed out are America, Russia and Iran. The most important reason why all three countries are perceived as influential actors is their direct involvement in the ongoing civil war in Syria and Iraq. Because, after the crises of Syria and Iraq, the Kurdish issue has gained a trans-border quality that is not comparable to the past and it will be very difficult to build a new negotiation and consensus process without considering the actors involved.

Civil society actors agree on the power of the US and Russia, but there is no consensus in the matter of what role these actors will play. Most participants state that it is an uncertain situation. Others argue that these actors will play a negative role. An NGO representative who advocates Islamic-conservative references in Diyarbakir argues that the intervention of international actors such as the United States and Russia is negative and that Turkey and Iran in particular can play a critical role in the establishment of peace in both the Kurdish affair and the Middle East. According to this, while Iran is a powerful country leading the Shi'a world, Turkey has a good relationship with the west and is a country that is democratic and libertarian compared to the region. These two countries can therefore play an important role in peace settlement in the region.

Another critical actor pointed out after the US, Russia and Iran is Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Actually, what makes the Iraqi Kurdistan Region a key actor is the geopolitic of the Kurdish issue, in other words, the Kurdish issue is at the border of the four states in the context of both population

and geography as well as multi-level and multi-actor socio-political mobilizations processes. The fact that the Iraqi Kurdistan Region is the only structure in which the Kurds have socio-political and administrative status within the four states, in other words, the fact that Iraqi Kurdistan Region is some kind of semi-state²⁸ is the most important dynamic that makes it a key actor. In addition, some participants remind us of the positive role that the Kurdistan Regional Government has played in previous negotiation and consensus processes. Finally, some participants indicate that these two regions can join in the medium term and that this will directly determine the future of the Kurdish issue in Turkey by pointing out the relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan Region and Rojava.

In addition to these four forces, the EU is also identified as a key actor by the participants. It should be noted, however, that the EU is seen as a much more limited key actor by the participants than the global actors such as America and Russia. In this issue, some participants argue that also some reputable international organizations and structures, can contribute to the social peace process as facilitators. This can be a NGO working in areas such as conflict resolution, human rights, or a mixed group of internationally recognized persons.

Power relations between actors are another important point that most participants underline. Accordingly, all actors do not have equally power, and actors will have different influences on possible negotiation and consensus processes. For example, in Diyarbakir, an information-based actor makes triple categorization according to influence powers:

If we sort as A and B and if A is the most powerful actors, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, America, Russia are A. There are A class powerful actors. When it comes to B, Abdullah Öcalan unfortunately is B in this period. PKK and PYD are also B class actors. We can say that the others are C class. Europe become C class actor. Also, HDP is C class actor. It became completely ineffective. Opposition parties CHP and MHP is in C class. Do not these have any influence? There is but we need to sort it. When we sort it, yes, peace can be built despite C. It is also possible despite the ones who are in B. But we can see that these three actors (Erdoğan, America and Russia) are strong.

Some participants describe civil society as one of the critical actors, focusing on negotiations at the social level rather than top-level negotiations.

28 Özdemir Kiran, Merve, *Construire Un Etat, Briser Des Tabous: Les Hommes D'affaires de Turquie Entre La Construction Étatique Du Gouvernement Régional Du Kurdistan (GRK) et La Politique Étrangère de La Turquie*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Institut d'Études Politique de Paris (Sciences Po.), 2013.

The first issue underlined in this regard is the issue of representation. Accordingly, a possible negotiation and consensus process should involve different layers of society, and NGOs such as academia, trade unions and professional chambers can play an important role.

For example, almost all civil society actors working in the gender field state that women's participation is necessary. Because a process that women are not involved in will be unsuccessful and in this sense women are at the forefront of key actors. Some participants state that victims, in particular, should be included. The involvement of injured and wounded actors during the conflict period will increase the success of social peace construction.

According to many participants, in a possible negotiation and reconciliation process, NGOs can take part as a kind of third eye, a critical actor. According to this, NGOs, on the one hand, can fulfill the observation mission, on the other hand, they can play facilitating roles on the situations where the process is obstructed and can function as a kind of bridge between the parties of the conflict and the public. According to this, in order to construct social peace, it is necessary to spread what was experienced in the past to all layers of the society and to adapt the political institution to this course. At this point, NGOs can lay the groundwork for negotiation and consensus process with widespread social activities, and they can put pressure on the political establishment to take a step for this purpose. Finally, some participants state that NGOs have knowledge and experience in certain areas and that they can include their accumulation in the process of social peace construction. In this regard, it is pointed out to NGOs that are particularly knowledge-based and specialized in certain areas.

In this section, the possibilities and boundaries of a new negotiation and consensus process in the Kurdish issue were discussed. In this context, the views of civil society actors on fundamental obstacles, opportunities and critical actors in a new dialogue process aimed at the political resolution of the Kurdish issue are examined. In the next chapter, the place of NGOs discussed in case such a process is initiated. In this context, what the NGOs can do, the main obstacles and opportunities in front of them, and finally, what needs to be done by the conflicting parties in order for civil society actors to play their roles more effectively are addressed.

CONCLUSION: ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY FOR RESOLUTION AND CONSENSUS

Within the scope of the research, lastly, participants' concrete recommendations about what NGOs can do in a possible negotiation and reconciliation process were addressed. In this context, firstly, obstacles and opportunities in front of NGOs were discussed. Secondly, what could be done by NGOs in a possible negotiation and reconciliation process are analyzed. Finally, it was noted what the state and the government, and the mainstream Kurdish movement have to do in order for NGO to play more effectively their roles.

The Main Obstacles in Front of NGOs

Main obstacles that participants underline are in order of mention as follows:

1. Widespread and deep fear in the society as a result of the State of Emergency practices caused to closure of NGOs as well as many media organizations, which limits the freedoms of expression and freedom of association, detention, arrestment, dismissing members of them, and as a result of this, dramatic decline in civil society work,
2. The fact that the government and the mainstream Kurdish movement do not value the civil society and are unwilling in the matter of associating with it,
3. Political engagement, partisanhip and polarization between NGOs,
4. The government's and the mainstream Kurdish movement's forcing NGOs to take sides,
5. Weakness of the internal institutional structure of NGOs and lack of institutional capacity (manpower, financial resources, information resources etc.),

6. Unsufficient democratic norms and decision-making processes within the NGOs (weak relationships with society and members, addiction to funds and tendency to professionalism, long-term presidency in NGOs, the president's decisiveness, rulership of middle-aged and older men, the lack of democratic decision-making processes),
7. Fear walls originating from the government or from the mainstream Kurdish Movement in the civil society community,
8. Existence of guns and ongoing conflicts,
9. NGOs' weak social base and limited capacities to influence political processes,
10. The negative view of the state towards NGOs working in conflict resolution and social peace construction,
11. The lack of experience and knowledge of NGO in the matter of conflict resolution and social peace construction, the inadequate use of international experience,
12. Civil society's timidity and not developing initiative,
13. With the beginning of the conflicts, disappearance of the possibilities of the NGOs' doing activities and speaking up,
14. Lack of cooperation and coordination among NGOs,
15. The legislation that narrows the field of NGOs,
16. The state's having a distrust of civil society, unlike the past, after coup attempt of the Gülen Organization which presented itself as the largest non-governmental movement,
17. NGOs' not using the language of peace and not positioning themselves for peace,
18. NGOs' avoiding doing new things, using new methods and having a conservative attitude in this regard,
19. Government-controlled NGOs organizing in every area and the government's attitude to work with these organizations as civil society actors,

20. Civil society actors' being overwhelmed by normative debates, so their inability to work actively and act collectively.

Opportunities in Front of NGOs

Civil society actors state there are limited opportunities even if they underline many obstacles. Opportunities that participants underline are in order of mention as follows:

1. The reference created by 2013-2015 Resolution Process in relation to the Kurdish issue can be solved by means of politics,
2. Loss of lives in urban conflicts in the last two years, negative references caused by large-scale devastation, and the prevalence and magnitude of the desire not to experience these again in society,
3. The ongoing system change after the constitutional referendum process, the 2019 presidential elections and the new dynamics it can offer,
4. The feeling of injustice that has spread to every segment of the society and the intensification of search for salvation,
5. Civil society's social base created by people, who remains distant to the conflicts, supports for peace and political resolution,
6. Increasing of number of those who are not satisfied with their neighborhoods, especially with the nationalist-conservative and Islam-referenced groups, and the expansion of "democratic gray areas" in Turkey,
7. Civil society's progresses in Turkey as a result of the EU membership process and reforms, the continuing civil society efforts despite the regression in the State of Emergency period,
8. Democratic accumulation as a result of the relations Turkey has established with the western world since the 19th century and being a reference country for the eastern world,
9. World experiences on conflict resolution and social peace construction and civil society actors' potential to convey this to Turkey,
10. The suppression of the July 15 military coup attempt by the citizens' civil initiative and the formation of a democratic political reference in this regard,

11. The accumulation of working experience of the AK Party government and the mainstream Kurdish movement with the civil society actors,

12. The Kurds' gaining strength in the Middle East, as a consequence, unlikely military solution.

What NGOs Can Do?

In view of the current obstacles and opportunities, participants offer different suggestions that NGOs can do in a possible negotiation and consensus process. Suggestions offered by participants on what NGOs can do were classified on the basis of the seven functions of NGOs in conflict resolution and peace building. Participants' most focused functions are sorted as "advocacy and public communication", "conflict-sensitive social cohesion", "mediation and facilitation", "in-group socialization and culture of peace", "monitoring and accountability" and "direct service delivery". It is seen that NGOs do not regard the function of "protection of citizens", which is in seven functions of civil society, as a critical area. Below, participants' suggestion are presented on the basis of functions in order of importance:

Advocacy and public communication

1. To defend the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and social peace on the normative level, to keep it alive in the social context and to demand from political decision-makers, in other words, to defend the rights of peace,

2. To conduct a multi-level, multi-actor "peace diplomacy" in the eye of decision-makers,

3. To carry out activities to spread the social peace demand to large circles; to work towards persuading the society about the political resolution of the Kurdish issue and the construction of social peace as independent institutions without being under the custody of politics, without any party's spoken word,

4. To contribute to the construction of social peace through civil disobedience actions and to create such a pressure on decision-makers,

5. To organize massive actions that bring together different social segments around peace demand, to construct a peace movement,

6. To produce information through activities such as field research, report, experience analysis and to be involved in policy making processes with this information,
7. To convey international experiences on social peace construction to Turkey,
8. To develop a language of peace and to disseminate it both in the politics and the media,
9. To involve politically unengaged NGOs such as fellow countryman associations, charity associations, sports clubs in the work of social peace construction; to make more visible the relationships between the works of these NGOs and the different dimensions of the Kurdish issue and the social peace-building, which were invisible and unnoticed until today, and to work towards this,
10. To establish shadow “truth and confrontation commissions” without waiting for an official agreement or negotiation process,
11. To disseminate the stories of the victims of the conflict period to different social masses,
12. To take into account the fact that the society is not interested in what happened in the past or what it will be in the future, to tell what is happening today and what is approaching us, to build peace studies on this approach,
13. To make visible and to create social awareness what war and peace is, and the truth in this issue,
14. To do studies that centralize women, youth and children, to include these groups in the work of social peace construction,

Conflict-sensitive social cohesion

15. Beyond advocacy activities, building bridges between east and west and bringing together different stories, establishing mechanisms for this,
16. To construct mechanisms and structures that different societies can come together, work collectively,

17. To construct structures, platforms, assemblies that NGOs with different political priorities can work together and perform common actions for peace in the scale of the country,

18. To build assemblies that bring together different political actors, public institutions and NGOs in all regions and localize the construction of social peace,

19. To expand and strengthen grey areas that bring together the different parties, make possible to speak between the differences, and to support the NGOs working in these areas,

20. To bring together those who are not satisfied with “their neighbourhood” and those who are in the AK Party, CHP and HDP neighbourhood,

21. To both raise social awareness towards peace and to create initiatives to put pressure on political decision-makers bringing together popular political names not possessed by a party and having different political engagements,

22. To bring conflicting social circles together, to carry out common works,

23. To bring together the conflicting or incompatible parties through finding solutions to problems and talking about common points such as economics, ecology, social life rather than works that directly center the Turkish and Kurdish identity and make it difficult to speak; to divide the issue into micro-pieces through social common points and to talk about macro issues such as the Kurdish issue by building bridges over micro-issues,

24. To develop activities such as the Wise People’s Committee; to raise social peace and to reach it the large masses through popular people who appeal to different social groups,

25. To ensure that NGOs in the west, especially those with strong dialogue with the government, come directly to the conflict areas for better comprehension and carry out activities in these regions,

Intermediation and facilitation

26. To arbitrate between the parties,

27. To monitor, analyse and report on the dialogue and negotiation process,

28. To give feedback to the parties about the mistakes and solutions,
29. To mediate between the parties, facilitating communication and negotiation,
30. To conduct observer, interventionist and preventive activities in the face of the activities sabotaging political resolution and social peace,
31. To do risk analysis, to predict potential risks, and to work on in advance what risks both civil society and political actors can face,
32. To establish structures to be commissioned in times of crisis,
33. To create a permanent shadow “peace-observation committees”

In-group socialization and culture of peace

34. To spread recognizing the differences, coexistence, respecting the rights and the culture of peace in the country scale, to increase social awareness in this issue,
35. To prepare future generations for social peace by contributing to the construction of an egalitarian and libertarian education system that will abolish discrimination, alienation, hatred on the basis of ethnic, religious, or gender,
36. To advocate and disseminate the political resolution and social peace in their own “political neighbourhood”, to follow-up the negotiation and consensus,
37. To take into account that telling the Kurdish issue through conscience does not make a difference in the opinions and attitudes of the people, rather than conscience, to do things that will allow people to understand their “own losses through the issue”, in other words to establish a bond with the Kurdish issue and the daily life of people,

Monitoring and accountability

38. To monitor and make violations visible, to create social awareness on this issue,

39. To show the related actors, especially political power, that the violations have serious legal consequences, to remind it,

40. To carry out documentation and reporting activities in each field systematically, to create memory and archive in different areas,

Direct service delivery

41. To build restorative mechanisms for conflict victimizations,

Other

42. To bring together institutions that primary work area is peace, to establish knowledge, ideas, mechanisms, structures and teams in order to support the peace process,

43. To make preparations to contribute political resolution in this area by showing how the Kurdish issue is related to their own field of work,

44. To develop original projects on micro scale in their own field and to provide direct support to the dialogue and negotiation process by producing concrete answers to the micro problems in the fields such as women's, youth, environment, language rights, social trauma, prisons, general amnesty etc.,

45. To carry out normative discussions on civil society, to review the relationship of NGOs with society, state and politics with a critical perspective,

46. To strengthen institutional capacity, especially by focusing on knowledge, technique and methodology, and by taking into account the experience of conflict resolution and social peace construction at different times and places,

47. To take lessons by discussing on the role that civil society played in the previous periods with a critical perspective, to learn from mistakes and successes of past.

What Should State, Government and Mainstream Kurdish Movement Do?

Participants' suggestions on what the state, the government, and the mainstream Kurdish movement should do in order for civil society actors to play their roles more effectively are listed below according to the fre-

quency of mentioning.

1. The provision of a political and legal environment in which civil society actors can freely conduct their work and the renewal of legal legislation to expand the field of civil society,
2. Ceasefire and the restoration of the atmosphere of de-conflict,
3. The state and the mainstream Kurdish movement's breaking the tentency to force civil society to get in political engagements habit,
4. The parties' giving up the instrumentalist approach to NGOs and creating opportunities for working together by paving the way for civil society,
5. The fact that the parties do not create a pressure or threat on the civil society actors and are not restrictive,
6. Considering that NGOs working for peace in the Resolution Process are now judged for their activities, the termination of these trials and the proving of legal assurance, which is provided for public officials, for civil society actors in subsequent peace processes,
7. Providing a degree of transparency and accountability that allows public participation and oversight,
8. Providing support for NGOs to develop their institutional capacity,
9. The parties conducting effective investigations in their internal mechanisms, establishing permanent internal mechanisms for this purpose.

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APPENDIX 01: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Diyarbakır

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2. Tigris Social Research Center, President Mehmet Kaya (*Dicle Toplumsal Araştırmalar Merkezi* - DİTAM)
3. Turkey Religious Affairs and Foundation Officials Union, Diyarbakır Chamber, President Ömer Evsen (*Türkiye Diyanet ve Vakıf Görevlileri Sendikası* - Diyanet-Sen)
4. Diyarbakır Bar, President Ahmet Özmen (*Diyarbakır Barosu*)
5. Diyarbakır Businesswoman Association, President Reyhan Aktar (*Diyarbakır İş Kadınları Derneği* - DİKAD)
6. Rights of Free Thought and Education Association, Diyarbakır Chamber, President Süleyman Nazlıcan (Özgür Düşünce ve Eğitim Hakları Derneği - Özgür-Der)
7. Diyarbakır Industrialist and Business People Association, President Burç Baysal (*Diyarbakır Sanayici ve İş İnsanları Derneği* - DİSİAD)
8. Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research, President Necdet İpekyüz (*Diyarbakır Siyasal ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Enstitüsü* - DİSA)
9. Eastern and Southeastern Business Women's Association, President Nevin İl (*Doğu ve Güneydoğu İş Kadınları Derneği* - DOGÜNKAD)
10. Association for Assistance Solidarity with Migrants, Diyarbakır Chamber, Co-Presidents Semire Nergiz ve Yılmaz Kan (*Göç Edenlerle Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği Diyarbakır Şubesi* - Göç-Der)
11. Human Rights Association, Diyarbakır Chamber, President Raci Bilici (İnsan Hakları Derneği *Diyarbakır Şubesi*- İHD)
12. Right Initiative, Diyarbakır Coordination Board Member Selahattin Çoban (*Diyarbakır Hak İnisyatifi* - Mazlum-Der)
13. Rehabilitation and Adaptation Center for Victims of Violence and Mi-

gration, President Mim Yavuz Binbay (Şiddet ve Göç Mağdurları Rehabilitasyon ve Adaptasyon Merkezi - SOHRAM)

14. Expert on NGO, Şehymus Diken

Van

1. Youth and Ecology Association, Member of Board of Directors Cevahir Böke (*Gençlik ve Ekoloji Derneği*)

2. Rainbow Education Culture and Aid Association, Vice President Kemal Çelen (*Gökkuşluğu Eğitim Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği*)

3. Human Rights Association, Van Chamber, President Murat Melet (İnsan Hakları Derneği *Van Şubesi* - İHD)

4. Human and Freedom Movement, Secretary General Mehmet Kamaç and Van Spokesman Murat Bozdemir (İnsan ve Özgürlük Hareketi - Öze Dönüş)

5. Mazlum-Der, Van Chamber Former, President Yakup Aslan

6. Self-Return Association, Member of Board of Directors Yasin Haskanlı (Öze-Dönüş Derneği)

7. Van Bar, President Murat Timur (*Van Barosu*)

8. Van Youth Education Culture Assistance Solidarity and Human Rights Association, President Giyasettin Özçiçek (*Van Genç Eğitim Kültür Yardımlaşma Dayanışma ve İnsan Hakları Derneği* - Genç-Der)

9. Van Entrepreneurial Businessmen's Association, President Kadri Salaz (*Van Girişimci İş Adamları Derneği* - VANGIAD)

10. Van Women's Association, President Zozan Özgökçe (*Van Kadın Derneği* - VAKAD)

11. Van Chamber of Commerce and Industry, President Necdet Takva (*Van Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası*)

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1. Women's Initiative for Peace, Member Nimet Tanrıku (*Barış İçin Kadın Girişimi*)

2. Saturday Mothers, Spokeswoman Sebla Tarcan (*Cumartesi Anneleri*)

3. EcoPolitics, Former President Tarık Çelenk (*Eko-Politik*)
4. Monitoring Equal Rights Association, General Coordinator Nejat Taştan (*Eşit Haklar İzleme Derneği*)
5. Truth Justice Memory Center, Memory Studies Program Director Özgür Sevgi Göröl (*Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi*)
6. Helsinki Citizen's Assembly, General Coordination Officer Emel Kurma (*Helsinki Yurttaşlar Derneği*)
7. Humanitarin Relief Foundation, Human Right Legal Affairs Officer Gülden Sönmez and Board of Trustees Member Osman Atalay (İnsani Yardım Vakfı - İHH)
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10. Process Research Center, Director Murat Sofuoğlu (*Süreç Araştırma Merkezi*)
11. Expert on NGO, Ayşe Betül Çelik
12. Expert on NGO, Mehmet Ali Çalışkan

Ankara

1. Alevi Bektashi Federation, Vice President Bülent Kaya (*Alevi Bektashi Federasyonu*)
2. Ankara Women's Platform, Member Hatice Kapusuz (*Ankara Kadın Platformu*)
3. Capital City Women's Platform, Former President Fatma Bostan Ünsal (*Başkent Kadın Platformu*)
4. Iron Chickpeas Association, President of the Board of Directors Sevana Somuncuoğlu (*Demir Leblebi Derneği*)
5. Research Center for Democracy Peace and Alternative Politics, Re-

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6. Agenda Child Association, Board Member Ezgi Koman (*Gündem Çocuk Derneği*)

7. Human Rights Association, General President Öztürk Türkođan (İnsan Hakları Derneđi)

8. Human Rights Joint Platform, General Coordinator Feray Salman (İnsan Hakları Ortak Platformu)

9. Right Initiative, Activist Ahmet Faruk Ünsal (*Hak İnsiyatifi*)

10. Civil Society Development Center, General Coordinator Tezcan Albay and Communication Coordinator Mehmet Kutku (*Sivil Toplum Geliştirme Merkezi - STGM*)

11. Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, President Şebnem Korur Fincancı (*Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı*)

APPENDIX 02: FIELD WORK QUESTIONS

Q1. For the political resolution of the Kurdish issue, there have been various dialogue and consensus searches since the 1990s. When you consider this period that lasted more than 20 years, how do you evaluate the role of civil society in the termination of conflicts and the construction of social peace in Turkey?

Q2. How do you comment the civil society activities for the resolution of the Kurdish issue in the matter of termination of conflicts and the construction of social peace in Diyarbakır/Van/Istanbul/Ankara? (Where the interviews were had)

Q3. What have you done to date as an institution on the termination of conflicts and the construction of social peace? What are your basic works in this area?

Q4. Do you have any ongoing project/work on conflict resolution and social peace construction today?

Q5. How do you comment the role of civil society in Turkey in the Resolution Process?

Q6. Did you have any contact with any political party or political actor as a non-governmental organization for the termination of conflicts and for peace construction in the Resolution Process? Or did the political actors in question demand your contributions?

Q7. Did you have any work/project as an institution for conflict resolution and peace construction in the Resolution Process? What are the institutions that you worked with on a local, regional or country scale and what kind of projects did you have?

Q8. Did you have any cooperation, common work/project with any insti-

tution in the eastern/western part of the country for conflict resolution and peace construction in the Resolution Process?

Q9. How do you comment NGO-academia relationship/cooperation in the context of conflict resolution and peace construction?

Q10. How do you comment NGO-media relations/cooperation in the context of conflict resolution and peace construction? When you take your works into consideration as an institution, can social media be an alternative for civil society?

Q11. Is it possible for a new negotiation and consensus process for the solution of the Kurdish issue, the termination of conflicts and the construction of social peace? What are the main obstacles that must be overcome?

Q12. What are the main opportunities in this regard, who are the key actors?

Q13. What can/should civil society do for a new negotiation and consensus process?

Q14. What are the most important obstacles to civil society in a possible resolution and consensus process?

Q15. What are the opportunities in front of civil society?

Q16. What should the parties do for civil society to play its role more effectively on the termination of conflicts in the Kurdish issue and on construction of social peace?