

## DIVERSITY OF HES OPPOSITION MOVEMENT IN TURKEY: BLACKSEA REGION CASES\*

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### ÖZ

Bu arařtırmanın amacı, geleneksel, kentli, hiyerarşik ile profesyonel çevrecilikten çok farklı olan ve 2000 yılı sonrasında yükselen Türkiye'deki yerel çevre hareketini analiz etmektir. Zira, ülke çapında planlanan binlerce küçük ölçekli hidroelektrik santral (HES) projesine karşı çıkan kırsal topluluklar ilk kez bir yerel harekete katılmışlardır. Alan çalışması kapsamında, yerel çevre hareketinin en belirgin olduđu Karadeniz Bölgesi çevreci etkinlikler, örgütlenme ve bilim, teknoloji, ekonomi ile politikaya yaklaşımlarına göre analiz edilmiştir. Yerelde ortaya çıkan çevre hareketinin iki yıl süren takibi sonucunda örgütlenme ve politika farklılıklarına göre seçilen üç alanda toplam 27 yapılandırılmış görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Alan çalışması bulguları göstermektedir ki kırsal bölgelerde yaşayan yerel halk "yaşam alanlarını savunmak" için hayatlarında ilk defa hem çevre protestolarına katılmış hem de yaşam alanlarına dair karar alma süreçlerine katılmayı talep etmişlerdir. Yaşam alanlarına yönelik tehditler, yerel halkı edigen kırsal topluluk durumundan ekosistemlerini savunan etkin yurttaşlara dönüştürmüştür. Yerel çevreci hareket, kırsal toplulukların temsilciler ve bürokratları aşarak karar alma süreçlerine katılım taleplerini ve vatandaşlık haklarını kullanma potansiyellerini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, yerel çevreci hareket HES konusunda etkin olmaktan kaçınan ve özel sektör ile kamu kurumları ile birlikte hareket eden ulusal ve uluslararası çevreci sivil toplum kuruluşlarını güçlü bir biçimde eleştirmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Taban hareketi, çevreci hareket, protesto, çevrecilik, Karadeniz

### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to grasp the raising environmental grassroots movement after 2000 throughout Turkey, as it seems much different from traditional, urban, hierarchical and professional environmentalism. For the first time, rural people developed hundreds grassroots

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movements throughout the country challenging thousands of small-scale hydroelectric power plant (HES) projects. The field study is based on the analysis of environmental activities, organization and approaches to science and technology, economy, politics in Black Sea Region where the grassroots movement is much significant. After two years of following hundreds of cases, three fields are chosen that are different in terms of organization and politics, then 27 semi-structured interviews were conducted on the field. Field study shows that rural and local people, defending their living space, not only joined the environmental protests but also asked to join decision-making mechanisms about their livelihood. The threat to livelihoods dialectically makes passive rural people become active citizens defending their ecosystem. Environmental grassroots movement shows civic potential of their communities and leads them to participate into decision-making. Rural people demand to decide about their lives instead of representatives and bureaucrats. Moreover, they strongly criticize national and international environmental NGOs that avoid challenging HES projects and acting together with corporate and state organizations.

**Keywords:** Grassroots, environmental movement, protest, environmentalism, Black Sea

By 2008, a raising and striking phenomenon began to disturb traditional environmentalism in Turkey; people throughout the country who had never joined environmental activism before; generated strong and diverse local actions against hundreds of Small Hydropower Plants (HES)<sup>1</sup> planned all over the country. These movements are significantly different from dominant, traditional, urban, organized, professional and moderate environmentalism of Turkey as they provide direct participation of local people beyond environmental discourse but a living space apology. People are organized in voluntary, non-hierarchical, horizontal and temporary organizations as strong civic oppositions at different places of HES constructions. Beside their common aspects like a strong critique of national environmental non-governmental organizations (NGO), there are significant differences among them in terms of ontology, organizations, actions, means, and ends. While some groups ask for more state interference, some others organize actions for more participation in decision-making mechanisms. Some activists use current local environmental NGO structures whereas some others generate local platforms.

This paper aims to analyse the diversity of grassroots movements against HES constructions. After two years of following HES opposition on media, twenty-seven semi-structured interviews were carried out face-to-face with active participants. In this paper, first energy and water politics behind HES constructions are explained. Second, HES opposition movement

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<sup>1</sup> Small scale hydropower plants have limited capacities between 10 and 30 MW (<http://www.small-hydro.com/about/small-scale-hydrpower.aspx>).

is detailed. Following, three different examples of grassroots movements in the Black Sea Region are analysed. Lastly, diversity, similarities and differences of HES opposition movement are assessed.

### **1. HES Opposition in Turkey**

HES opposition is ignited against the planning of thousands of HES all over the country. In fact, electricity demand of Turkey as a developing country inevitably increases annually while world electricity demand is expected to increase 100% until 2030 ([http://www.mmo.org.tr/resimler/dosya\\_ekler/8188c7e9965c217\\_ek.pdf](http://www.mmo.org.tr/resimler/dosya_ekler/8188c7e9965c217_ek.pdf)). Developing and least developed countries need more energy that can be produced by polluting resources more than developed ones. On the other hand, climate change debate introduces renewable resources like hydropower against fossil fuels. Hydropower is accepted as a renewable energy resource and is considered environmentally friendly compared to coal and nuclear.

As an ambitious developing country, Turkey aims to double annual electricity consumption per citizen from 2.400 to 5.200 kWh/year to pass the world average of 2.782 until 2035. The dependency of imported fossil fuels forces Turkey to develop alternatives within country. Hence, 1.198 of the plants that are licensed, 749 of them are hydropower and 324 of them are thermal while others are wind, geothermal and biofuel. Turkey prepared new laws ([http://www.teias.gov.tr/eBulten/makaleler/2009/okulyeni2/elektrik/elektrik\\_piyasalari\\_kanunu.pdf](http://www.teias.gov.tr/eBulten/makaleler/2009/okulyeni2/elektrik/elektrik_piyasalari_kanunu.pdf)) to enlarge electricity market and to ease the privatization of electricity production. HES constructions are part of hydroelectric investments that also involves large dam projects. The aim is to use all rivers to generate electricity even they are intact. The northern and southern mountainous regions include many small intact rivers starting from summits and ends at sea. All those rivers, bringing life both to nature and people; mainly with agricultural production, suddenly became a water potential that should be transformed into electricity urgently. However, HES projects are harmful to biodiversity, livelihoods and communities.

There are 1.738 HES investments planned in the privatization process that nature cannot be renewed after the destruction so energy production from rivers is unsustainable (Hamsici 2010: 36). With parallel to hundreds of HES constructions, local people developed numerous and widespread grassroots movements throughout Turkey. Loç Valley-Kastamonu, Aksu Valley- Düzce/Sakarya, Yeşilirmak Basin-Amasya/Tokat, Melet Basin-Ordu, Düzgözü Village-Giresun, Salarha Valley-Trabzon, Güneysu, Fındıklı (Şendeniz 2012), Senoz Valley, İkizdere and Fırtına Valley-Rize, Ardanuç, Şavşat, Murgul, Borçka, Macahel, Yusufeli-Artvin, Tortum and İspir-Erzurum, Munzur Valley-Tunceli, İbradı, Akseki and Alakır Valleys-Antalya are some significant places where HES opposition has emerged (Hamsici 2010).

There are not many studies in social sciences about HES opposition movement in Turkey. Erensu (2011: 8) defines HES opposition movement

as a coalition of “village based solidarity groups and urban-based environmental activism networks” within his development-based analysis. Tıkan-sak (2012: 114) implies the “will for autonomy on policy decisions” of people in HES opposition. Arı (2013: 215) states the reason of opposition in Loç Valley/Kastamonu as “non-participant policy-making process, top-down decisions and exclusion from decision-making processes”. Dönmez (2013: 61) implies the “economic and political marginalization” of local people challenging the state and business to protect their livelihood. Aksoy (2013: 102) states the failure of HES opposition in affecting the public policy formation process. HES opposition is a spread and strong movement where the left tradition is already involved in (Adaman et al.2015). *Uprise of Anatolia* (<https://vimeo.com/19937849>) and *A Few Bold People* (<http://www.turkishmoon.com/afewbravepeople/afbp.php>) are documentaries telling the story of uprising across the country that local people form platforms and unions, organize protests, meetings, press releases and take HES companies to courts. Social media is a suitable platform to share their resistance; a local protester says “We are state, we construct state. They must not forget!” Even the mass media broadcasts their resistance against state and HES companies (<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/hes-lercarsi-birebir-carpisan-10-kahraman-17447034>). The movement is mostly local however different groups can act together including national organizations. “We do not give Anatolia” is a nationwide platform to voice their common claims like opposing new nature conservation law that is expected to facilitate constructions like HES. E-mail lists and social networks are utilized to organize activities. The framework is not limited to HES opposition and includes other environmental destructions like Tuz Lake, coastal zones, the construction of third bridge in Istanbul and many others.

Another HES opposition rises from a local branch of national environmental NGO ([http://www.likyahaber.net/haber/haber\\_detay.asp?haberID=1925](http://www.likyahaber.net/haber/haber_detay.asp?haberID=1925)) based in Antalya. It criticizes national environmental NGOs implying the differences between them and democratic mass organizations. The funds, aims, projects, successes and even environmentalism of national NGOs are questioned as they are working for themselves, but not for nature. Moreover, media and national environmental NGOs feed each other. Bartın, in Black Sea Region, shows similar opposition against a thermal power plant. According to their catchphrase “I am living in Bartın and I will live”, a platform is constructed including mayors (<https://www.facebook.com/Bart%C4%B1n-Platformu-307129005990628/>). They organize protests, meetings, press releases and join media programs to generate resistance against the plant.

Bergama Movement is the most important grassroots (<http://politeknik.org.tr/tuerkiye-cevre-hareketi-halklarken-mehmet-horu/>) and community movement in Turkey (Çoban 2004: 438). The movement developed against gold mine construction of a foreign company in three villages of Bergama, İzmir (Özen 2009: 2). It is one of “the resistance centers” with

Aliğa and Gökova (Dural 2008: 214) in the history of environmental grassroots movement in Turkey. In fact, *Bergama* case is the pioneer of HES oppositions that depend on direct action, grassroots, non-hierarchical and temporary organizational structure. It is a rare example of direct participation of 'ordinary' people to decision making processes (Özen 2009: 1). They define themselves as a resistance and a rebel against the state and private sector pressure taking their lands for gold mine. The movement was formed after losing a law struggle against gold mining company. In fact, they won the case, but the court decision is not implemented. Hence, they organize a peasant citizen movement that includes women beyond their traditional passive position in society and decision making processes (Kadirbeyoğlu 2010: 149). Beside environmental issues, Bergama Movement is interested in other social justice issues of Turkey like the Kurdish problem, anti-nuclear protests in order to increase democratic space.

## 2. Field Study

The geography of Black Sea region with hundreds of small rivers is chosen majority of HES constructions. On the other hand, the HES opposition becomes stronger in region and is shared by citizens whose valleys as living spaces are threatened. Numerous HES oppositions in the region show diverse approaches to environment, organization, activities and politics. In order to understand the diverse picture of environmentalism, Pepper (1993: 47) provides a classification in terms of environmental activity, organization, science, technology, economy, and politics. Eryılmaz (2012: 85-86) contributed to this classification with the integration of social ecology (<http://www.social-ecology.org/>) of Murray Bookchin who implies the root of ecological crisis as the domination of nature that stems from domination of man (Bookchin 1991). Bookchin also offers a solution to ecological crisis that includes a direct and decentralized democratic approach (Biehl 1998).

Although all grassroots movements involve citizen participation and challenge current environmental decision-making process, there are ontological, political, economic and activity differences among them in Black Sea Region. Hence, in this research different organizations at different parts of the region are selected. Green Artvin Society (Yeşil Artvin Derneği, YAD) is an official environmental *association* in Artvin with its history of struggle against mine and other environmental threats. It is settled in a city, different from other two fields of study. The member profile is mostly artisan and academics, representing urban middle class. Second field is Aksu Valley in western Black Sea Region, composed of sixteen villages and has a non-official and local *union*. The valley is situated at the intersection of Düzce and Sakarya provinces that have a significant conservative tradition and strongly supports neoliberal and conservative ruling party. The inhabitants of union joined protests and developed civic actions and platforms for the first time in their lives. Third case is north-eastern Black Sea Coast with numerous Brotherhoods of Rivers Platforms (DEKAP). The unique aspect is

the regional coordination and organization of DEKAPs that are organized bottom-to-top including numerous local *platforms*.

### **3.1. NGO: Green Artvin Society (YAD) / Artvin**

YAD is the leading environmental NGO of Artvin and was founded in 1995 to resist mine construction just above the city that also is a hot issue nowadays ([http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/02/160223\\_dokuz\\_soruda\\_cerattepe](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/02/160223_dokuz_soruda_cerattepe)). It became popular among Turkey in 2015 with the massive protests in Artvin against mine construction ([http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/02/160223\\_dokuz\\_soruda\\_cerattepe](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/02/160223_dokuz_soruda_cerattepe)). YAD is governed by a management board and has almost a hundred members from Artvin including academics, artisans, lawyers, doctors, students and retired citizens. It presents an educated middle class profile whose most active members are from artisan and university while it is not closed for the participation of non-middle class. The voluntary presence of elites of a small city is characteristic for local environmental associations across the country.

YAD engages in all forms of environmental problems while the priority of activities depends on urgency and importance. Air and water pollutions are not prior in the agenda due to various mine and HES constructions in Artvin. Limited people working in management board are active, carry the mission, and organize the activities. Beside the legal struggle, the information meetings are preferred to raise awareness of local people. The middle class member profile favours legal struggle as a first option.

Respondent 3 from YAD implies his belief of science and technology that can solve environmental problems including HES construction. He strongly trusts science and technology that are mostly desired for environmental planning. The minimum damage can only be given thanks to scientific research that is believed to be objective and away from interests of state and corporate sector. The integration of ecological research into development projects may minimize affects. In fact, middle class rooted local environmental associations are expected to believe and to trust on science and technology that are conceptualized as non-political and objective while the hegemony of dominant groups on funding, developing and using science and technology is not noticed.

There are thousands of associations registered in Turkey, however only a smaller portion is active while environmental associations are the most active among them. The association is an official organization that is controlled by the governorship. However, it is much easier to establish an association than a fund/foundation that necessitates considerable amount of initial money. However, associations are more democratic than funds. It is easier to be a member of an association compared to funds. Hence the management board is open to change, whereas funds restrict membership and the possibility to take position at management board. The funds may also have a general director, CEO and workers as they show a company structure that most national environmental NGOs in Turkey and world are on

track. They transform into rational and bureaucratic structures and lose civic virtues for the sake of professionalism (Diani and Donati 1999: 18-20). Professional environmental NGO tends to have better-paid staff and prefer less risky lobbying activities (Dalton et al. 2003: 26). Hence, most local environmental NGOs in Turkey are criticizing this tendency, as they do not want to depend on big budgets that necessitate the professional company structure. Respondent 4 from Artvin claims the weakness of national environmental NGOs in HES opposition as they have ties with corporate sector limiting their actions.

*"TEMA<sup>2</sup> unwillingly supports HES struggle and Greenpeace blames lack of potential to join. There are both good and bad sides of national and international environmental NGOs. On the other hand, companies start their own environmental NGOs, in fact all environmental NGOs are not the same."*

The participation of national environmental NGOs in HES opposition process generates anger among grassroots in the world. While national environmental NGOs seem weak in Turkey, English case is different. Rootes (2009: 29) states that local environmental NGOs and actions are not sustainable and continuous in England. The use of public space is decreased; people have more private and individual spaces. Old people lost their participative aspect, while young people never had. Hence, Rootes favours national environmental NGOs to raise environmental concerns even if they are marginalized in last years. He adds that environmental NGOs are more participative and accountable than parties. However, Turkish case became different after 2000. National environmental NGOs lose legitimacy and power with their passive position and links to the private sector while local actions rose within unofficial organizations beyond the local environmental association structure.

Rootes (2009: 25) questions the affectivity of British environmental NGOs as they are marginalized in affecting national policymaking. Moreover, they are not organized to help local NGOs with the exception of Friends of the Earth. Their interest in local campaigns is low due to their professionalization causing "constrained resource" and caring donors more than members. The situation is similar in Turkey; national environmental NGOs are organized as national companies working on enlarging environmentalism sector but have a limited effect on policymaking. On the other hand, local campaigns do not depend on interests, profit making, donations; but on real environmental concerns. Therefore, national NGOs provide very symbolic and limited support to local campaigns that are not useful for their profit making environmentalism. Moreover, they also avoid conflicts with government and private sector that may threaten funding opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> The TEMA Foundation (Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats) founded in 1992, is the best-known environmental NGO in Turkey.

Within the framework of the serious critique of national and international environmental NGOs, most local environmental NGOs are very careful about their income generation. Respondent 4 from YAD says:

*"We do not accept money from foreign countries; we do not accept money from unknown resource. Once, we accepted money from a company, but we are still against these funds. That money did not reach us, a friend used it for a project. We did not join the advertisement film of that company either."*

The reaction against funding -mostly international funding- is a common characteristic among local environmental NGOs in Turkey. It is assumed that the funding does not aim to protect environment but to make environmental NGOs work for donors. Hence, funded local environmental NGOs are sharply criticized by other NGOs as they became the agent of international powers. This critique shows the integration of environmentalist and nationalist approaches. In fact, the nature is seen the sacred land of country that has to be defended against both exterior and interior powers.

The common struggle for the environment generates grassroots movement that is beyond traditional policymaking structure like representative politics and elections. Respondent 4 from YAD implies the presence of local people and says, *"We want local to claim nature. We should support them, the principal is local ownership."* In contrast to traditional environmental NGO position, YAD calls to action to local people. YAD joins local platforms as well as supporting local people to actively join decision-making. In fact, it also one of the founders of DEKAP and the Artvin representative. However, DEKAP structure is different from official, permanent and local association. While YAD joins DEKAP decision-making structure, respondent 4 states their objection to the domination attempts of radical left parties:

*"We are one of the founders of DEKAP as Artvin representative. It is founded as a regional organization. Members of political parties sometimes highlight politics in front of HES opposition, however we do not agree with this. HES issue is beyond political parties! We should be open to people from all political parties."*

Although YAD resists the intervention of radical leftist parties into DEKAP, respondent 3 shows his happiness that ruling party did not win previous elections in Artvin unlike most of the country. Ruling party is seen as the champion of neo-liberalization processes destructing environment with HES and other development projects. Most of the middle class based local environmental NGOs in Turkey take this opponent position against ruling party as respondent 3 supports the main opposition party. Although he cannot explain how opposition party can be more environmentalist; he believes that another political party can choose different politics within current political economic frame of global capitalism. Although local environmental NGOs in HES opposition go beyond the participation of elites and call for the right of local people to join decision-making, they still lack the critique of national and international professional politics. The active citi-



zen of local sphere does not fit passive voter of representative system. The democratic demand of local people necessitates reforms in representative system where environmental NGO alliances and citizen groups have more power in decision-making mechanism.

Although YAD generally supports local people as a prior decision-making body, respondent 1 shows their distrust to local people who can misuse environment:

*"When we say let local people decide, they may use nature badly. Therefore, I want to trust state and parliament. I want this trust, and then there will not be a need for local people and environmental NGOs. However, I cannot trust state and government while the state and government authorities are so bad. There can be a good state and government, Why not?"*

### **3.2. Union: Aksu Valley Union / Düzce-Sakarya**

Aksu Valley Union (Protection Union of Gölyaka-HendekAksu River and Environment) is founded on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010 by the representatives from 16 villages in Düzce province and Hendek district of Sakarya Province against HES constructions. Local people aim to save their river in order to protect their living space. Respondent 7 talks about their reason to struggle against HES as:

*"We are against HES due to these unconscious constructions, also I am against HES constructions at other places. When I first heard about HES, I thought as a wheat type or apple type. Now, due to HES constructions water table is running out. Irrigation depends on water, therefore our tomatoes, pepper, onion, hazelnut, corn and poplar incomes are in danger."*

Respondent 6 voices herobjection as *"I live here, this water problem will also affect me."* The local character of movement is different from urban environmental consciousness that has no real link with nature. Valley residents live in and with nature even they see it as a resource. In fact, it is more than environment but a living space. Respondent 7 says *"Environment is a part of land that provides all necessities of humankind."* Their life has strong links with nature that makes them not only environmentalists and protesters but also 'living space advocates' ('Yaşam Savunucuları'), similar to other examples of HES opposition. The inhabitants of the valley are threatened by the destruction of their living space. Hence, the notions of environment and representative politics are distorted to reach nature and participative politics. The passive inhabitants of conservative community are becoming the active citizens of eco-community of valley ecosystem.

Apart from press releases ([http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xes5z5\\_aksu-deresi-koruma-birligi-basin-ac\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xes5z5_aksu-deresi-koruma-birligi-basin-ac_news)), information meetings are favoured in Aksu Valley. Respondent 10 implies *"Information meetings should be regularly held, if we do not join once, we will not know what is going on."* These meetings provide awareness raising as Respondent 8 states *"I don't want HES constructions at other fields, last year in village we saw a documentary showing why whole Black Sea people opposes."* During the ini-

tial phase of HES opposition and beside law struggle and information meetings, union has contacted with the Minister of Environment and Forestry regularly. They tried to explain how HES construction was badly planned and did not have a scientific base. This is a unique example of lobbying which can be hardly seen at other HES oppositions.

Although none of the respondents favours physical interference, one resident claims the need of sabotage to construction equipment. He calls others as *pigeons* whose tactics are seen failed. They should leave leading to *falcons* who can threaten construction equipment of company that has a value of millions of Turkish Liras. This shows the dynamic and time related situation. If people cannot see results; they may change their tactics that are not suitable at the beginning. However, the violence damages the legitimacy of valley people and eases the interference of police and gendarmerie forces similar to some cases in HES opposition.

Aksu Valley residents imply that HES constructions can also be made without threatening environment. Current construction process is not favourable but needs more planning and technological advance. People are not against energy production, however the project does not have to cause an environmental disaster. Advanced and environmentally friendly technology should be used. Respondent 11 implies his trust to science and technology as *"HES can be done with giving minimum damage."* Respondent 8 shows her belief:

*"Which century we live in? They should construct in a better way. There can be a positive HES, I saw a good example at neighbour village. People are content with it and asking us "Why are you against HES?" If they really think and want to do, they can construct better."*

Respondent 14 talks similar:

*"All HES constructions are not same; there is a HES construction in the next valley at a blind point. We went there and saw that there is not a nature 'massacre'. We are against HES in this valley; we are not interested in other parts of Turkey."*

The planning process should be done wisely and participative, and should also reflect the people beside the interests of the construction company. There may be few HES constructions at the end of stream threatening nobody. Aksu Valley shows the belief in showing aspects of science-technology, participation and planning.

A vast majority of population of the valley votes for ruling party; however this becomes an obstacle for HES opposition activities. They insist that their opposition is not against the ruling party but to protect their valley. However, they are accused of being against ruling party even they heavily vote for it. Hence, the union tries to show their distance from party politics. Beside traditional politics, environmental NGOs are also avoided in the valley. Respondent 27 summarizes the critique of valley people on national environmental NGOs as:

*"We want consistency from national environmental NGOs. They are objecting HES opposition, on the other hand they are accepting funds from international capital. This is disapproved in our valley... Environmental NGOs are not independent, neither their activities. It is not true that they react some things while they are silent for other things. When they analyse a project, they think how much money they can take. So, it is not true. It is false that they are interested in funds while dealing with bears. Other associations work with member fees. If you work well, you can take contributions. We have staff and can provide fellowships to eleven students. We organize activities to make money with member fees. If environmental NGOs work well and people see them, they support them with member fees."*

There is a strong tendency for grassroots action beyond traditional environmental NGOs. They lost their trust to state's role in controlling, planning and environmental protection by unlimited and uncontrolled actions of private companies constructing HES. The passive citizens question the efficiency of state control. They fill this gap by their local decision-making bodies. A few of them ask for the development of local platforms to govern community issues including non-environmental issues. Respondent 27 talks about this limitation within environmental frame as *"We are interested in HES issue, may be we should also deal with others, however the participation will be limited"*. Respondent 14 says *"We as valley people are not enough to decide about HES issue. State, universities, local and national NGOs and village council should act together."* Due to distrust to traditional politics and environmental NGOs, local people try to find new ways to join decision-making processes. Respondent 12 states: *"They should ask us about HES issue. State, village headman and village council should decide together about HES issue. However, we elect a representative to parliament, and then they go to Ankara and forget us."* Respondent 27 implies the problems of current councils that limit participation of decision-making.

*"There may be a council that everyone can join, including the university, governor, company, village headman, representatives; there may be holistic planning also. They will say 'we already have these', but they are not working. They will say 'we have academicians', however we as local people are not there. There are HES commissions at governorships, but not working. The majority decides. There should be a commission that everyone can join. There should not be voting. There will not be any decision that local people denies. We are trying to preserve but they are destroying."*

Most of the people in valley ask for permanent participation in decision-making about environmental issues despite their age, income and gender differences. The local character of HES opposition let them overcome various differences among the valley and let them feel as owners of their village and Aksu Valley. There is not any experience of protesting before HES opposition in Aksu Valley as a conservative area. However, HES threat makes people form and join protests like petition, protests, information meetings and court cases, etc. Respondent 7 implies this change as *"we be-*

*came nature people two years ago. If we act together, we can solve any problem.* Respondent 9 thinks similar *“HES issue is not the problem of leftists, but it is the problem of everyone. We should act together with other HES oppositions, Hopa struggle and DEKAP actions are hope for us”*. Another importance of valley is the ethnic diversity that each village has different history and culture. HES opposition makes them cooperate beyond their ethnic differences. Before HES threat, there were very limited relations among villages but they have improved during opposition.

### **3.3. Platform: DEKAP (Brotherhood of Rivers) / North-eastern Black Sea Coast**

Most towns in Black Sea region are situated in the downstream of valleys that are characterized by rivers. The terrain is dominated by high mountains forcing populations to settle down at coast. Rivers start from mountains and pass through villages to feed a riparian ecosystem ending at coast where most of the settlements are. Riversides provide limited agricultural land for domestic crops and tea productions as main crop. Each valley has composed of a few towns and several villages with approximately several tens of thousands population as a whole. This ecosystem is repeated along the coastline. Each ecosystem is threatened by tens of HES constructions that ignited the grassroots movement along the coastline. When the opposition fire is burned in a valley, it spreads out to the neighbouring ecosystem and to others. Hence, the HES constructions are both local and regional. The grassroots action of the region is first ignited at Fındıklı/Rize in 1998 and then other valleys followed it. Each valley has a local branch of Brotherhood of Rivers (DEKAP) that constructs a regional body including 16 provinces, 26 valleys and 98 organizations from Zonguldak to Artvin (<http://www.derelerinkardesligi.org/>). Third part of the field study focused at Rize (Center, Çayeli and Fındıklı) and Artvin (Hopa and Kemalpaşa) where HES opposition is active and spreading. They act both locally and regionally different from other HES oppositions in Turkey.

Respondent 19 implies that 90% of DEKAP members come from villages. This high participation of citizens at platforms shows the demand to save their villages and valleys as living spaces. Members are not from middle class like environmental NGOs, but the people of threatened living spaces. They form a ‘platform’ without constructing new identities like activists and members of civil society. Within villages, these local people have spontaneous meetings to develop their ideas and actions. DEKAP meetings take place regularly; local DEKAPs meet weekly while DEKAP council gathers twice a year and DEKAP management board meets monthly. Respondent 22 says *“The agenda is prepared by local people at all meetings”* and states the bottom-up nature of meetings. The decision-making is realized with both majority voting and consensus. Bottom-up decision-making structure, regular and open meetings are important characteristics of participation.

People participating in the DEKAP meetings have impressive understanding of nature. Respondent 26 implies the relations within nature as:

*“Opposition was a nice opportunity for us, we learned as we lived. Earth is a living thing, everything is interrelated. If a leaf in Amazon falls down, it will cause a flood at Black Sea Region. I had this kind of thought before, during HES opposition process I believed, now I know it. I made in-depth analysis why we are opposing HES constructions. Everything in nature should stay as it is. Aninterference to something causes many effects. Our waters are vital points of earth but they are cutting veins on leaves and drying those; similarly HES constructions destroy rivers and basins.”*

Similarly, Respondent 16 shows his relation with nature and says, *“We do not consider nature as a property. When we defend nature, we also defend the right of stone, land, leave that cannot defend themselves.”* He conceptualizes nature and society together and defines HES construction as *“they destroy our social, cultural and historical values, they deterritorialize us”*.

Respondent 26 criticizes unions, environmentalism and implies the role of local people following the path of LM as:

*“Unions are not interested in the HES issue. In Turkey, unionism has a strange structure. The production process affects soil and water; so workers and unions will be affected. However, unions mostly are interested in collective bargaining agreements and they are not developed enough to deal with other issues. The survival of labour struggle is only possible with sustainable environment, however they do not think of this.*

*There is a revolution of ideas that has never seen in Turkey. Till now, environmentalism is a movement that even cannot fill the small public squares big cities. Now, nature-defending reaches below levels of society, the villages, neighbourhoods and rural areas. The struggle raises from rural, and the difference is raised between environmentalism and nature defending. HES construction destroys my living space, my moral presence and my life. But there are not similar concerns in cities, in Taksim, in Istanbul; they only have intellectual concerns that put their hearths at ease.*

*This is not an environmentalist but a vital response. Environmentalism term irritates me; it is like a label. I am not an environmentalist; environmentalism is a little NGO, a little popularity, a little ‘show’ like a collection of rubbish at somewhere. After all, environmentalism is strongly connected to system. They collect rubbish but they use plastic bagged coal, there is not internalization. This is not the case for all environmentalists, but for most of them.”*

Similar to other cases of this study, DEKAP denies the involvement of national environmental NGOs into grassroots movement as they work with state and companies and taking funds. Respondent 23 states their critical position as *“We do not contact national and international bodies, either with Turkey Water Council. For example, we do not contact ‘X Society’, because they took money from capitalists and they do not live here.”* Respondent 26 also critically analyses national and local environmental NGOs:

*“National environmental NGO issue is a controversial subject. Some environmental NGOs voice louder, some others voice weaker depending where they are funded. There is not an environmental NGO that strongly opposes HES constructions, because they are in the middle of capitalist system. Most of their funders have mining, thermal plant investors. Environmental NGOs are stuck and reluctantly make declarations but are not struggling. ‘X NGO’ is like this, ‘Y NGO’ is not against HES constructions at all. ‘Z NGO’ is like a state environmental NGO. Environmental NGOs cannot position themselves accurately due to capitalism, but peasants can do. If members of national environmental NGOs provide enough resource, they can be independent and strong. According to today’s model, environmental NGOs have to be friendly with state; they need projects and funds of state, so they cannot object state... Local environmental NGOs are too passive. They do not have enough training, consciousness and environmental sensitivity. They do not understand HES struggle with their environmentalism cover. They do not think what effects of HES constructions are when they dry the rivers, cut the trees and how they affect the lives of people. Local environmental NGOs are doing nothing about environment.”*

Among DEKAP members, there is a clear annoyance about the urban environmentalists. Respondent 22 says *“I wanted my retirement earlier just for nature defending. This five-year struggle took root from a peasant movement. However, ‘metropole environmentalists’ interfere in the local movement.”*

DEKAP criticizes not only national environmental NGOs but also local ones due their relations with companies. SenozAssociation resisted HES constructions in Senoz Valley/Rize until the accomplishment of first two HES projects. After, they met with other companies to reform new HES projects in valley. Hence, they signed an agreement to improve environmental conditions of planned HES. They thought that increasing number of HES constructions of all Turkey shows the seriousness of government and the results of the law struggle ([http://www.senozderesi.com/haber\\_detay.asp?haberID=929](http://www.senozderesi.com/haber_detay.asp?haberID=929)). SenozAssociation insists to imply that *“they are not against everything and all HES constructions”*. This agreement is commonly criticized along Black Sea coastline and within valley as ‘selling river’.

Similar to Respondent 19, 20, 22, 23 and 24, Respondent 21 from DEKAP criticizes the role of representative of parliament and state. His platform is active and also deals with issues other than environmental problems. He says: *“There is no need to ask representatives but people should talk. Local people and local councils are enough. The authorities are asking us about everything. We are dealing with tea factory, town’s garbage issues also.”*

It is clear that there is a strong demand for participation to decision-making mechanism in local politics. The active citizenship and civic efforts let them take a position in decision-making. By active participation, local authorities have to admit their civic power. Moreover, the citizen platform debates both environmental and non-environmental issues. As they strong-

ly criticize representative politics, the nature of local platforms becomes more participative. Respondent 22 implies that the platform meetings are designed by people whose issues are presented. The agenda is prepared by their wishes. The referendum call (<http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/yesil-hafiye/bir-referandum-da-hesler-icin-yapilsin-1013398/>) of İkizdere Association is an example of desire to join decision-making processes as that respondent 22 says:

*“DEKAP should be active about other issues as well as HES issue. There must be referendums at local scale about HES and other issues. The only solution is the unity of people. In İkizdere (Valley), everybody come including women and children.”*

DEKAP wants local to decide about their living place and accuses those taking funds from international bodies and corporate sector. One respondent implies the will of local people with a conflicting event. An Istanbul based platform KIP (Platform of Karadeniz Revolts) went his village and blames his platform with doing nothing. KIP called people for revolt and so the gendarmerie called him whether he knows those people and he heard the event or not. He went there and, did nothing. He says, *“They called me fascist, because I did not help them. Only local people decide what they do. We do not want outsiders”*. Local decision-making and will are prior for him and his people.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to analyse raising environmental grassroots movements in Turkey. The HES opposition shows new and unique aspects that are against the traditional environmentalism in Turkey. Except Bergama case, for the first time local people developed grassroots movements throughout the country challenging HES constructions. Local people, who have not joined any protests in their lives, became pioneers of protests voicing new slogans like “we will resist for our right of live until the end”. Not only they joined the environmental movement but they also used concepts of ‘right of nature’ and ‘living space’ for the first time. Traditional, urban, professional and lobby-based environmentalism seems passive while local, voluntary, temporary, non-hierarchical environmentalism depending of defence of living space rises.

This research focuses on Black Sea Region where the grassroots movement is much significant. Even grassroots movement seems similar among region, three fields are different in terms of organization and politics. YAD is a local and official environmental NGO, Aksu Valley Union is a temporary local platform of conservative inhabitants while DEKAP is a local and regional platform of threatened citizens of valleys. YAD presents a town and middle class based environmental association perspective. Aksu Valley shows an alternative path of demand for participation to decision-making despite of its conservative background. DEKAP provides the advanced mod-

el for a participative structure with its regional organization and living space notion beyond environment.

For three fields, the struggle introduced a demand to participate in decision-making. Local people used the term 'living place' instead of environment and nature; that they link their life with nature. Environmental grassroots movement shows a civic potential asking for participation to decision-making. They want local people to decide instead of representatives and bureaucrats. They criticize national and international environmental NGOs that work with corporate and state sectors for funds and legitimacy. Environmental grassroots movement casts a critical eye over accepting funds.

Among three fields, YAD shows environmental NGO structure, middle class profile and desire of strict state controls and planning. Aksu Valley Union has more participative aspects than YAD with his temporary, non-official and citizen based union structure and living space claim. Different from other HES opposition areas, conservative inhabitants of Aksu Valley transform into active citizens questioning decision-making mechanism. The environmental issue becomes a water conflict to defend their life. Although they become active citizens with legal struggle, protests and information meetings, they are able to carry lobbying activities even with ministers that it is unique and different from other HES oppositions. DEKAP shows the more participative model than other two others, not only with numerous platforms acting together and forming a regional confederation but also the claim to join decision-making beyond the water issue. Local people struggle against HES constructions as 'defending life' linking their life with nature. Not only elites, but also women, young and others join actions and decision-making. Apolitical inhabitants become active citizens of community defending their living space. Each individual become a political actor of her/his life within a community. The bottom-up civic organization is not limited to local platforms but reaches a regional scale to form a regional structure. In fact, forming a regional DEKAP body is inevitable to support each other while local platforms decide about themselves.

The raise of environmental grassroots movement is different from traditional, urban and professional environmentalism in the sense that it conceives environment as part of life. Local people demand to affect their life and to join decision-making process distorting current representative politics. The threat to local life dialectically makes passive people become active citizens of their ecosystem that shows the ecological links between society and nature.



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